

**Solidarity, Supportiveness & Creative Language Use in Second-Language  
Interpersonal Talk**

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## Abstract

Second-language (L2) users frequently demonstrate a strong interest in developing, establishing and maintaining social relations with other L2 users through the medium of the second language and I argue in this thesis that this is often achieved through a variety of supportive and creative ways as interactants jointly construct interpersonal talk. My main aim in this thesis is to explore the workings of L2-L2 interpersonal language use and, as a secondary aim, to propose pedagogic intervention that will help the L2 learner to interact supportively and creatively in the target language.

To develop this argument, I will build on the work on Aston and his description of how successful social relations in the target language are negotiated through supportiveness and solidarity and his use of the terms *some* and *any* (taken from Sacks, 1970-1971, and Schenkein, 1978) to examine how the L2 user can participate as a distinct individual in L2-L2 talk as opposed to interacting as an anonymous language user.

Second-language interpersonal talk is problematic because the language user seeks to conform with others but, at the same time, wants to interact in creative ways. In discussing creative language use, I build on the work of Mead and his distinction between the creative *I* and the socially-conforming *me* and argue that L2-L2 creative language use is jointly constructed between second-language users as they seek to develop successful social relations.

I aim to analyse the problematic nature of L2 interpersonal language by examining data collected on second-language users engaged in L2-L2 small talk in a target-language context and through interviews with such users. While building on Aston's description of solidarity and supportiveness in L2 interpersonal discourse, I also explore how creative language use allows the second-language user to achieve successful social relations and, at the same time, helps her to interact in her own distinctive way.

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## Other transcript symbols

Horizontal ellipsis indicates that part of the utterance has been omitted

...

Vertical ellipsis indicates that turns are missing

.

.

Speech is louder than surrounding talk

capital letters

Speech is quieter than surrounding talk

degree sign (°)

Extension of sound

:

A hardener

comma (e.g. last night)

Details of the conversational scene

(telephone rings)

Characteristics of the talk

(laughter)

Feature of interest

→

I have not recorded the characteristics of the second-language user speech delivery due to the difficulty of deciding whether certain features of utterances are possibly due to interference from the L2 user's first language.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### 1.1. Introduction

In this thesis, I examine the use of interpersonal language between second-language users of English. Specifically, I aim to describe and analyse how L2 users engage in interpersonal language use in creative and supportive ways as they seek to develop, establish and maintain social relations with other L2 users. In trying to achieve relational goals, the non-native speaker (NNS) employs solidarity and supportiveness to achieve engagement and involvement with other language users and creative language use to interact as an individual. I argue that a greater understanding on the part of learners and teachers of the use of solidarity, supportiveness and creative language use in terms of interpersonal or phatic language use can help the second-language user achieve more 'successful' interpersonal and transactional relationships in the target-language context. I define successful L2-L2 interpersonal language use as the joint achievement of the desired degree of involvement, concern and engagement between second-language users. At the same time, I will argue that, even if the second-language user claims not to be particularly interested in developing interpersonal relationships in the L2, an understanding of second-language use is a way of understanding target-language cultural behaviour (Cameron 2001: 7 - 8). Furthermore, it would be 'irresponsible', educationally speaking, if ELT teachers do not make second-language learners aware of the choices available in L2 interpersonal language use. The current focus on transactional language use in foreign language teaching has a tendency to leave 'gaps' regarding the use of interpersonal language use. This thesis proposes to go some way to filling these 'gaps' by describing the choices available for achieving social relations in the L2-L2 target language context.

To support this argument, I have carried out research on a specific group of second-language speakers in an attempt to understand how L2 users actually use and see themselves using interpersonal language in the second-language context. From these studies, I also describe L2 interpersonal language practices and patterns of use that enable me to propose second-language pedagogical activities that go beyond current approaches to teaching and learning interpersonal language. As a second-language teacher of English in Mexico and a second-language user of Spanish, I have a special interest in trying to propose pedagogical activities since I consider a restricted L2 interpersonal ability seriously limits the development of successful social relations of my students in Guadalajara, Mexico.

## 1.2. Building on Previous Work

In establishing the direction in which I want to describe and analyse how L2 users engage in interpersonal language use, I build on the work of Aston who argues that comity – the ‘establishment and maintenance of friendly relations’ (Aston 1993: 226) – can be understood by examining:

- the features of interactional language (relational talk) as opposed to transactional language (informational talk);
- the resources employed by native and non-native speakers in achieving comity;
- the use of supportive and solidary talk in seeking successful social relations;
- language user attempts to interact as a distinct *somebody* rather than as a nondescript *anybody*;

First of all, I follow Aston’s approach to studying comity by examining how conversation analysis, particularly the work of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson who examined the local

management dimension to interpersonal language use, and interactional sociolinguistics, especially Goffman 's concepts of *face* and 'working consensus' (1959: 20 - 21), help describe the workings of interactional speech. •

I build on the work of Aston by, first of all, studying the interpersonal strategies used by a specific group of non-native speakers (i.e. Mexican EFL users) as opposed to Aston's focus on more anonymous participants largely taken from service encounters in bookshops (Aston 1988a, 1988b, 1988c, 1989, 1993, 1995). Secondly, I examine L2-L2 interpersonal language use rather than Aston's strong emphasis on L1-L1 and L1-L2 use. Thirdly, I study interpersonal language use itself (as seen in L2-L2 mealtime talk) as opposed to Aston's focus on interpersonal language use within transactional talk (e.g. in bookshops) (Aston 1988b, 1988c 1989, 1993, 1995).

I go beyond Aston's argument which describes successful interpersonal language use in terms of participant convergence (i.e. the achievement of solidarity and supportiveness) and claim that there is a creative dimension to L2-L2 interpersonal language use by drawing on the work of Mead (1934). Mead argues that individuals interact socially by establishing reciprocal relations with individuals. Such relations are expressed through the creative *I* whereby an individual seeks to interact in her own way and the conforming *me* whereby an individual recognises that she is member of a community and needs to adhere to the attitudes and norms of that community and its language users. The achievement of solidarity and supportiveness is an expression of the *me* as she conforms to others. The creative *I* is an individual response to the norms of a community and the attitude of others (Mead 1934: 196). Therefore, the basis for creative language use comes from building on (or diverging from) the conforming practices and patterns of others. In order to examine how second-language users engage in creative language use by exploiting existing target language patterns and practices, I will build on the work of Tannen (1984, 1989) who argues that the creative use of repetition reflects a greater degree of involvement between participants and the work of Cook (1996, 1997, 2000) who argues that language play allows L2 users to manipulate linguistic patterns and word meaning and construct joint meanings.

### 1.3. Interpersonal Language Use & Language Teaching

In this thesis, I propose to relate interpersonal language use to the second-language learning context. English language teaching (ELT) currently emphasises the need to achieve transactional goals (e.g. conveying information) – often at the expense of pursuing interpersonal goals. In discussing ELT, I assume classroom ‘model’ language to be English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and I adopt Gnutzmann’s definition of EFL as ‘standard English, generally British or American English’ (1999: 163). I am not advocating the classroom teaching of L2 norms of language use as advanced by proponents of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Rather, I focus on EFL because I want to relate L2-L2 interpersonal language use to existing second-language teaching and learning patterns and procedures and classroom practice. However, within the context of the EFL classroom, I will argue that L2-L2 interpersonal language use may adhere to target-language practices or reflect patterns of use that emerge as a result of L2-L2 interaction.

As in first language use, interpersonal language in ELT is often described within a narrow category of phatic language that includes introductions, goodbyes and ‘safe’ topics such as the weather and hobbies. Such a description sees phatic language as being empty, predictable and prepatterned and subservient to transactional language use (McCarthy 2003: 33 - 34). Carter (1997: 160) argues that an overemphasis on transactional language use can be seen as one of the more negative aspects of communicative language teaching.

While the argument that phatic language is present in most language use is not new (see, for instance, Cheepen 1988: 3, Coupland 2003:2, Downes 1998: 401, Holmes 2000: 33-34), I want to examine how interpersonal language use is present in L2-L2 interaction and how second-language users employ phatic language to help create ‘successful’ second-language relationships. Furthermore, the features of L2-L2 interpersonal language often differ from L1-L1 or L1-L2 talk in terms of interactional patterns and practices since second-language users may not refer to or relate to first-language norms of use. I also examine the dynamic

and creative dimension to L2-L2 interaction which is often missing in ELT as language users are often expected to adhere to conventional patterns of language use.

#### 1.4. Empirical Settings

I want to relate theoretical insights into interpersonal language use to specific EFL speakers. I chose Mexican subjects because of my professional and personal situation – I have lived in Mexico for over twenty years. I teach at two universities in Mexico and have taught at basic, intermediate and advanced levels to children, adolescents and adults.

An opportunity sample allowed me to study how Mexican EFL users in London, England, interacted with other non-native speakers in supportive and creative ways within a specific social group. The study of second-language users interacting with other second-language users provided me with the opportunity to study a growing communicative reality of second-language users (and especially Mexican L2 users) in that they are more and more likely to interact in English with other NNSs rather than with native-speakers (NSs).

The assertion that L2-L2 interaction is a common feature of EFL use is not a particularly novel idea. In the 1980s, Strevens emphasised the preponderance of L2-L2 interaction:

It is a remarkable feature of English that probably more communication takes place between L2 users of it than between L1 users.

(1980: 71)

Kachru's identification of an 'outer circle' of English-language users, estimated at 150 - 300 million speakers by Crystal (1997: 54), highlights the number of second-language users who use English with other L2 users on a daily basis and where English enjoys an important function in education, literary creativity and popular culture (Kachru & Nelson 1996: 78).



In the 1990s, Prodromou (1997: 19) claimed that 80 per cent of communication in English took place between L2-L2 users and Alexander (1999: 35) forecast that, in 2000, 70 per cent of L2 interaction was likely to be with other non-native speakers and that this figure would rise to 80 per cent by 2010. In the present decade, Seidlhofer (2001: 152) also estimates that around 80 per cent of overall communication in English is between L2-L2 speakers.

Within ELT, L2-L2 interaction is reflected in the growing interest in teaching of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) aims to prepare 'learners to communicate with non-native speakers of English from all over the world' (Gnutzmann 1999: 162). Underlining the growing importance of ELF for the second-language user, Alexander (1999: 34) claims that more and more business English use now reflects L2-L2 interaction. Given the growing importance of English as an international language, it is therefore less relevant for L2 users to take their bearings against native-speaker norms.

Although Mexican EFL users were chosen in order to examine a specific target-language context of interpersonal language use, I hope that findings or conclusions will be applicable to other second-language users and will illuminate the phenomenon of L2-L2 interpersonal language use more widely.

### **1.5. Interpersonal Language: Key Terminology**

In describing and analysing the interpersonal dimension in second language use, I need to identify what L2 users are trying to achieve in the target language. Social conversation (e.g. small talk) is often described in terms of interactional language use. The term 'interaction' can be defined in a range of ways. In a loose and all-encompassing way, all spoken communication can be seen as reflecting interaction. On the other hand, Brown & Yule (1983b: 2 - 3) and Nunan (1999: 228) use the term 'interaction' to refer to socially-focused language as opposed to goal-oriented 'transactional' language.

While accepting Brown & Yule and Nunan's distinction between interactional and transactional language, I will argue that this division is not particularly satisfactory because interactional language is found in most transactional language. I adhere to Aston's argument that both transactional and interactional aspects are often present

differing in their relative weight. To communicate ideas we must generally also establish a minimum of rapport; to establish bonds of personal union through talk we will generally transfer some information, however trite.

(1988c: 20)

Furthermore, such a stark division may have pedagogic relevance but language users do not divide up language use in this way: Language users may not have either interactional or transactional motivations. I adhere to Aston's argument that the distinction is useful while at the same time bearing in mind the problematic nature of trying to separate transactional language from interactional language (1988c: 20; 1989: 25). At the same time, it is often difficult to separate out the interactional aspects of language from transactional aspects when interactants choose to construct their own context rather than allow the context to be dictated by the situation. Indeed, the very act of constructing a context is a decision made by interactants as *somebodies* rather than as nonentities who are playing out positional roles. Furthermore, contexts that supposedly reflect 'closed' situations (e.g. buying stamps at a post office) may generally follow routine patterns of language use but there is still some leeway for the development of interactional language. Language users do not have to stay within the confines of linguistically 'closed' situations. They can seek out interactional alternatives and explore different ways of developing relationships. I argue that second-language users normally want to actively participate in the L2 context in a positive and proactive way rather than merely react to the L2 environment.

The question regarding 'what' the L2 learner uses language 'for' leads to the transactional / interactional dichotomy. On the other hand, the question 'how' the L2 learner is using the target language focuses much more on how the language user wants to interact in the target language, reflecting the personal dimension to interpersonal language use. A language user may want to participate in an involved, considerate and concerned way in a given situation

or as what Aston (1988b, 1988c, 1989, 1993) terms as “supportive”. At other times, the language user might want to demonstrate closeness and solidarity (Aston 1988b, 1988c, 1989, 1993). Sometimes, participants may want to participate in a disinterested and uninvolved way or, when circumstances require, as being detached, resistant and uncooperative. Therefore, any description of personal language needs to describe a range of ways regarding how language users can interact with other language users.

Personal language allows the L2 user to express the beliefs, values and attitudes that she brings to the target language context and offers her choices in the way that she wants to participate in the target language context. The second-language user may wish to use personal language to interact as specific individual as a *some* (Aston 1989b, 1988c, 1989, 1993) – a term he borrows from Sacks (1970-1971) and Schenkein (1978). By *somes*, Aston refers to interactants whose relationship has developed from having participated together in a unique way and who have become for each other specific individuals (1988c: 217; 1989: 220). On the other hand, the language user always has the option of protecting herself and participating as a cautious and unassuming *any*. By *anys*, Aston refers to participants who define their interaction more in terms of positions or roles rather than from any personal relationship and who simply remain for each other any other individuals (1988c: 217; 1989: 220).

In describing the achievement of social relationships, Aston argues that the term ‘establishment and maintenance of social relations’ is cumbersome. Therefore, he interchangeably uses the terms ‘negotiating rapport’ and ‘comity’ (1988c: 18; 1989: 23). However, I believe that there is a difference between the two terms. Rapport involves harmonious accord and joint understandings i.e. the relationship between specific individuals as they relate to one another and establish a degree of closeness. It reflects the relationship of *somes*. On the other hand, comity comes from the Latin *comis* meaning ‘courteous’ or ‘friendly’. Courteous behaviour reflects respect, civility and consideration for others but it does not necessarily reflect any degree of closeness. It is the relationship of *anys* i.e. between two unknown individuals. Therefore, there is a difference in the terms in that ‘rapport’ and ‘comity’ highlight the *some* and *any* distinction. Therefore, I will avoid

using Aston's terms interchangeably and adopt 'interpersonal language use' when referring to the establishment, development or maintenance of social relations.

### 1.6. Defining 'Successful' L2-L2 Interpersonal Language Use

In discussing L2-L2 interpersonal language use in this thesis, I need to be able to describe what 'successful' social talk is. Although only the interactants themselves in a given context can decide whether social talk is actually successful, I need a working definition which helps me to examine L2-L2 patterns and practices of interpersonal language use. Therefore, I define successful L2-L2 interpersonal language use as the process through which second-language users jointly achieve a desired level of involvement and concern. I now want to expand on various aspects of this definition.

First of all, I would argue that successful L2-L2 interpersonal language use is a process because it emerges and is established during a given interaction. Furthermore, there is no point at which it can be said that successful L2-L2 interpersonal language use has been attained *per se*. Interpersonal language use needs to be maintained and / or developed throughout the interaction.

Secondly, I view interpersonal language use as a joint achievement because participants need to work together to reach common understandings and show consideration for the feelings and attitudes of each other. This is a mutually accomplished process and cannot be achieved alone; participants collectively adhere to recognisable practices and patterns.

Thirdly, interpersonal language use reflects varying levels of involvement and concern between interactants. First of all, levels of involvement and concern may vary during the interaction itself as participants may show increased (or reduced) appreciation of the feelings or attitudes of others. Secondly, interactants may not necessarily seek the same level of engagement with a given participant during each interaction. On any given

occasion, a participant may want to demonstrate closer (or more distant) relations with others.

Using this working definition of successful L2-L2 interpersonal language use, I will attempt to demonstrate in this thesis that L2-L2 interpersonal language use is jointly structured and follows identifiable patterns and practices of language use and that L2 interactants reflect varying levels of involvement and concern in L2-L2 talk.

### **1.7. Contextualising the Study**

Everyday spoken communication in one's first language (L1) involves dealing with a wide range of interpersonal situations. Depending on each individual context, participants express themselves in a variety of ways: they have informal chats and friendly (or sometimes not so friendly) discussions, they engage in serious talk, they are involved in business dealings, they often like to gossip and sometimes they strike up conversations with strangers. Sometimes interpersonal communication is carried out in predictable ways (e.g. through the use of conventional politeness formulae and standard patterns of phatic language) and, at other times, it is highly creative and unpredictable. However, whether speakers are being conventional or creative, interpersonal language is normally successful because participants adhere to the norms, strategies and structures of language use of other interactants in a given context.

In this study, I argue that L2-L2 interpersonal language use is carried out with the idea of achieving communicative success. Speakers are not constantly worried about possible communicative failure. Just as Aston contends that second-language pedagogy should aim at helping 'the learner establish satisfactory rapport' (1988c: 36)(1989: 41) (as opposed to just focusing on avoiding pragmatic failure), I also argue that classroom teaching / learning activities should aim to identify patterns and practices of successful L2-L2 interpersonal language use. To pursue this argument, I have one overarching question in this thesis: How

do L2 users achieve successful social relations with other L2 users? I attempt to answer this overarching research question with specific research questions:

1. What are the interactional practices that characterise L2-L2 interpersonal language use?
2. How do L2 interactants express concern for and engagement with other L2 users?
3. What resources does the L2 user employ in order to achieve successful interpersonal language use in the second language?
4. How do L2 interactants engage in creative language use with other L2 users?
5. How can second-language users be given opportunities to develop interpersonal language ability within the L2 learning context?

In their L1, participants develop an interpersonal language ability that allows them to judge what other speakers are trying to achieve communicatively. Speakers normally mutually help each other achieve communicative goals. This is the underlying principle behind the concept of *face* (Goffman 1967) as participants mutually support each other's projected image as part of a working consensus (Goffman 1959: 20) as they temporarily accept each other's position and co-operate with each other.

When it comes to L2-L2 interpersonal language use, the foreign language user may see herself in a completely unfamiliar situation where L1 norms, strategies and structures of use no longer seem to apply. Second-language interpersonal behaviour may not mirror first-language concepts of supportiveness, concern, consideration and involvement. Interpersonal behaviour (such as solidarity and distance) may be expressed in different ways. This leads to cultural comparisons being made and the emergence of national stereotypes e.g. the Mexicans may be described as 'relaxed, hospitable, and warm people' (Harris & Moran 1996: 228). Negative stereotyping may have in the past been encouraged in ELT textbooks as seen by this exercise taken from Soars & Soars:

Look at this description of a stereotype. Which nationality do you think it is?  
*'They're overweight and loud. Their voices are loud, their behaviour is loud and their clothes are loud – yellow checked trousers and a red flowery shirt. They've*

*always got three cameras round their neck, and want to buy everything that's more than fifty years old.'*

(1986: 22)

In fairness to Soars & Soars, I acknowledge that their aim is to challenge stereotypes. However, such exercises may actually foster national stereotypes among ELT learners (e.g. the English are cold and reserved, the Japanese are formal etc.) of which the L2 users were not previously aware.

Given the potential danger of approaching L2 interpersonal language use from an L1 perspective and perhaps categorising other users in terms of stereotypes, the second-language user needs to develop a L2 interpersonal ability in order to develop successful relations. Interpersonal ability involves interacting with other participants in contextually sensitive and supportive ways while responding to developing and changing relationships in the L2 context. While such an ability may initially develop from first-language knowledge and experience, the second-language user also needs to learn to conform to L2 interpersonal language practices and patterns of use.

While achieving satisfactory interpersonal relationships can be both a serious challenge and a potential problem for L2 users in the target culture (Geoghegan 1983, Aston 1988c, 1989), it is often wrongly assumed in ELT that L2 users have only transactional motives for learning a second language e.g. ordering a meal, booking into a hotel or attending a business conference. Little attention is focused on the interpersonal aspect of language use and, when it is, interpersonal language practice often focuses on conventional politeness formulae and standard patterns of phatic language. This may be taught in terms of grammatical constructions e.g. *Can you...* vs. *Could you...* or as communicative functions e.g. saying goodbye or in terms of topics such as small talk. As Aston argues, interpersonal language use cannot be wholly conducted through using formulaic language:

Naturally-occurring interactional speech is predicated on individualisation ... [and] involves participants in adhoccing their own resources, not just using conventional ones. (Aston 1988c. 392)

Otherwise the 'personal' element will be missing from interpersonal language. Interpersonal language involves interaction between two participants who work together in an attempt to achieve successful social relations.

Even if a learner's stated or perceived objectives are purely transactional, interpersonal language (as I argued in 1.3. and 1.5.) is still a feature of most spoken discourse since it is difficult to separate transactional language from interactional language use. Even if the L2 user is allowed to pursue her objective of using a second-language for solely transactional purposes, she may not even be able to achieve these goals effectively. For instance, McCarthy argues that if the L2 learner focuses on achieving purely transactional goals, second language teaching runs the risk of:

... creating a "reduced" personality for the learner, who may well be able to achieve transactional goals but who may be unable to project his / her personality and create appropriate relationships with interlocutors....

(1998: 112)

In the following section I discuss a secondary aim of the thesis which is to help L2 learners to develop interpersonal language resources and achieve 'successful' L2-L2 social relations. I argue that interpersonal language resources can be developed by increasing the learner's pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge.

### **1.8. Interpersonal Language Resources**

In the L2 classroom, learners should be given opportunities to examine resources available for achieving successful social relations. With regard to developing the use of L2-L2 interpersonal language, I want to build on Aston's position that a pedagogy of interactional speech should not be concerned about prescribing interpersonal behavior but rather with providing the L2 user with the appropriate resources and



‘enhancing awareness of the issues involved and facilitating development of a range of operational choice’ (1988c: 12)

In the language user’s L1, there are recognised practices for selecting interpersonal resources and using them in a given context. For instance, there may be a range of ways of expressing different illocutions or communicative acts such as disagreeing or complimenting. Such resources may be transferable from the NNS’s L1 or the NNS may need to learn them. These resources have been identified as pragmalinguistic knowledge (Leech 1983, Thomas 1983) or pragmalinguistic conventions (Spencer-Oatey 2000b). Transferable resources would suggest that there are universal patterns and practices regarding interpersonal language use.

At the same time, principles for engaging in appropriate social behaviour may vary from culture to culture. So for instance, social distance / solidarity may be expressed in different ways in different cultures. These resources have been identified as sociopragmatic knowledge (Leech 1983, Thomas 1983) or sociopragmatic conventions (Spencer-Oatey 2000b). Differences in appropriate social behaviour may mean that L2 learners need to be alert to different interactional practices in the L2. However, even if social behaviour differs from culture to culture, this is not to say that there are not commonly held underlying principles. So, for instance, the concept of protecting both the speaker’s and hearer’s face may be common to all societies but implemented in different and contrasting ways.

In describing and analysing L2-L2 interpersonal language, I aim to identify how pragmatic knowledge can help L2 users achieve successful social relations and increase their awareness of interpersonal choices made by other participants.

In sum, I make the following distinction between pragmalinguistic knowledge and sociopragmatic knowledge, drawing on the work of Leech (1983), Rose & Kasper (2001) and Thomas (1983):

- a) Pragmalinguistic knowledge gives the L2 user a range of linguistic resources for engaging in social interaction. Pragmalinguistic knowledge can be seen as

'resources for conveying communicative acts and relational or interpersonal meanings' (Rose & Kasper 2001: 2) which may include resources that can be taken from the L2 learner's first language.

- b) Sociopragmatic knowledge provides a source for social principles and 'rules'. It reflects local 'cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour' (Thomas 1983: 99).

However, in my data analysis, I will not pursue the pragmalinguistic / sociopragmatic distinction in detail since L2 users may not belong to a recognisable social grouping whose members enjoy commonly-held perceptions of power, imposition, distance etc.

### **1.9. Developing Interpersonal Language Ability**

It is not enough to just describe and analyse L2 interpersonal language use. Like Aston (1988c, 1989), I need to outline possible pedagogical activities that help the second-language user to develop and use a second-language interpersonal ability and allow the learner to engage in what Spencer-Oatey (2000b) calls 'rapport management'. Aston's use of declarative and procedural knowledge in describing L1-L1 and L1-L2 interaction is also helpful in trying to describe L2-L2 interpersonal language use.

Interpersonal ability consists of two types of knowledge: Declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. Declarative knowledge gives the language learner a 'database' of language use and a 'programme' for applying the data in terms of procedures and practices (Johnson 1996). To develop such a database for interpersonal language, learners need to identify real-life instances and practices regarding successful language use. Declarative knowledge allows the language learner to 'stand back' and examine the features of successful language use. Procedural knowledge in interpersonal terms involves the ability to activate the knowledge of interactional patterns, practices and procedures in instances of

actual use. I will argue that there is a relationship between declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge in developing interpersonal ability. Declarative knowledge can help raise learner awareness and procedural knowledge can help the language user engage in actual L2 interpersonal language practices in real time and when under communication stress.

To develop L2 declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge, I propose to use McCarthy & Carter's pedagogical mode of *Illustration-Interaction-Induction* (1995: 217) which offers a scheme for noticing and increasing the L2 user's awareness of interpersonal language use. Such a scheme is useful in that it calls on the L2 learner to look at specific instances of language use and examine possible choices with regards to context and use.

#### **1.10. Structure of the Investigation**

In this introductory chapter, I have tried to lay out an argument for a need to describe and analyse L2-L2 interpersonal language and propose pedagogical activities that offer opportunities for practising interpersonal language use in the second-language classroom.

In chapter two, I describe interpersonal language use within the context of second language teaching and learning by examining current pedagogical practice, identifying shortcomings and limitations with regard to current approaches towards interpersonal language use. I survey previous work carried out on teaching L2 interpersonal language use and critically examine the current transactional / interactional dichotomy in English language teaching and the lack of opportunity given to the L2 learner to interact in her own creative way.

In chapter three, I attempt to set out a critical framework to answer the research question: how do second-language users achieve successful social relations with other L2 users? I also undertake an overview of work already done in the field and briefly examine L2 interpersonal language studies.

In chapter four, I position my study within three approaches to examining L2 interpersonal language-in-use: conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics. Furthermore, I describe more fully the type of research I am undertaking. I also outline the specific research questions, data collection procedures and data analysis methodology.

In chapter five, I take the major analytical categories of solidarity and supportiveness and analyse how L2 users engage in interpersonal language use. To study how L2 users reach interpersonal understandings, I look at L2-L2 interpersonal language use within a specific setting, a university hall of residence in the United Kingdom.

In chapter six, I examine how creative language use can help the L2 user to interact as a *somebody* in the second-language context as she conforms to social practices and patterns of use but also participates in her own way. I also consider what it means to interact as a L2 *anybody* in second-language use.

I do not just want to be able to describe L2 interpersonal language use. I also want to help the L2 learners achieve successful social relations. Therefore, in chapter seven, I outline pedagogical activities which can provide opportunities and resources for the language learner to *notice* and then to practise L2 interpersonal language use.

Finally in chapter eight, I review how I answered my research question (i.e. how L2 users achieve successful social relations with other L2 users) and examine the potential limitations and weaknesses of the thesis and make some tentative suggestions for further areas of research into L2-L2 interpersonal language use.

## **1.11. Conclusion**

In this thesis, I will be examining how solidarity, supportiveness and creative language use can lead to successful relations in the L2-L2 context. I am not interested in trying to

develop a theoretical model of L2-L2 interpersonal language use or develop a comprehensive syllabus for teaching interpersonal language use – tasks well beyond my capabilities. Rather, I want to build on current understandings of successful interpersonal language use and through studying the practices of L2 users, I want to try to relate any findings to the L2 classroom teaching / learning context.

In attempting to describe and analyse successful language use, I will not be examining in detail where L2-L2 interpersonal talk goes wrong and relations break down. An analysis of miscommunication is obviously important in order to limit misunderstandings in the L2 context but it does not necessarily result in the construction of positive relations. In trying to understand how second-language users achieve successful social relations, I explore the co-operative practices and patterns of specific L2 users. Such an examination and analysis of interpersonal language use provides an opportunity to review and question current teaching practices and propose supplementary activities to current second-language pedagogy. In examining successful L2-L2 interpersonal communication, this study specifically focuses on:

- \* Co-operative practices
- \* Supportiveness & solidarity
- \* Creative language use

I argue that this thesis forms a distinct contribution to the knowledge of second-language interpersonal talk because:

- i. I examine L2-L2 interpersonal language use in a naturally-occurring context and describe patterns and practices that characterise L2-L2 interpersonal language use;
- ii. I claim that there is a creative dimension to L2-L2 talk and that there is a tension between the L2 user's desire to conform to other language users while also wanting to engage in her own individual way;

- iii. I argue that there are interpersonal choices available to L2 users in how they want to interact in L2-L2 context. Building on the work of Aston, I describe these choices in terms of solidarity/supportiveness, conventional/creative language use and interacting as an *anybody* or *somebody*.
- iv. I offer pedagogical activities which provide opportunities for L2 learners to engage in interpersonal language use in the classroom through using existing ELT materials.

## Chapter 2

### Current Practice: ELT Teaching & Social Relations

#### 2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I describe current attitudes and teaching practices with regard to interpersonal language use within the ELT context. I outline current principles in language teaching and analyse the distinction made between transactional and interactional language use which has had such a significant impact on communicative language teaching approaches in ELT. In building a case for pedagogical intervention, I study actual instances of L2-L2 interpersonal language use, examining whether L2 learners need to be taught socialising skills which they already enjoy in their first language and try to outline the type of interpersonal relations second-language users may wish to develop in the target language. I review current pedagogical practices with regard to L2 interpersonal language use, discussing how textbooks and teachers approach the issue of interpersonal language use. I argue that opportunities are not being provided by current teaching / learning practices for the learner to develop an L2 interpersonal ability. Furthermore, second-language teaching often views L2 interpersonal language use as either unimportant or as subservient to transactional language. The current emphasis on transactional language use and the lack of opportunity given to the L2 learner on the personal dimension to interact in her own creative way (see 3.13.) are both potential obstacles in allowing the second-language user to achieve more successful social relations. Therefore, there is a 'gap' between actual needs and the current ELT focus on transactional language. My observations and arguments are taken from – but not limited to – the teaching / learning of interpersonal language in the Mexican ELT context and information collected at a London university hall of residence (see Chapter 4 for description of data collections procedures and analysis).

## 2.2. Transactional - Interactional Distinction in ELT

I would claim that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is the mostly widely adopted approach to English language teaching in Mexico. It is endorsed by *la Secretaría de Educación Pública* – the Mexican Secretariat for Public Education (SEP) – and it is widely used in university language centres and in private language institutes throughout the Republic. CLT aims to develop the learners' 'communicative competence' (Hymes 1971) so that they can 'use the language appropriate to a given social context' (Larsen-Freeman 1986: 131). Nunan argues that the objectives of the communicative approach aim 'to reflect the needs of learners' and this is achieved through developing functional skills as well as achieving linguistic objectives (1989: 194). These functional skills are often seen in transactional and interactional terms. For instance, Nunan argues that

Most interactions can be classified as either transactional or interactional. Transactional talk is produced in order to get something, or to get something done. Interactional language is produced for social purposes. (1999: 228)

Such a simple division of language purpose leads the language user to see transactional and interactional in terms of *either / or* with transactional language as the more important since it can be seen 'to be getting things done'. The importance given to transactional language can be seen in Ramírez's discussion of the difference between transactional and interactional language use:

*Transactional functions* include providing and obtaining information about facts, events, needs, options, attitudes, and feelings. For example, a policeman can give directions to a traveller, or a salesperson can explain to a customer the store's policy for exchanging merchandise. A person can write a letter to a bank explaining intentions to open a checking account, a child can ask a parent's opinion on buying a bicycle, or a teacher can inquire from the students their attitudes about other cultures. *Interactional uses* include socialising functions of language, such as greetings, leave taking, introductions, thanking and apologizing. These functions might serve to indicate the nature of the social relationship or peer solidarity. During the course of interaction, participants might negotiate role relationships by suggesting, requesting, directing, advising, warning or praising. (1995: 234 - 235, author's italics)



The wide variety of examples highlighting the possible uses of transactional language heavily contrasts with relatively minor roles given to interactional language use. While Ramírez appears to be clear about the function of transactional language i.e. ‘providing and obtaining information about facts, events, needs, options, attitudes, and feelings’, he appears to be less certain about the purpose of interactional language which ‘might serve to indicate the nature of the social relationship or peer solidarity’ as ‘participants might negotiate role relationships’. I contend in 2.4. that interactional language does indicate the nature of social relations as participants establish, negotiate and define relationships.

I will now argue that since the transactional and interactional language dichotomy has so strongly influenced ELT teaching, I need to examine their functions and features and their interrelationship. I contend that not only is it difficult to separate the two terms but also there is an underlying interdependency between transactional and interactional language.

### **2.3. Transactional Language**

Transactional language is usually seen as focusing on an event or situation. It is speaker-oriented as an interactant wants ‘to convey information’ (Brown & Yule 1983b: 23) and ‘to get something or get something done’ (Nunan 1999: 228). In contrast, Brown & Yule (1983b: 13) argue that interactional language is listener-oriented. The major concern of transactional language use is to make the ‘message clear’ (Brown & Yule 1983b: 13). The success of transactional language in achieving communicative functions or objectives can be evaluated through the flow of information during the communicative event and through to the successful completion of the task at hand. Transactional language use is a key feature of the communicative approach (Carter 2004: 29, Cook 2000: 193, Harmer 1983: 43; 132, Richards & Rodgers 1986: 22).

With an overriding emphasis on achieving pre-determined and fixed goals, transactional language also sees context in terms of a fairly predictable and static framework of fixed

impersonal categories with regard to situation, purpose, relationships and topic. For instance, when relationships are considered, they are often seen much more as positional i.e. reflect the social role being played (e.g. doctor, travel agent, hotel receptionist) rather than 'as specific individuals' (Aston 1988b: 216). There is no anticipated change in the status of contextual features during the course of transactional language use. This leaves the transactionally-focused L2 speaker at a potential disadvantage when engaged in spontaneous, on-line, real-time, interpersonal language use.

This is not to say that a transactional focus on language use is not without merit and justification. First of all, in terms of successfully negotiating target-language situations (e.g. ordering a meal or leaving a telephone message), transactional language use often responds to L2 target needs (e.g. travel and business). Secondly, transactional language objectives provide a clear basis on which to select and grade relevant structures and functions. Structures and functions can be put, relatively speaking, to immediate use and, therefore, provide a high 'surrender' value. Thirdly, a pedagogic focus on transactional language helps evaluate learner progress in terms of what the language user can specifically 'do' (and 'not do') in the target language and culture. Finally, activities that highlight the teaching and learning of transactional language can be evaluated and justified by correlating the meaningfulness and value of such activities with projected target language use.

#### **2.4. Interactional Language**

Interactional language is used to achieve objectives that are independent of transactional language: It 'is produced for social purposes' (Nunan 1999: 228) and for expressing social relations and personal attitudes (Brown & Yule 1983a: 2 - 3). Whereas transactional language is often situationally-dependent (e.g. in a bank, at the post office or in an office), interactional language involves participation that comes from the developing relationship between interactants.

It is perhaps easier to describe what interactional language is used for rather than describing its content or features, especially since, as Gumperz argues, our response is to ‘relate to what we think the speaker intends, rather than to the literal meanings of the words used’ (1982: 1). Interactional language needs to be seen in terms of what participants are trying to accomplish and the accompanying processes involved in achieving interpersonal goals. Measuring the success of interactional language use radically differs from evaluating success in transactional situations: interactional language use is not an all-or-nothing achievement of objectives or a matter of utilising pre-identified forms and structures (e.g. the use of the interrogative to ask a question). Interactional language emerges and develops as relationships are established, explored, monitored, negotiated, re-negotiated, celebrated or even terminated during the course of communication:

Interactional speech is typically employed to negotiate personally-defined relationships – it is the language of making friends.

(Aston 1988c: 217)

Interactional speech is often a feature of talk with strangers (e.g. on a plane, during a summer holiday, in a waiting room) where talk can be quite intimate and revealing (Hayakawa 1977). Similar to conversing with intimates and close friends, this is often because strangers understand the nature of their relationship (or indeed the lack of one): since they are unlikely to meet again, there is little threat to each other’s *face* (Goffman 1967) and they can be more open and revealing. However, the daily spoken language of L2 users is more likely to fall in between ‘intimate’ and ‘strangers’ talk. It is in these situations where relationships are not defined that it becomes important to understand the workings of interactional language since participants need to establish what Goffman (1959) terms a working consensus of the interaction. A working consensus is an arrangement whereby participants agree on the level of involvement they want to maintain in a given interaction. The level of involvement may emphasise concern and interest between friends or distance and respect between acquaintances. (I develop the concept of L2-L2 working consensus in 3.9.).

Interactional language helps the second-language user to move beyond just focusing on the faithful execution of accurate grammatical structures and functions in order to achieve transactional ends. Instead, interactional language concentrates on the relational dimension of the communicative event (e.g. on developing and maintaining a relationship).

## 2.5. Interdependency of Transactional & Interactional Language

Up to now, I have presented an extreme view by separating interactional and transactional language into two opposing linguistic classifications. While hardly reflecting communicative realities, this division does, to some degree, reflect contemporary L2 teaching practice whereby ELT textbooks and syllabi emphasise the need to convey information and get things done in the target language. In contrast, interactional language is often reduced to functional formulae. In reality, it is often difficult to separate transactional language out from interactional language. Cheepen goes as far as to argue that

It is rare, ... in the case of human-human discourse, to find a dialogue which is purely one or the other.

(2000: 288)

The identification of transactional and interactional speech often results in more importance being given to achieving an objective (transaction) rather than to how it is achieved relationally (interaction). Transactional language is often emphasised because it is 'important' or 'serious' talk and it gets the 'job' done. It is normally overtly purposive, tangible and identifiable with regard to its communicative objective. In contrast, interactional language is often associated with a wide range of derogatory linguistic labels including 'small talk', 'chit-chat', 'gossip', 'chinwag', 'idle chat' which basically see interaction as not being serious or 'real talk' (Coupland 2000b: 7 - 8).

The division into transactional and interactional language may at best be unhelpful because transactional and interactional language focus on different aspects of language use. They are not mutually exclusive:

... when we communicate with others we simultaneously communicate some amount of information and indicate our current expectations about the relationship between or among participants.

(Scollon & Wong Scollon 1995: 138)

Therefore, the primary role in communication given to transactional language (e.g. in transferring information) must be questionable. To summarise, it would be a serious underestimation to ignore the role played by interactional language in the transactional context for several reasons. First of all, alternation between interactional and transactional language signifies changing on-line communication priorities: maintaining interpersonal relationships versus conveying messages. Secondly, during spoken discourse, interactional language is constantly used to check on the current state of relationships and to ascertain whether ‘interpersonal’ adjustments have to be made so that communication continues to run smoothly. The use of interactional language makes the transactional task easier: L2 speakers use transactional language to concentrate on the task at hand and do not have to use transactional language for ‘double-duty’ by using it to focus on the interpersonal dimension. Thirdly, in the case of language breakdown and possible misunderstanding, interactional language offers alternative strategies to transactional talk in that it also provides a range of resources that can attempt to rectify the situation.

Transactional language and interactional language have different roles to play. It is not a question of ‘either’ / ‘or’. Interactional language often takes on what Coupland (2000b: 4) terms a ‘specialist’ function as it is used to monitor the state of interpersonal relationships. This specialist function can be seen in that interactional talk, compared to transactional talk, is less concerned with the importance of detail (Bygate 1987: 36). Participants may appear to say very contradictory things as seen in the example below where the Mariana, a Mexican PhD student, is being supportive of Blanca, a Portuguese PhD student:

Example 2.1.

- 1 Mariana: *lechuzas* [barn owls] are bigger.
- 2 Blanca: yeah and the owl is (mimics an owl) [ (laughter)
- 3 Mariana: [yeah small and]

Mariana and Blanca are interested in supporting each other rather than determining whether *lechuzas* are big or small. The use of *yeah* (lines two and three) reflects acknowledgement in that the hearer has received the information and also alignment and supportiveness in that she agrees with the position of the other interactant (Schiffrin 1987: 275).

Furthermore, interactional talk can take on a specialist function of helping to smooth over transactional processes that appear to be too role-focused. Transactional language often assigns participants a 'role' to be played out which may be rigidly defined. In contrast, interactional language allows participants to evolve as individuals within (or even by breaking away from) their assigned roles. In addition, transactional language assumes an "either-ness" (e.g. shopkeeper - customer or doctor - patient) rather than a "both-ness" that can be advanced through the development of rapport and supportive understanding found in interactional language.

## 2.6. Interpersonal, Interactional & Personal Language

The transactional-interactional distinction focuses on the functional use of language: transactional language focuses on the event or situation e.g. to convey information (as discussed in 2.3.) and interactional language on the relationships between participants (as discussed in 2.4.). However, such a division of language use potentially ignores the personal dimension to social talk since participants may also have individual aims and objectives in any given encounter. Furthermore, interactional language can be seen as language use that conforms and accommodates to the language of others. In contrast,

participants may also want to interact in their own way and determine their own degree of concern and involvement with other participants.

The personal and interactional aspects of social language are embraced in Halliday's concept of *interpersonal* language (1970: 21; 1973: 36). Halliday argues that interpersonal language

may be understood by the expression of our own personalities and personal feelings on the one hand, and forms of interaction and social interplay with other participants in the communication situation on the other hand.  
(1973: 36)

Halliday argues that interactional language reflects 'the "me and you" function of language' (1975: 19) and allows the speaker to participate in the world around her. He argues that interactional language helps maintain relationships:

Language is used to define and consolidate the group, to include and to exclude, showing who is "one of us" and who is not....  
(1969: 30)

Interactional language, therefore, includes solidary and supportive language as the speaker establishes, develops and maintains social relationships with other language users. Halliday argues that there is a natural link between interactional and personal language (1969: 31). Personal language allows the speaker to express an awareness of herself

... to make public his [sic] own individuality; and this in turn reinforces and creates this individuality.  
(1969: 30)

Halliday argues that the personal 'function' can be seen through 'expressions of personal feelings, of participation and withdrawal, of interest, pleasure, disgust and so forth....' (1975: 20). Personal language can reflect a creative dimension as the speaker expresses her attitudes, judgements and feelings in her own way within a given situation.

Interactional language enables an interactant to participate with others while personal language allows an interactant to participate as an individual. In this thesis, I will adopt Halliday's term interpersonal language use to embrace both the interactional and personal dimensions to language use. In this way, I can examine the conventional and creative aspects of social language use as participants both conform to others and interact in their own way.

## **2.7. The Case for 'Teaching' L2 Interpersonal Language Use**

If I am to argue that teachers need to understand L2-L2 interpersonal language use and subsequently present a case for its incorporation into an L2 pedagogy, I need to show that second-language learners have a 'gap' in their ability to engage successfully in L2-L2 interaction. I will describe this gap by examining how L2 users employ and fail to employ pragmatic resources by analysing two examples taken from the London university hall of residence data.

In the first example, Armando tries to express his opinion about another student but does not appear to have (or perhaps is not able to access) the necessary pragmalinguistic knowledge to participate in the conversation. In contrast, Mariana demonstrates a range of pragmalinguistic resources which try to support Armando's remarks.

### **Example 2.2.**

Meal-time conversation between Mariana and Armando, Mexican PhD students, Blanca, a Portuguese PhD student, and the participant-observer (P/O). Blanca does not speak during this extract. Armando has been talking about how he sees Carla, an Italian research student, speaking in English.



- 1 Armando: *si* maybe Paul too but er Carla when Carla is speaking in English  
 2 she's a *simpatic* but is more formal *pues* but, if you listen to her  
 3 speak Italian it's another person  
 4 Mariana: = she's like more open =  
 5 Armando = more open MORE OPEN COMPLETELY COMPLETELY  
 6 Mariana: = do you speak to her in Italian and? =  
 7 Armando: n& a little bit yeah only listening  
 8 Mariana: um  
 9 Armando a little words =

As he tries to describe how Carla comes across in English, Armando does not seem to be able to clearly express his communicative intention. He says that Carla interacts in English differently than in Italian but cannot say how or what is the point behind his remark. Meanwhile, Mariana agrees with Armando and makes a supportive move with *she's like more open* (line 2). Mariana, therefore, is not just expressing agreement with Armando but tries to move the conversation forward with her own observation about Carla and develop a closer understanding with Armando. Mariana could have come out with a positive comment such as *yes* or *quite* but rather she shows agreement by adding to Armando's comment.

Mariana had pragmatic choices in demonstrating supportiveness. Assuming that she wants to support Armando's comment with a 'second assessment' (Pomerantz 1984), Mariana has options which Pomerantz describes in terms of *upgrading* (e.g. the use of a strong term such as *yeah, I ...*), *matching* (e.g. offering a comparable evaluation with the use of *... too*), or *downgrading* (e.g. the use of weak agreement with the use of *well ...*). The choice of any of these three options need to be weighed up and related to the local context.

Mariana opts for a matching assessment: *she's like more open* (line four). While offering a matching assessment, Mariana could have just given a nonsubstantive reply such as *mm, hum, huh* etc. However, second language conversation can quickly come to a halt when a

speaker just receives a long string of non-substantive replies such as *mm*, *hum* and *huh*. Boxer, for instance, argues that

... when backchanneling responses surpass a certain critical mass, when they are overused and / or do not eventually lead to or co-occur with a more substantive response, they can and indeed frequently do lead to the extinguishing of the topic under discussion and frequently the abandonment of a conversation. (1993: 292)

Armando tries to build on Mariana's supportive strategies but can only repeat her words, first softly, and then more loudly and repetitively: *more open MORE OPEN COMPETELY COMPLETELY* (line three). This hardly helps the conversation move forward in terms of developing a closer understanding. He appears to lack the necessary pragmatic strategies to build on Mariana's contribution. It is then left to Mariana to attempt to seek closer social relations as she changes the topic and asks Armando if he speaks Italian. Armando's nondescript answer *a little bit yeah only listening* (line five) once again fails to build on the conversation. Short answers give other participants little to go on in order to develop interpersonal language use. Mariana can only answer with a non-substantive *um* (line six) as if she does not know what else to say in order to maintain social relations. The concept of taking conversation forward reflects the need for joint interaction between participants as they try to achieve successful social relations.

This example illustrates how Mariana employed different pragmatic resources while engaging in social interaction. These included the use of matching assessments and changing the topic. Her contributions reflect supportiveness. By contrast, Armando appeared to lack the pragmatic resources to successfully participate in the conversation. His answers were short. He resorts to speaking louder in order to express his opinions. His contributions do not provide the basis for bringing a conversation forward and developing social relations.

In the second example, Joohyun has the necessary language to interact with other participants but she seems lack pragmatic resources as she appears to be unaware of the inappropriateness of her remarks.

Example 2.3.

Joohyun, a newly-arrived Taiwanese PhD student in London, sat down at the dinner table at the university hall of residence where three post-graduate students from Japan, Taiwan and the United Kingdom were already seated. After everyone introduced themselves, the new student's opening comment was

Joohyun:       What do you think about the life of a PhD student?  
                  [Silence]

Joohyun:       I mean do you think it is worth it?

(Reconstructed dialogue 12/1/2002)

Joohyun's questions are well-formed and relevant but they fail to encourage contributions from the other interactants. She does not employ pragmatic knowledge to help manage social relations. The first question seems to be formulaic, typically found in ELT textbook conversation, and requires a careful and considered answer. It is not a particularly informal question with which to start a social relationship. Being away from home, living in a university hall of residence and studying in a foreign country require a great deal of sacrifice and, therefore, the second question appears to be *face*-threatening as it challenges, if not attacks, the other interactants. Students must be continually asking themselves if studying for a Ph.D. 'is worth it' (as Joohyun phrases it). Joohyun does not display the necessary pragmatic resources with which to actively participate in conversation. She does not seem to be aware of social distance and feelings of others as her questions seem imposing and potentially threatening the *face* of other interactants.

The conversations involving Armando (example 2.2.) and Joohyun (example 2.3.) suggest that second-language users can experience difficulties when interacting with other language users. Presumably, Armando and Joohyun can and do establish successful social relations in the first-language. Therefore a key question is whether L2 learners need to be 'trained' in establishing, developing and maintaining interpersonal relations in the second-language if they can already do this in their first language. The experiences of Armando and Joohyun

would suggest that they do need some sort of awareness-raising and guidance. They come to the second-language context with their L1 experience and knowledge of interpersonal language use but they may be unable to always call on this knowledge in the target language context. This may be because they appear to lack the knowledge of the available pragmatic knowledge (as in example 2.2.) or perhaps they do not know what socially appropriate pragmatic behaviour is (as in example 2.3.).

In making out a case for pedagogical intervention that helps learners engage in L2-L2 interpersonal language practices, I need to study current teaching and learning activities in the EFL classroom, examining textbook treatment of interpersonal language use and teacher practices regarding social talk. In the following sections, I will discuss potential weaknesses in current teaching practice in order to identify how L2 users can be helped to achieve successful L2-L2 social relationships.

## **2.8. Interpersonal Language Use in the L2 Classroom**

While the ELT profession generally agrees that ‘communicative purpose’ is a key second-language learning objective, it is far from clear what is ‘meaningful communicative behaviour’ from the point of view of the L2 user and how this is to be achieved. Meaningful communicative behaviour is more often than not seen in terms of goals, end results and the successful completion of tasks rather than in terms of social encounters and how interactants interact and develop and maintain relationships. In the following sections, I want to describe interpersonal language practices within the L2 classroom before engaging in theoretical underpinnings as I am interested in understanding what is happening in the EFL classroom rather than in examining how (or even whether) theory is being put into practice.

I will now briefly describe how textbook authors deal with interpersonal language, taking examples from a range of ELT textbooks currently in use in Mexico including *Cutting Edge*

*Intermediate* (Cunningham & Moor, 1999), *American Inside Out Intermediate* (Kay & Jones, 2001 / 2003), *Atlas 2* (Nunan, 1995), *Challenge Intermediate* (Haines & Brewster, 1991), *Pyramid 3* (Williams, Claxton, McGowan & Tejada, 1997), *In Detail* (Rainey de Diaz, 2003), *New Interchange* (Richards, 1997 / 1998), *Passages 1* (Richards & Sandy 1998a), *Skyline 5* (Brewster, Davies & Rogers, 2002) and *Up Close 3* (Uhl Chamot, Rainey de Diaz & Baker Gonzalez, 2002).

ELT textbooks seem to deal with the interpersonal dimension in three ways: i) as a topic of conversation; ii) as formulaic expressions; and iii) through lists of communicative functions.

### **2.8.1. Topics**

Talking to friends, dating and going to parties are common interpersonal categories in EFL textbooks e.g. *American Inside Out*, *Skyline* and *Up Close*. Possible L2-L2 interpersonal contexts are largely ignored by textbook writers e.g. socialising with non-native speaking classmates, sharing meals and / or accommodation with other L2 users, interacting socially with NNSs at business-related functions, talking to fellow passengers during a journey and mixing with other tourists. In such situations, interpersonal relationships may be opportunistic, undefined and negotiatory. Such interpersonal contexts are often viewed as transitory and unimportant in ELT teaching which, as I shall argue later, is focused on 'getting things done' and achieving objectives.

A topic focus is a common feature of interpersonal talk in the selected EFL textbooks and can be seen in the following exercise as students are asked to identify suitable topics for small talk.

Small talk is informal conversation with friends and acquaintances at school, on the job, or on social occasions. Which of these topics are suitable for small talk?

- |  |  |   |                                      |
|--|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> current affairs | <input type="checkbox"/> health problems | <input type="checkbox"/> marital status | <input type="checkbox"/> the weather |
| <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment   | <input type="checkbox"/> hobbies         | <input type="checkbox"/> salaries       | <input type="checkbox"/> work        |

(Richards & Sandy 1998a: 48)

Richards & Sandy give as possible correct answers *current affairs, entertainment, hobbies, the weather, work* and rule out *salaries, health problems* and *marital status* (1998b: 113). Interpersonal language is seen as stable, safe, and predictable. Language users do not take many risks in discussing these topics. At the same time, topic approaches to social talk may result in such problems as those experienced by Joohyun (see example 2.3.). While she approached small talk through a topic focus i.e. being a PhD student, Joohyun appeared to ignore the interpersonal dimension as the conversation could be interpreted as potentially *face-threatening* and put other interactants at unease (see discussion in 2.7.).

While they cannot be prepared for every possible interpersonal language situation, L2 learners can be given a range of interpersonal language resources. A more reflective exercise is found in *Atlas Book 2* where students are asked to complete their own social network reflecting on who they talk to everyday and about what. When they get to Task 6, students are asked:

What do you talk about with your close friends? Your classmates or coworkers? Teachers? Make lists.

Here is what one group said that close friends talk about: *money, movies, what to do on the weekend, changing jobs, the environment, relationships, other people, vacations, learning English, growing old, accidents.*

(Nunan 1995: 30)

Once again the emphasis is on topics for interpersonal talk – which L1 speakers may disagree on. The exercise does not take into consideration which language is being used between close friends, classmates and co-workers i.e. whether talk is carried out in L1 or L2. Nunan seems to presume that the same topics are talked about in L1-L1, L1-L2 and L2-L2 talk. At the same time, the activity fails to convey the changing and developing nature of the topics within social talk and how participants' topics 'compete' with each other (Wardhaugh 1985: 141). Nunan's topics of conversation are fixed and explicitly stated

items on a check list and are not seen to emerge as a result of choice and negotiation in participant interaction.

### 2.8.2. Formulaic Expressions

A formulaic approach to interpersonal talk in ELT textbooks can be seen in exercises that ask students to recognise and practice fixed expressions as seen in the following example:

Read these expressions commonly used in making small talk, and place them under the appropriate heading. Can you add any more expressions to the list?

Can you believe this weather we're having?  
Catch up with you later

Hi. How's life been treating you?

How's everything at school?

How's the job going?

It's been a long time! How have you been?

Sorry, I've got to run, Talk to you later.

Well, it's been nice talking to you.

Starting a conversation

Introducing a topic

Closing a conversation

(Richards & Sandy 1998a: 48)

While such activities may raise learner awareness of the structured nature of phatic language, they do not underline the negotiatory nature of interpersonal language use where interactants build on or react to each other's contributions. For instance, in the following exercise taken from *In Detail 1* on interpersonal language use, language learners are not made aware of the need to take the contributions of other participants into consideration:

## Interrupting politely

In English, it's polite to let the other person finish speaking before taking our turn. Sometimes we need to interrupt the speaker to ask a question or make a very short comment. Here are some expressions you can use.

<b>to interrupt:</b>	Excuse me, but.... Pardon me but... Sorry to interrupt but...
<b>to stop an interruption:</b>	Could I please finish my point? Let me just finish.
<b>after an interruption:</b>	As I was saying... Anyway ... To get back to what I was saying ...

(Rainey de Diaz 2003: 60)

When interpersonal language is dealt with in the ELT classroom, there seems to be an assumption that students need to be taught interpersonal language skills – perhaps reflecting a common attitude among textbook writers, as argued by Swan (1985), that L2 learners are not seen to bring linguistic and communicative knowledge from their L1 to the L2 context. In the above example, it may be concluded that the concept of not interrupting is alien to the L2 learner: *In English, it's polite to let the other person finish speaking....* While the advice on not interrupting may sound condescending, the recommended expressions for interrupting politely reflect little sensitivity to other participants and their points of view. Such expressions as *Excuse me, but...* and *Could I please finish my point?* seem to reflect a speaker-listener code model of second-language use e.g. Shannon and Weaver's 'source-encoder-channel-decoder-destination' archetype (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 4). A speaker-listener code model assumes that a sender encodes a message which is transmitted and decoded by the receiver. Communication, therefore, involves the comprehension of thoughts. There is little sense of negotiating meanings, coming to common understandings and engaging in creative language use.



### 2.8.3. Communicative Functions

In syllabi reflecting communicative approaches, language functions are key concepts in helping the learner achieve her communicative goals and, as Stern notes, are ‘sometimes the sole component’ (1992: 174). As a result of the work of Wilkins (1976), language functions have been embraced by advocates of communicative approaches as ways of highlighting what learners are ‘doing’ with language (Harmer 1983: 22, Littlewood 1981: x). While Savignon (1991: 263) argues that lists of functions are apparently based on an assessment of the learner’s communicative needs, Littlewood says

In deciding what functions, topics and so on are most likely to be relevant to the learners’ needs, teachers must rely ultimately on their own intuition and observation. However, they can make their task easier by using published check-lists, which they can modify as they think necessary.

(1981: 82)

Littlewood’s assertion that teacher intuition and observation, along with published check-lists, play a significant role in outlining L2 learner’s needs means that the learner’s own communicative needs may not adequately be identified. Published check-lists are often found in EFL textbooks which demonstrate a strong bias towards informational functions as seen for instance in *Skyline 5*, where the functions for Unit 2 are listed as:

- Talking about technology now and in the future
  - Talking about genetics
  - Doing a technology survey
- (Lethaby 2002: 4)

A complete list of communicative functions to be learnt by students is often found in the index of ‘communicative’ textbooks e.g. *New Interchange*, *Passages* and *Skyline*. Presumably L2 learners know what are functions and their importance in learning a second language as they do not appear to be explained in either the student’s or the teacher’s books.

When it comes to language functions and interpersonal language, categories such as 'socialising' or 'social formulae' contain such 'functions' as *starting a conversation, introducing oneself, introducing somebody, answering an introduction, attracting someone's attention, greeting someone, asking how someone is, saying how you are and taking leave*. Such categories of interpersonal language are either preliminary or subsequent to transactional language use. Interpersonal language is rarely treated as a goal in its own right.

The presentation of communicative functions in textbooks focuses on the speaker and encoding messages (as discussed in 2.8.2.) rather than on the joint construction of interpersonal language as seen in the following exercise taken from *Cutting Edge Intermediate*. In the 'Useful language' section, students are given the following language for introducing and giving opinions:

**Introducing opinions**

"Personally, I think / I don't think it's a good idea because ..."

"It seems to me that...."

"I agree / I don't agree with this law because ..."

**Giving opinions**

"I think everyone should have the right to ..."

"People should be free to..."

"I think it's wrong to..."

"This shouldn't be allowed because..."

"On the one hand..., but on the other hand..."

"I don't really have any opinions about..."

(Cunningham & Moor 1999: 116)

Such exercises for expressing opinions do not take into consideration context and do not offer interactants options as to whether they want to interact as being supportive and understanding or as being distant and detached. For instance, the use of external modifiers such as disarmers (e.g. *Sorry, I hope you don't mind me saying this...*) and internal modifiers such as hedges (e.g., *I kind of think that ....*) would give language users more options in coming across supportively.

A further example of lack of options can be found in *Challenge Intermediate* as students are told how opinions can be expressed in English:

### Asking for and giving opinions

Here are some ways of asking people for their opinions:

*What do you think about the price of food?*

*What's your opinion of the government?*

These are some ways of expressing your opinions:

*I think it's very worrying.*

*I believe people work too hard.*

*In my opinion / view they're making a lot of fuss about nothing.*

These expressions stress that you are giving your personal opinion:

*As far as I'm concerned,...*

*If you ask me...*

This is a polite way of giving an opinion:

*Don't you think smoking is bad for you?*

You can also give your opinion and add a short question:

*I don't think people should smoke in public, do you?*

*I think jogging is very bad for you. What's your opinion? / What do you think?*

(Haines & Brewster 1991: 58)

In discussing asking for and giving opinions, the authors of *Challenge Intermediate* focus on speaker meaning. Instructions given to students for expressing opinions show little consideration of, or sensitivity for, the other interactants. Such a structured question as *What do you think about the price of food?* does not reflect friendly everyday chit-chat. Other interactants may see such a question as a formal request for a well-considered and thought-out opinion and taking a position that may have to be defended in the subsequent conversation. A similarly structured question was asked by Joohyun in example 2.3. (*What do you think about the life of a PhD student?*), which was received by silence from the other interactants. As discussed in 2.7., Joohyun's question seemed to be imposing and potentially *face-threatening*.

In analysing current teaching practice, I have argued that EFL textbooks approach interpersonal language through teaching topics, formulaic expressions and communicative functions. I have also suggested that such approaches have serious limitations in promoting interpersonal language: topics do not give learners the resources to interact across a variety of interpersonal contexts and situations, especially with regard to L2-L2 interpersonal language use; formulaic expressions often reflect a speaker-listener code model of second-language use and do not help L2 interactants to negotiate meanings, reach common understandings and engage in creative language use with other L2 users; and communicative functions focus on the speaker rather than on both the speaker and hearer working together. Although they may have to work with these potential limitations in ELT materials, teachers do not have to adhere to textbook approaches and have their own role to play in helping the L2 learner develop an L2 interpersonal language ability.

## **2.9. Teachers & Interpersonal Language**

With regard to interpersonal language use, EFL teachers are generally encouraged by advocates of communicative language teaching to create a supportive and friendly atmosphere in the classroom. How this is to be achieved is far from clear. At the same time, teachers often seem to be discouraged from promoting interpersonal language use in the L2 classroom because there is a strong emphasis on the successful completion of transactional tasks. Transactional tasks are focused on the successful conveyance of information from speaker to hearer. If information is conveyed and shared, the speaker and hearer reach a degree of convergence and the communicative goal is achieved. However, as Aston argues (1988b: 76, 1988c: 47, 1989: 54), the successful completion of transactional tasks is evaluated on the sharing of information while there is little pedagogical interest in encouraging learners to focus on sharing feelings which are provided through small talk opportunities. Unnecessary talk is an important concern of L2 teaching and learning practice and this is often seen in terms of teacher talking time (TTT) which is considered as less valuable than student talking time (STT).

### 2.9.1. Creating Rapport

In order to create a supportive and friendly atmosphere in the classroom, handbooks for EFL language teachers encourage teachers to establish rapport in a supportive environment (Gower, Phillips & Walters, 1995, Scrivener 1994) and to reduce 'communicative stress' (Brown & Yule 1983b: 36). It would seem that such dictates should help L2 users to develop social relationship skills in the second language.

Creating rapport is a key word in L2 teaching but never seems to be clearly defined. Scrivener defines rapport as 'the quality of relationship in the classroom' (1994: 215) and sees rapport as 'the personal atmosphere a teacher creates in the classroom'. He lists sixteen factors that can 'positively affect the learning atmosphere in the classroom' (1994: 7):

The effective teacher...

- *really* listens to his students;
- shows respect;
- gives clear, positive feedback
- has a good sense of humour
- is patient
- etc.

(1994: 7)

Meanwhile, Gower *et al.*, (1995) argue for the importance of rapport as it 'helps create a friendly, cooperative atmosphere' (1995: 19). Like Scrivener, they give various 'tips' on how to encourage rapport such as: *Have the right manner....; Don't prejudge a class....; Look as if you enjoy your job....* etc. (1995: 56).

However, the problem with Scrivener and Gower *et al.* is that they forward only one side of the equation: rapport is a joint construction. Rapport is about shared feelings and attitudes; it is not solely about the teacher demonstrating goodwill. If rapport is about developing successful social relations, both teachers and learners need to engage with each other in cooperative and supportive ways.

Besides focusing on the teacher's contribution to developing rapport and ignoring that of the learner, handbooks for EFL language teachers fail to examine different expressions of interpersonal relations in the classroom. As I argued in 1.5., rapport involves harmonious accord and joint understandings. However, classroom relations can also be expressed through courteous behaviour and civility i.e. comity. Furthermore, social relationships are not fixed and vary according to specific classroom situations: teacher-student, student-teacher or student-student interaction may reflect a degree of closeness and involvement or it may be characterised through consideration and distance.

### **2.9.2. Discouraging Interpersonal Language Use**

Proponents of communicative language teaching (see 2.2.) see the teacher's role as creating learning opportunities for achieving a task (Kumaravadivelu 1991, 1993) rather than in examining and building social relations in the classroom. Time is at a premium, as teacher trainers and classroom observers so often point out to teacher trainees, and the teacher's activities need to be carefully timed. Maximising teaching time is especially important for the under-pressure teacher who is evaluated on her ability to successfully cover the programme, apply an end-of-course exam and perhaps 'finish' the book. In such a highly-controlled EFL environment, socialising activities are for outside the classroom as proposed by Prodromou. For instance, he lists one role of the teacher as that of a 'friend' who 'chats with students over coffee or arranges a cinema visit with the class' (1991: 4).

However, achieving strictly-controlled pedagogical objectives may not coincide with learner objectives in the classroom. While language learners are presumably in the L2 classroom in order to learn a second language, their own personal objectives may not be entirely focused on learning. As Allwright (1998) argues, in the L2 classroom there are students who are just as interested in 'getting along' with other students – or what Richards & Lockhart term 'social students' (1994: 145) – as well as those who are interested in 'getting ahead'. Students who are interested in 'getting along' may be much more receptive

to activities that promote interpersonal language use since such activities should provide opportunities for socialisation within the classroom. Students, especially those who are obliged to study English by the educational system, may prize successful social interaction with their classmates above and beyond individual academic success (Allwright 1998: 126). Perhaps the popularity of communicative activities among students is to some degree a reflection that students want to socialise and 'get along' with other learners. 'Getting along' calls for a teaching pedagogy that helps learners express supportiveness, cooperation, conciliation and engagement.

### **2.9.3. Teacher Talking Time**

Among teacher trainers and trainees, teacher talking time is generally seen as a negative feature of a communicative language teaching and should be reduced as much as possible. For instance, Scrivener tells teachers:

...in many cases TTT (Teacher Talking Time) actually represents time when learners are not doing very much and are not very involved.  
(1994: 14)

Teachers are expected to maximise student talking time although little consideration is given to the quality and purpose of learner talk.

On the other hand, arguments have been forwarded to support the use of teacher talking time. For instance, Cullen claims that TTT within the classroom context reflects conventions and norms of turn-taking of 'more formal gatherings such as staff or board-room meetings' (1998: 181). Potential opportunities for developing social interaction in the classroom are therefore used as opportunities to study the achievement of transactional business objectives. Adopting an alternative view, researchers can examine how teacher talk is able to help learners achieve relational L2 objectives through scaffolding or

'interactional support' (Clay & Cazden 1990: 212). By receiving support from a more knowledgeable language user, scaffolding helps a learner to develop social skills:

... in social interaction a knowledgeable participant can create, by means of speech, supportive conditions in which the novice can participate in, and extend, current skills and knowledge to higher levels of competence.

(Donato 1994: 40- 41)

By focusing on interpersonal language use, teacher scaffolding can offer learners examples of 'successful' performances (Díaz, Neal & Amaya-Williams 1990: 138) as learners seek to develop their own independent performance. Breen & Littlejohn (2000: 16) argue that teacher scaffolding in social interaction can help learners maintain the flow of conversation, elaborate or reformulate learner utterances and aid with appropriate vocabulary.

Purely transactional views of the L2 classroom ignore the possibility of seeing the classroom as a real social context. Even if the teacher is dominant, she may demonstrate quality examples of social talk. Teacher talk can reflect involvement, engagement, supportiveness and creative talk and provide opportunities for students to engage in interpersonal language use. In the L2 classroom as a social context in its own right, evaluation of interpersonal language use has to be made by the participants themselves since they are the ones involved in the communicative event. Only they can assess the degree of success they have achieved (or failed to achieve) in establishing, developing and maintaining relationships. Outsiders to an interaction (e.g. programme co-ordinators and classroom observers) cannot judge in absolute terms the degree of success achieved in a given interaction.

Opportunities for developing social relations can and do occur in the L2 classroom when teachers see the L2 language user as a *somebody*, as well as a student (i.e. playing a role). However, given contradictory pressures (i.e. to establish rapport but achieve transactional objectives as efficiently as possible), teachers are provided with little encouragement to promote interpersonal language use in the L2 classroom.



If ELT textbooks and teacher practices do not encourage interpersonal language use, one needs to look at the underlying principles behind classroom practice. I argued in 2.2. that the communicative approach to language teaching attempts to relate language use to a given social context. An initial examination of ‘communicative teaching’ principles could have acted as a point of reference before I discussed classroom practices. However, I, first of all, wanted to study what actually ‘goes on’ in the classroom with regard to interpersonal language use in terms of textbook and teacher approaches. Now, I will examine theoretical underpinnings of current practice by discussing the principles of communicative language teaching and the current interest in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) which can be seen as one strand of CLT.

### **2.10. Principles behind the Current Situation**

As I discussed in 2.2., Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is the mostly widely adopted approach to English language teaching in Mexico and tries to respond to learner needs by developing functional skills which its proponents often categorise in terms of transactional and interactional uses. Communicative language teaching tries to reproduce the target-language situation in the L2 classroom so that activities mirror, as closely as possible, the ‘real’ world outside. However, due to the prominence given to transactional language use, CLT proponents often do not regard the classroom as an authentic interactional context in its own right. For instance, Lewis asserts that

Classrooms are not essentially places where you have informal conversations, conduct negotiations, develop personal relationships etc.  
(1993: 16)

Allwright notes that CLT proponents often see classroom activities as a rehearsal for real life and their approach to methodology and classroom practice fail to see the classroom as an already existing social context (1988: 123 - 124). So, when comparing the second-language classroom with ‘the real world’, Lewis argues that there is

a great deal of difference between socialising, negotiating, building relationships and **practising** socialising negotiating and building relationships.

(author emphasis 1993: 16)

Lewis does not consider the classroom to be a real-world communicative and social context as, for instance, Allwright (1998) argues, and perhaps, would many foreign language learners. As I discussed in 2.9.2., 'getting along' may be a much more relevant and immediate language purpose for the learner who may have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom in the 'real' world. Giving English a social use inside the classroom may help motivate learners who question the need to learn a second-language as they may argue that English is unlikely to play a significant role in their later adult and professional life (Rogers 1982: 145).

Within communicative language teaching, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has currently become one of the most talked about methodologies (Block 2002: 117) where communicative teaching is focused on successfully achieving 'the task'. A task is described by Long, for instance, as

a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Thus, examples of task include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation, borrowing a library book, taking a driving test, typing a letter, weighing a patient, sorting letters, taking a hotel reservation, writing a check, finding a street destination and helping someone across the road. In other words, by 'task' is meant the hundred and one things people *do* in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between. (p. 89)

(Long & Crookes 1992: 43 - 44)

In interpersonal terms, a task seems to focus on pretty mundane transactional activities. There is little reference in TBLT to engagement, closeness, supportiveness, solidarity or creative language use. As Kramsch argues, task-based teaching reflects a strong concern with information retrieval and processing (1995: 48) and downplays the social dimension to second-language use. However, it would be wrong to claim that task-based teaching has totally ignored interactional language use. For instance, Nunan sees a task as

a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than on form.

(1989: 10)

While acknowledging that task-based teaching includes interactional goals, Nunan seems to give them a transactional focus as he positions them within Clark's (1987) 'communicative goal types'. Communicative goals, argues Nunan, help learners achieve interactional outcomes as they 'establish and maintain interpersonal relations and through this to exchange information, ideas, positions, attitudes, and feelings, and to get things done' (1989: 49). It appears that the achievement of social relations cannot be an L2 learner goal in its own right but helps 'get things done'.

This focus on language as purely goal-oriented runs the risk of reducing communication to a checklist of language functions and ignoring the interpersonal dimension:

This tendency to conceive goals as transactional (and hence to consider discourse constraints in relation to the achievement of such goals) glosses over the fact that much everyday speech use instead has as its primary goals the negotiation of interpersonal relationships.

(Aston 1993: 226)

## 2.11. CLT & Interpersonal Language Use

In analysing current EFL teaching practices with regard to my local context in Mexico, I have argued that interpersonal language is usually dealt with through topics, communicative functions and formulaic expressions as teachers appear to adhere to the communicative approach and tasks are completed and results are achieved. Communicative focus is on the action (e.g. renting a flat, ordering a meal or making a plane ticket) not on the participants who are often merely seen to perform roles (e.g. owner-tenant, waiter-customer or travel agent-client). Communicative language teaching is not about interactants

reaching levels of understanding, convergence and supportiveness. It is about ‘ascertaining’ roles and following a fixed structure:

Conversations, for example, begin, with greetings and progress through various ordered moves: the speaker’s and hearer’s roles are ascertained, topics are introduced, rights to talk are assumed, new topics raised, and, at an appropriate time, the conversation is terminated in a suitable manner.

(Richards 1983: 118)

Richards’ description of conversation ignores the dynamic nature of interpersonal language use and would seem to offer little room for joint negotiation between participants or for creative language use. The idea of routine and the interactants’ fixed roles is also highlighted by Harmer:

In an effective piece of communication (where both participants want the communication to succeed), it is probable that the listener will want to listen to what the speaker says and will be particularly interested in the speaker’s purpose – in other words, in what the speaker is trying to say. Although the listener may have a clear idea of the direction the conversation will take, he or she will nevertheless have to be ready to process a great variety of language in order to understand efficiently what is being said.

(1982: 165 - 166)

As speakers and listeners focus on encoding and decoding messages, individual or joint creative language use is not part of transactional language which values usefulness and efficiency in achieving goals. As Norton argues, communicative language teaching methods often do not

.... actively seek to engage the identities of language learners in the language teaching process.

(2000: 139)

The communicative approach assumes that practising activities relevant to the ‘real’ world will result in learning. The teaching and learning of transactional language use leaves little room for the individual and her identity, her history, her experiences, her values, her involvement, her intentions or her motivation in the language classroom.

## 2.12. CLT & L2-L2 Interpersonal Language

I have discussed communicative language teaching and interpersonal language use without making specific reference to L2-L2 social talk. I now want to examine how L2-L2 talk is treated in the second-language classroom with regards to ELT textbooks, factors regarding teacher background and L2 interpersonal language use between learners.

### 2.12.1. L2-L2 Talk & Textbooks

In developing speaking and listening skills, ELT textbooks virtually ignore the growing reality of L2-L2 interpersonal language use (as discussed in 1.4.) and instead focus on L1-L2 social interaction. For instance, in the selected textbooks, few instances of L2-L2 conversation were to be found. When L2-L2 interaction is used in dialogues, speech reflects native-speaker patterns. For instance, in the following dialogue, Carlos and Eduardo are talking about football:

- Carlos: ... and I think Cruz Azul's next game against Morelia will be difficult for both teams.  
Eduardo: Yes, I think so. But I hope Cruz Azul wins.  
Carlos: Last Saturday Guadalajara scored five goals against America to put them at the top of group three.  
Eduardo: I think Guadalajara could be this year's champions, Carlos.  
Carlos: I hope so but Puebla is also playing well and last night they scored three goals against U.N.A.M.

..... (Williams *et al.* 1997: 30)

Football is the topic of conversation whilst the teaching / learning aspect focuses on vocabulary (i.e. sports register such as *team*, *goal* and *score*) and structure (*I think ... and I hope...*). While the authors may have solely written the dialogue for a linguistic purpose, the L2-L2 context is not taken into consideration. Eduardo and Carlos seem to be native speakers. Furthermore, no reason is given for why these Mexican football fans are talking

in English. Indeed conversation in the selected textbooks that involve native-speaker and non-speaker interaction also fails to reflect non-native language use as seen, for instance, in the following conversation between Ryan, an American, and Soo Mi, a Korean:

Ryan:           Look, at this headline, Soo Mi.  
Soo Mi:        Wow! So many people in the United States get divorced!  
Ryan:           Is it the same in Korea?  
Soo Mi:        I don't think so. In Korea, some marriages break up, but most couples stay together.

..... (Richards 1997: 31)

Soo Mi's use of the English language seems to be indistinguishable from that of a native speaker. ELT textbooks assume that native and non-native language shares the same linguistic and social features. There is no sense of negotiating meanings, arriving at shared understandings and reaching a working consensus with regard to how to proceed with social talk.

### 2.12.2. L2-L2 Talk & EFL Teachers

The role of the EFL teacher in providing opportunities for practising L2-L2 interaction is largely ignored in current academic debate which is more focused on examining strengths and weaknesses of native and non-native teachers. Academic articles, such as *Native or non-native: Who's worth more?* (Medgyes 1992) and, more specific to the Mexican context, *Native Versus Non-Native Speakers: Professionalism over inheritance* (Hubbard 1994), debate between whether the native-speaking English teacher (NEST) or the non-native English teacher (non-NEST) is in a better position to help learners achieve L2 proficiency: the NEST is a 'perfect' speaker and potentially in a strong position to help learners develop fluency skills and cultural knowledge; meanwhile, through her experience

of learning the target language, the non-NEST can anticipate learning problems since she has successfully learned the target language.

However, such debate fails to consider that non-native teachers interacting with non-native learners in non-native-speaking classrooms may be not particularly interested in recreating target-language patterns of interpersonal language use and may not find L1 norms and standards of use relevant to their own local classroom context: a context of L2-L2 interpersonal language use. Given that 80 per cent of ELT teachers are non-native speakers (Hubbard 1994: 7), L2-L2 interpersonal language use may reflect the reality in a growing number of second-language classrooms. Far from wanting to achieve target-language small talk practices, L2 users may develop their own patterns and practices which Kramersch has described as a 'third place' (1993). A third place reflects how learners

construct their own personal meanings at the boundaries between the native speaker's meanings and their own everyday life.

(Kramersch 1993: 238)

L2-L2 interpersonal language use may reflect the second-language users' own patterns and practices of use. Furthermore, the non-NEST teacher is in a particularly strong position to help learners explore L2-L2 interpersonal language use within the classroom context given that she is a model of successful L2 use (Gnutzmann 1999: 164, Medgyes 1992: 39).

### **2.12.3. L2-L2 Talk within CLT**

CLT is increasingly questioned for promoting a global description of English, which privileges native-speaker models but does not relate to the local context of L2 users. Kramersch, for instance, argues that ELT does not respond to local uses:

Communicative strategies and tactics, interactive tasks and activities have become the new universal unit of foreign language education, superimposed on social situational specificity. There is some concern among ESL educators that they are

exporting, with the English language, a rather non-variable form of discourse and interpersonal communication focussed all too exclusively on the efficient and effective exchange of (mostly oral) information. And this form of communication is, in fact, particular to certain anglophone nation-states like the UK, the US, Australia and New Zealand, and certainly not universal.

(1999: 133)

Kramsch argues that communicative language teaching not only promotes transactional language use but also a global norm. CLT has traditionally paid little attention to the phenomenon of L2-L2 interaction. Kramsch & Sullivan sum up commonly-held attitudes towards CLT:

Within a communicative pedagogy it seemed natural to use dialogues and texts that were 'authentic', i.e. spoken or written by native speakers for native speakers to communicate real-life messages for real-life purposes according to the socially sanctioned conventions of real-life language use.

(1996: 199)

However, the phenomenon of L2-L2 interaction (as discussed in 1.4.) questions such definitions of authentic language use, especially since the L2 users may not be following target norms of use. Widdowson has argued that authenticity does not reside in language itself *per se* (i.e. reflecting native-speaker use) but lies in the relationship between language use and language users (1978: 80, 1990: 46). Such a view opens up the possibility of L2-L2 interaction reflecting authentic language use. To get around the problem of trying to define authenticity, Kramsch & Sullivan suggest that the term 'appropriate' language use may be more helpful as it embraces both global uses of language with its use in local contexts. Such a view of language recognises that, while having to be global speakers of English, L2 users can, at the same time, appropriate language for their own specific social needs. Therefore, appropriate language use does not ignore the global context of language use but also accommodates local practices. In pedagogic terms, appropriate language use compensates for the imposition of native-speaker language norms:

One could argue that the communicative teaching of English imposes on learners of English around the world discourse forms that are typical of Anglo-Saxon commercial practices, and that one should therefore seek to develop a pedagogy more appropriate to local conditions. (Kramsch & Sullivan 1996: 200)



As Kramsch & Sullivan (1996: 210) argue, second-language learners need a pedagogy that is appropriate to their local context and allows them to appropriate language for their own social purposes. Appropriate language allows users to conform to global standards of language use but also to engage in supportive and creative language use that responds to their own context. Hall describes the establishment of such practices and patterns of use in terms of discovery, observation / reflection and response:

Our becoming participants involves three processes: the discovery (other- and self-guided) of interactive patterns in the practices in which we engage with others; observation and reflection on others' participatory moves and responses to these moves; and our own active constructions of responses to these patterns.  
(1995: 218)

Therefore L2-L2 interaction involves socialising with other speakers as interactants establish and observe interactive patterns and engage in participatory processes. Such processes are far removed from describing interpersonal language use in terms of safe topics (see 2.8.1.), formulaic expressions (see 2.8.2.) and communicative functions (see 2.8.3.). Hall argues that the native / non-native speaker construct becomes less relevant in second-language use as participants use the 'immediate situational and interactive context' to engage in social relations with other L2 users (1995: 220 - 221). Therefore, L2-L2 interaction involves a greater sensibility to the local context and awareness of choices to be made (see 3.15) in how the L2 user wants to participate in the local context.

### **2.13. Conclusion & A Way Forward**

I have argued in this chapter that the current dichotomy in CLT between transactional and interactional language use artificially separates language use and fails to take into account the personal and local aspects of language use. In making a case for the need to help learners develop an L2 interpersonal ability, I have argued that the current ELT textbook emphasis on topic, formulaic expressions and communicative functions often does not respond to the localised context of L2-L2 language use. At the same time, due to teacher

training practices and pressure to cover the programme, teachers are not encouraged to engage in interpersonal language use in the classroom. Therefore, language teachers, especially non-native English teachers, are also not using the classroom to explore L2 interpersonal language use.

Despite its professed interest in promoting interpersonal language, communicative approaches to L2 learning have an underlying aim to teach conformity to social norms rather than give the learner the necessary resources to pursue both interactional and personal objectives. There is little interest in helping the second user to engage in creative interpersonal language use.

In this chapter I have questioned current pedagogic practice. In the next chapter, I shall identify patterns and practices of interpersonal language use as a preliminary step towards helping the second-language user develop successful L2-L2 social relations.

## Chapter 3

### Solidarity, Supportiveness & Creative Language Use

#### 3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I describe how conventional and creative language use help second-language users develop successful relations with other L2 users in the target language. I argue that the principles of L2-L2 interpersonal language use are fundamentally the same as those of L1-L1: participants seek orderliness and sequence in talk; they aim to reach a working consensus in a joint understanding of a given interaction; and they use common resources to achieve successful interpersonal relations. However, these principles are more marked in L2-L2 interpersonal language use as participants often cannot use target language norms as a point of reference with regard to interactional practices and patterns of use as is the case with L1-L1 interaction. While, in L1 creative language use is often taken for granted, in a second language it enhances L2-L2 talk and helps participants to interact as *somebodies* as they achieve joint understandings and more meaningful social relations.

In pursuing this argument, I will closely follow and build on the work of Aston (1988b, 1988c, 1989, 1993) who examined how interactional language was used in mainly L1-L1 and L1-L2 transactional situations between bookshop assistants and customers in the United Kingdom and Italy (1998a). In doing so, I will argue that Aston developed a framework of solidarity and supportiveness which can also be used for studying L2-L2 interactional language use. I will specifically examine Aston's approach to *face* (Goffman 1967) and to conversation analysis (Sacks 1970/1 and 1974).

This study is different to Aston's because he describes interpersonal language use within the context of transactional-interactional language use. I am broadening the scope of

interpersonal language use to include personal language, as contemplated in Halliday's definition of interpersonal function. Furthermore, I argue that the personal dimension calls for creative language use which allows the L2 language user to become a *somebody*. Aston's describes the concept of a *some* in terms of like-mindedness and intimacy (1988c: 302, 1989: 304, 1993: 235) rather than achieving new meanings and reaching new understandings with other interactants. Whereas Aston focused on L1-L1 and L1-L2 language use, I will look mainly at L2-L2 interpersonal language use. I want to further develop the concept of *some* in L2 interpersonal language use by describing how the L2 user tries to interact as a second-language *somebody* in both conventional and creative ways with other L2 users.

The study of L2-L2 interpersonal language use needs to also take into consideration the resources that second-language users bring to, and develop in, L2 use, especially when interacting with other L2 users. I will describe these resources in terms of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge. Pragmalinguistic knowledge gives L2 users a range of linguistic resources for engaging in social interaction while sociopragmatic knowledge provides a source for social principles and 'rules'. Pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic resources (Thomas 1983, Leech 1983, Rose & Kasper 2001, Spencer-Oatey 2000b) offer ways for second-language users to express supportiveness and achieve successful social relations.

In order to forward my line of argument in this chapter, I will take examples from the data collected at the London university hall of residence. I describe research design and methodology in Chapter 4.

### **3.2. L2 - L1 Interaction: Comity & Rapport**

Arguing against the current emphasis in language teaching on transactional language use (as discussed in chapter two), Aston examines how an L2 can be used for social purposes or

for what he calls 'comity' and 'negotiating rapport' (1988c: 18, 1989: 23). Social talk is not just about reaching successful outcomes. It also reflects the process of negotiating rapport or what Aston describes as bringing worlds into convergence (1988c: 81, 1989: 86).

Rejecting Shannon & Weaver's 'source-encoder-channel-decoder-destination' archetype of communication (see 2.8.2.), Aston builds on Widdowson's 'convergence theory' which sees communication between interactants as a process of extending shared knowledge rather than that of information transfer. Widdowson argues

The model of the communication process that I am trying to construct, then, looks like this. Interlocutors inhabit different worlds of knowledge and experience, but there are elements in common which provide the means of connection. One set of such shared elements is the language system and another is the collection of cultural patterns of normal practice and thought, what I have referred to as schematic knowledge. Communication is achieved when these elements are exploited to bring different worlds into convergence, thus, for the interlocutors, extending the common grounds of shared knowledge.

(1983: 130)

Aston argues that Widdowson's focus on convergence of worlds underlines both the purpose of communication and enables interlocutors to achieve communication. However, Aston asserts that the outcome of communication should not just be seen in terms of 'cognitive convergence' i.e. negotiating shared knowledge or beliefs, but also in terms of building of rapport as 'friendships can be made (or wrecked) through talk' (Aston 1988c: 76; 1989: 81). In examining how interactants achieve successful social relations, Aston explores the complementary concept of 'affective convergence' which he defines as 'negotiating shared attitudes or feelings' (Aston 1988c: 76; 1989: 81).

Aston attempts to describe how interactants reach affective convergence by examining three approaches to negotiating rapport: Sperber & Wilson's relevance theory, Goffman's account of *facework*, and Garfinkel and Sack's conversation analysis. Since I am interested in the interpersonal dimension to L2-L2 interaction, I will leave to one side relevance theory which deals with psychological mechanisms. Relevance theory 'is concerned with the mental, not behavioural responses of the hearer' and does not reveal how interpersonal

language is negotiated (Aston 1988c: 99, 1989: 104). As I want to understand the ‘doing’ of L2-L2 interpersonal relations, I will discuss the other two aspects of Aston’s description of affective convergence.

### 3.3. *Face & Facework*

Aston argues that if achieving comity reflects affective convergence then any study of interpersonal language use needs to look at the process of interactivity between participants as they mutually influence one another. Aston argues that such interactivity can be understood through Goffman’s concepts of *face* and *supportive interchanges*. The concept of *face* tries to explain interactants’ mutual concerns and *supportive interchanges* reflect the process of *facework* as interactants work together to satisfy those mutual concerns.

Goffman’s concept of *face*, claims Aston, helps explain how relationships are negotiated and enhanced as interactants respond to each other’s mutual interests. Goffman attempted to describe an interactional order where participants ‘find it expedient to spend time in one another’s immediate presence’ (1983: 237). Adopting the term *face*, Goffman maintained that interactants will ‘claim a positive social value’ for themselves ‘in any particular contact’ (1967: 5). *Face* is maintained within the social world: an interactant wants her *face* respected so she will respect or sustain the *face* of other interactants (Goffman 1967: 5). Therefore, interactants will mutually display involvement and considerateness as each participant pursues a ‘line’ – ‘a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself’ (Goffman 1967: 5).

Therefore, the concept of *face* assumes that interactants approach encounters on the same basis. However, the concept in itself does not explain how interactants achieve satisfactory relations. Interactants need to work at maintaining or enhancing each other’s face. This, Aston argues, can be achieved through *face-preservation* and *face-enhancement*.

*Face-preservation* attempts to maintain existing social relations and involves interaction ritual which can be seen as

... an effort on everyone's part to get through the occasion and all the unanticipated and unintentional events that can cast participants in an undesirable light, without disrupting the relationships of the participants.

(Goffman 1967: 41)

However, Goffman argues that *face-preservation* is not the objective of interaction: 'one learns about the code the person adheres to... but not where he is going, or why he wants to get there' (1967:12). *Face-preservation* reveals modes of interaction but reveals nothing about the motives of interactants. In contrast, *face-enhancement* involves boosting relationships and this is achieved through *supportive interchanges* which Goffman describes in terms of:

One individual provides a sign of involvement in and connectedness to another, it behooves the recipient to show that the message has been received, that its import has been appreciated, that the affirmed relationship actually exists as the performer implies, that the performer himself has worth as a person, and finally, that the recipient has an appreciative, grateful nature.

(1971: 63)

Aston claims that the sign of 'involvement-appreciation' dimension to *supportive interchanges* leads to 'establishing and enhancing friendly relations in the process of comity' (Aston 1988b: 108). *Supportive interchanges*, Goffman argues, reflect a positive ritual of 'identificatory sympathy' (Goffman 1971: 65), as one interactant feels for the other, or 'reassurance displays' (Goffman 1971: 67), as participants express their awareness of changes experienced by others e.g. congratulations, commiserations and condolences.

While supportive interchanges reflect the joint development of social relations, participants may have to carry out 'repair work' when confronted with miscommunication or misunderstanding. Goffman argues that in such an event interactants need to engage in *remedial interchanges* (1971: 64) when an 'infraction' has occurred:

... then a dialogue is indicated, the offender having to provide remedial accounts and assurances and the offended a sign that these have been received and are sufficient ....

(Goffman 1971: 64)

*Remedial interchanges* signal the need to rectify actual, or possibly emerging, unsatisfactory social interaction. They reflect *facework* as interactants seek to correct the situation and can be charted through a conventional structure as highlighted in the following example involving a request:

Deed:           A virtually offends B

remedy        A:     “Can I use your phone to make a local call?”

relief         B:     “Sure go ahead.”

appreciation A:     “That’s very good of you”

minimization B:    “It’s okay.”

(Goffman 1971: 143)

*Remedial interchanges*, argues Goffman, reflect a first cycle (remedy and relief) which indicates concern regarding the violation, or possible violation, of a norm and a second cycle (appreciation and minimization) which is focused on the successful management of social relations.

As Aston points out, *remedial interchanges* reflect ritual which seeks to redress imbalance while *supportive interchanges* reflect reciprocal facework (Aston 1988c: 106, 1989: 111). Taken together *supportive interchanges* and *remedial interchanges* reflect the interactive and negotiated dimensions of *facework* (Aston 1988c: 100, 1989: 105).

### 3.4. Presentation of *Self*

Through the concept of *face* and engaging in *supportive* and *remedial interchanges*, the L2 user can be seen to ‘present’ an individual and a socialising *self* with her own history, beliefs and values. However, *face* needs to be projected within a given social context and



by interacting with others. However, the presentation of the self (Goffman 1959) can be problematic within the L2-L2 context as interactants often find that they want to integrate themselves with target-language users but, at the same time, want to present their own *self* – the way an interactant wants to be seen by other interactants.

Second-language users are often well aware of the *face* being projected by other interactants. For instance, in an interview following the mealtime conversation at the London university hall of residence, Blanca, a Portuguese PhD student, said of Armando, a Mexican PhD student:

Example 3.1.

Blanca: ... maybe he doesn't want everyone to know exactly how he is. He wants to keep a distance or maybe wants us to create a certain image of him or see him in a certain way.

(Recorded interview 21 / 2 / 2001)

Blanca may be unaware of such concepts as solidarity and supportiveness but she does recognise how other interactants express rapport and distance.

At the same time, L2 users realise that other interactants present themselves differently depending on the language. In example 2.2., Armando noted that Carla, an Italian research student, seemed to interact differently in English than in her native language:

Example 3.2.

Armando ... when Carla is speaking in English she's a *simpatic* but is more formal *pues* but, if you listen to her speak Italian it's another person.

Armando seems to find it difficult to express his perceptions of Carla. He is aware of the *face* that she trying to project in English i.e. to be likeable and kind but he notes that there

is an element of formality and perhaps distance about her. He cannot find the words to describe the way she presents herself in English. He tries to find a cognate for the Spanish *simpático* ('likeable' or 'kind') and produces *simpatic* and also uses the Spanish *pues* (meaning 'then' or 'well'). However, Armando's observations would suggest that L2 users are aware of the *face* being projected by others.

Meanwhile, while interacting in a second language, a participant may not have full control of how she presents her *self*. For instance, in a follow-up interview after a L2-L2 meal-time recording, Blanca, a Portuguese Ph.D. student in London, recognised that during conversation she often unintentionally interrupts people: '*When I realise it, it's done*'. She argued that she wants to interact as being supportive but recognises that

### Example 3.3.

I know I can dominate the conversation. Ideas come one after another. I'm doing it too much.

(Reconstructed dialogue 28 / 2 / 2002)

Aston (1988c: 102, 1989: 107) argues that *facework* for Goffman is a matter of impression management which, he says, is aptly captured in the title of Goffman's book: *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). Goffman claims that interactants 'present' a performance to other interactants in order to control the impression other interactants have of the situation (1959: 26). Aston argues that such a view is based on the single individual and not on the reciprocal nature of social talk (1988c: 103, 1989: 108); it is essentially a speaker account of interpersonal language use rather than that of a speaker-hearer focus.

### 3.5. Conversation Analysis

In arguing that *face* and *facework* do not describe the process of joint action, Aston believes that conversation analysis (CA) does provide a description of how interactants achieve affective convergence which he attempts to identify in terms of textual and rhetorical orderliness. CA offers a way of describing ‘talk in interaction’ (Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998: 13, Wooffitt 2001: 52) i.e. what participants are ‘doing’ interactionally (Duranti 1997: 247) as interactants engage in the joint construction of social relationships. In the next section, I shall follow Aston’s arguments that conversation analysis reflects orderliness and sequence in talk by examining how participants build on each others’ contributions (turn taking), organise the structure of contributions (conditional relevance) and interrelate utterances (adjacency pairs).

#### 3.5.1. Turn-Taking

Textual orderliness can be seen within a basic concept within conversation analysis: turn-taking. Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974) argue that turn-taking is carried out systemically as participants adhere to rules of social interaction. The study of turn-taking and topic management highlights how interactants achieve rapport as they build on the contributions of other interactants. Sacks *et al.* argue that turn-taking is rule-governed:

It has become obvious 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 coordinated; 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.

(1974: 699)

With regard to interpersonal language use, Sacks *et al.* offer a systematic way of studying turn-allocation (designation of the next speaker), possible turn transition places (anticipated turn completion which provides an opportunity for other interactants to participate) and self-selection (when interactants nominate themselves to speak). The study of turn-taking highlights how interactants 'work' with other interactants. Sacks *et al.*'s rules of turn-taking practice which can be summarised as:

1. The current speaker chooses the next speaker, if not ...
2. Any other speaker may self-select, if not ...
3. The current speaker may (but does not have to) keep talking.
4. Talk continues until the next transition-relevance place or continues thereafter until a change of speaker is effected.

While turn-taking practices reflect global principles e.g. only one speaker speaks at a time and speaker change recurs (Sacks *et al.* 1974: 700), the system also operates at a local level within a given context. Turn-taking practices cannot be predicted and need to be studied as a locally and interactionally managed system (Sacks *et al.* 1974: 725).

Aston argues that turn-taking practices provide evidence of convergence (1988c: 122; 1989: 127) in terms of textual orderliness which can be seen through the co-operative and rule-governed turn-taking practices outlined by Sacks *et al.* (1974). Turn-taking reflects interactants agreeing on the context and content of talk. Context of talk is agreed on as participants adhere to established turn-taking patterns (Aston 1988c: 123; 1989: 128). Participants seek to understand the content of talk since overlaps and silence can reflect non-understanding or disagreement.

However, the study of turn taking practices has its limitations with regard to studying L2 interpersonal language use. As Placencia argues, conversation analysis does not examine external and / or social factors in a given interaction:

...conversation is presented as if it had a life of its own outside participants or situations. In other words, conversationalists are presented as machines, void of motivations or goals....

(1991: 90)

So, while offering a tool to study turn-taking patterns in L2-L2 interpersonal language use, conversation analysis does not consider the problem of context which is created by L2 participants as they employ L1 resources, knowledge and experiences along with the developing resources, knowledge and experiences in the second language in order to achieve successful interpersonal relationships.

### 3.5.2. Conditional Relevance

In pursuing his argument that CA reflects how interactants achieve satisfactory social relations, Aston (1988c: 125, 1989: 130) follows Sack's line that extended sequences reflect rhetorical orderliness. So, for instance, story telling reflects interactional organisation in terms of a preface, telling and response sequences (Sacks 1974: 337). Further rhetorical orderliness can be seen within these organisational parts. For instance, a story preface can be seen in terms of the speaker's proposal to tell a story and acceptance by the hearer to listen to a story (Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998: 134). Acceptance by the hearer gives the storyteller what Goffman (1974: 508) calls a *ticket* – permission granted by other interactants for a speaker to have an extended turn as she tells a story, anecdote, joke etc. Goffman took the term from Sacks who saw a *ticket* as 'something which can serve as a beginning for someone whose rights to talk are in the first instance restricted' (1972: 345). Goffman offers examples of *tickets* such as "“Do you know what I think?” “Do you know what happened?” “Listen to me” “Did you hear what happened to Mary Jane?”...." (1974: 508).

Extended turns such as story telling are projectable and expectable in terms of sequence. So, for instance, a joke normally contains a preface (proposal to tell a joke e.g. *Do you want to hear a joke...*), the telling (including a punch line) and a response (laughter / non-

laughter). Interactant contributions reflect ‘conditional relevance’ as they adhere to the organisation of the extended turn. Schegloff defines conditional relevance in the following terms:

By conditional relevance of one item on another we mean: given the first, the second is expectable; upon its occurrence it can be seen to be a second item to the first; upon its nonoccurrence it can be seen to be officially absent – all this provided by the occurrence of the first item.

(1968: 364)

Aston (1988c: 126, 1989: 131) argues that conditional relevance also reflects convergence between interactants. Relevance reflects the process of speakers structuring their contributions in such a way that they are comprehensible to the hearer. Conditional relevance is closely aligned to ‘recipient design’ as interactants focus on the hearer. Sacks *et al.* define recipient design as the

multitude of respects in which the talk by a party in conversation is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are co-participants.

(1974: 727)

However, recipient design is not just a matter of the speaker being sensitive to the hearer. The hearer may need to listen sensitively to the speaker. Jefferson argues that such sensitivity to others can be seen in ‘troubles talk’ (1984a, 1984b) where co-participants display supportiveness or ‘troubles-receptiveness’ (Jefferson 1984b: 351). Aston argues that supportiveness reflects a preferred response (Aston 1988c: 265) as other interactants demonstrate affiliation and reveal shared attitudes.

Troubles telling can be closely aligned with ‘laughter together’ (Jefferson 1984b: 361) as co-participants laugh along with the troubles-teller. As the trouble-teller laughs at her predicament or problem, she is often joined in such laughter by her co-participants. Jefferson argues (1984b: 251) that the troubles-teller’s laughter indicates that her troubles are not getting the better of her and the co-participants’ laughter reflects their appreciation of this. This supportive interaction can be seen as ‘time-out’ from the troubles telling in

progress. Aston (1988c: 317, 1989: 319) argues that laughter together reflects a pre-affiliative stage leading towards solidarity and supportiveness as interactants move towards appreciating other participants' predicaments.

### 3.5.3. Adjacency Pairs

Rather than looking at isolated sentences or utterances, conversation analysts look across turns to examine the interrelationship between utterances. Analysts are interested in what comes before and after a given utterance and take the position that a turn cannot necessarily be seen as a distinct syntactic or grammatical unit. While in 3.5.1, I discussed speaker turn-taking patterns and turn transition places, in this section I want to examine the relationship between utterances. These are often seen in terms of adjacency pairs. The concept of adjacency pairs was developed by Schegloff & Sacks (1973) who described how interactants co-constructed utterances in orderly ways. The adjacency pair calls for a first pair part to be followed by a constituting second pair part. They are often seen in stereotypical patterns e.g. complaint - apology, order - compliance and request - grant. For example:

Complaint – apology:      A:    You ate the cake I left in the fridge!  
   B:    Sorry

Request - grant:            A:    Can you mail these for me please?  
   B:    Sure

(Richards & Schmidt 1983: 129)

Aston (1988c: 127-128, 1989: 132-133) argues that the first pair part and second pair part sequence suggests that participants are seeking comity. When the second-pair part is the expected response, it can be seen as a preferred response.

Eggins & Slade (1997: 27) point out that adjacency pairs reflect expectation rather than determination. In other words, the first part of an adjacency pair is often expected to be

followed by a preferred second part response as interactants achieve rapport but there is no obligation to do so. In interpersonal language use, there is a strong likelihood that first pair part and second pair part sequences reflect common understandings.

However, there are potential difficulties in understanding the use of adjacency pairs in L2 interaction. As Richards & Schmidt (1983: 129 - 130) point out, it may be difficult to identify the intention of a first pair part. For instance, *hello* may be a greeting, a summons (e.g. finding out if anybody is there) or an answer to a summons (e.g. answering the telephone). Furthermore, there are limitations to the usefulness of examining adjacency pairs when studying interpersonal language use. As Placencia argues, adjacency pairs do not take into consideration the individual social dimension to talk; in the case of greetings, participants may be portrayed as 'producing answers or second greetings just because questions require answers and greetings require second greetings' (1991: 94). However, a second pair answer may not just be said for the sake of supplying an appropriate response. Therefore, for instance, in the case of L2-L2 talk, a second pair answer may reflect the answer of a specific *someone* saying a specific *something* in a specific social circumstance.

### 3.6. Claiming & Showing Understanding

Besides achieving affective convergence through textual and rhetorical orderliness, Aston (1988c: 141, 1989: 146) also argues that interactants reach comity through seeking teleological orderliness as they try to achieve specific social outcomes e.g. common understandings and agreements. He argues that teleological orderliness can be understood through Schegloff's distinction between *claiming* and *showing* understanding (1984: 39). To claim agreement is not the same as asserting agreement. For instance, on reaching the top of a hill, two walkers may examine the view:

A: *Nice view!*

B: *Beautiful!*

(fabricated)



*B*'s remark shows that she claims to share the same opinion as *A*. However, there is no evidence that she actually feels the same way. On the other hand, the two walkers may have looked at the view and said:

A: *Nice view!*

B: *You can see for miles!* (fabricated)

*B*'s contribution in this case can be seen to build on *A*'s remark and reflects that they seem to appreciate the view in the same way.

Aston argues that *claiming* and *showing* understanding reveals not only teleological orderliness but also textual and rhetorical orderliness as interactants follow established turn-taking practices and adhere to preferred responses.

### 3.7. Solidarity & Supportiveness

As interactants engage in *facework* (see 3.3.), follow recognised turn-taking practices (see 3.5.1.), interact through adjacency pairs (see 3.5.3.) and *claim* or *show* understanding (see 3.6.), Aston argues that language users achieve comity which he describes in terms of supportiveness and solidarity. Supportiveness and solidarity are key terms in Aston's work. He differentiates between supportiveness and solidarity by arguing that with supportiveness interactants show feelings '*for* the other' whilst with solidarity interactants feel '*as* the other' (Aston 1993: 232).

Supportiveness is expressed through concern, sympathy and appreciation as participants try to identify with what the speaker is feeling or experiencing. Aston describes supportiveness as

... sharing attitudes towards features not of our common world, but of one or other's participant's world – his individual feelings and experiences rather than our common ones. (1988c: 225)

Supportiveness means trying to understand the target-language “world” or “worlds” of other participants. For instance, Aston offers the following example:

- A: My cat's dead  
B: Oh dear you must be upset (1988b: 83)

In the interaction, B does not have the same feelings as A but can *feel for* A. Feelings and experiences in the world of others may not have the same significance for other participants (Aston 1988c: 225, 1989: 228). Nevertheless such features can be shared in the sense of feeling happy or sad for other participants as expressed, for instance, through praise and sympathy. Supportiveness involves assessing the news or personal disclosure of others and showing concern for, and appreciation of, the individual feelings and experiences of others. For instance, in the following example, an interactant is making an assessment of a house she has seen about which the other interactant has no first-hand knowledge:

- L: Jeeziz Chris'shu sh'd see that house E(h)mma  
yih av no idea h[hmhh  
E: [I bet it's a dream ... (Pomerantz 1984: 97)

Emma does not have independent access to the news about the house since she has not seen the house in question. All she can do is try to assess the news and be supportive of the opinion of others.

In contrast, solidarity means that participants have or, have had, independent access to the experience in question (i.e. they have felt it themselves) and they have felt or experienced it in the same way as other interactants. In other words, interactants share common experiences and feelings. Aston describes solidarity as:

sharing attitudes to features of our common world, which we feel the same way about... (1988c: 225)

Feelings and attitudes are commonly, rather than individually, held and are expressed through ‘matching assessments’ as interactants share the same viewpoint of the world.

Viewing the world in the same way can be observed through the employment of such adjacency pairs as assessment-assessment as seen in Aston's own example taken from Pomerantz (1975):

J: T's - tsuh beautiful day out isn't it?  
B: Yeh it's jus' gorgeous (Aston 1988c: 255)

Aston argues that the interactants reflect affective convergence since both utterances are built from the same frame of reference i.e. *gorgeous* and *beautiful* and which belong to the same category of 'positive descriptors' (Aston 1988c: 256).

### 3.7.1. Interactional Language in L1-L1 & L1-L2 Transactions

In examining L1-L1 and L1-L2 service encounters in Italian and British bookshops, Aston argues that interactional speech is not just facilitative i.e. to smooth over a transaction (1988b: 78) but also reveals how interactants express supportiveness in terms of news assessments (see 3.7.) and supportive interchanges (see 3.3.) and solidarity in terms of matching assessments (see 3.7.). Aston argues that solidarity is achieved through celebrating the successful use of interactional language and through doing agreement.

Aston argues that one of the most common supportive routines involves personal disclosure and sympathetic reaction (1988a: 89). However, he says that his data produce few examples of this routine. This is perhaps because, interpersonal disclosures are given transactional solutions as seen in the following example.

C: Well: I'm leaving on Friday I live in Holland  
A: Uhm - well that - if you know - if you know the book that is in this: in a way is no - is no problem (Aston 1998a: 90)

Furthermore, Aston says that his data offer few examples of another common supportive routine: story-telling (1988a: 89). He argues that supportiveness may not surface in public service situations because supportiveness is the language of showing sympathy or approval. In the case of bookshop encounters, problems seem to call for solutions and not expressions of appreciation and concern. I hope to demonstrate through the London university hall of residence data that supportiveness is very much a feature of L2-L2 social talk as participants show concern and interest while trying to understand the perhaps very different worlds of other interactants.

In Aston's study, matching assessments are often expressed in terms of celebrating language use and doing agreement. For instance, language users may take pleasure at just being able to talk to each other and subsequently they *celebrate* mutual understandings. Aston argues that this 'celebration of the ordinary' may be even more so in a second language as the L2 user establishes common ground with a L1 interactant (Aston 1993: 240). Aston offers the following example (taken from Gavioli & Mansfield) where a L2 user establishes such common ground and appears to celebrate the ordinary:

Cn: You DON'T accept book tokens here do you?  
A: Yes, we do  
→ Cn: = Yes you do!  
A: Oh, yes!

(1993: 240)

As Aston comments: '... the fact that a large city book shop accepts book tokens becomes a cause for joint celebration in a way that would hardly seem possible in the context of NS discourse' (1993: 240). Celebratory language reflects a spontaneous dimension to interpersonal language use as language users share their joint appreciation of a given context and *celebrate* that appreciation. Celebratory language reflects the co-construction dimension to interpersonal language use as interactants *celebrate* common understandings. *Celebrating* the ordinary is one way of maintaining harmonious relationships with other interactants. Interactants appreciate their relationship and take time out just to *celebrate* it. (I argue in chapter five that *celebrating* the ordinary is even more significant in L2-L2 conversation as participants *celebrate* that they can talk to each other on an interpersonal

level.) As Aston (1988c: 293, 1989: 295) points out, it is often difficult to actually determine whether interactants are *celebrating* their use of language but perhaps it can be seen to emerge as interactants 'do' agreement. For instance, Aston offers the following example (taken from Pomerantz 1975) of interactants 'doing' agreement on their conversation's successful outcome:

- A. Nice talking to you [sir]  
B. [Nice] talking to you.

(Aston 1988b: 255)

### 3.7.2. Self-Disclosure & Restricted Attitudes

As I argued in 3.7.1., in achieving supportiveness with other L2 users, participants may reveal information about themselves. This can be achieved through self-disclosure as interactants share biographical information (and other personal details) 'such that through this information the hearer "knows one better"' (Edmondson & House 1981: 173). Self-disclosure reflects a willingness to make an investment (Norton Peirce 1995 17-18, Norton 2000: 10-11) in a relationship as interactants aim to reap rewards from more meaningful personal relationships.

Self-disclosure is an everyday first-language activity:

You must "present yourself" in a conversation, and part of that presentation is the way you choose to display yourself to others and how you view your relationship with the rest of the world. In fact, every encounter with another person requires you to come to a decision about how you want to appear in that encounter, that is, how you wish to present yourself to the other or others.

(Wardhaugh 1985: 26-27)

Self-disclosure allows the language user to achieve Halliday's interpersonal language function, both in terms of interactional and personal language use. In L2-L2 interpersonal language use, the L2 user can develop more personalised social relations with others by

revealing information about herself and, at the same time, can reveal biographical and other personal information in order to interact in her own way. Edmondson & House see self-disclosure as a way of increasing social bonding in the target language and outline two disclosure strategies:

- i) speaker volunteering a disclosure in the hope of being reciprocated with a matching disclosure from the hearer;
- ii) to voice a request for a disclosure as in the use of tag questions e.g. *You are doing this course as well are you.*

(1981: 173 - 174)

By volunteering information and requesting information, self-disclosure evokes a 'reciprocity norm' which states that '... if I do something for you, you will reciprocate and do something for me' (Gudykunst & Kim 1997: 261 - 262). Reciprocity leads to mutual self-disclosure and hence opens up the possibility of 'supportiveness' (Aston 1988c, 1989, 1993) between interactants as they establish common ground.

Aston (1988c, 1989) sees self-disclosure as providing one means for a language user to become a *somebody* – as L2 users share particular attitudes and not just *any* attitudes, developing what Aston terms 'restricted attitudes' (1988: 251) i.e. restricted to the interactants involved in the self-disclosure activities. Aston (1998c: 303, 1989: 305, 1993: 235) claims that 'restricted attitudes' – attitudes not shared with an *any* – are a key feature of interpersonal encounters. As social relations develop, interactants progressively offer more 'restricted' information. The development of restricted attitudes occur as interactants move from expressing backchannel responses such as minimal responses (e.g. *mm* and *yes*), preemptive turn completions (i.e. completing the current speaker's turn) and clarification requests (e.g. *what do you mean?*) to expressing more outright support for the speaker's attitude or opinion. In the following extract taken from the London university hall of residence data, the interactants are talking about a trip to Italy:

Example 3.4.

Conversation during lunch between Elsa, Lydia and Tania – all Mexican PhD students – and Saeko, a Japanese PhD student. Saeko is talking about the visit of her boyfriend to Europe from Japan and their proposed trip to Italy.

- 1 Saeko: this was first time I went would go to Italy and he also this is the first  
2 time he will go to Europe European countries I am very looking  
3 forward to going to Italy  
4 Tania: I think Italy is a very nice a very pretty country  
5 Saeko: I think so  
6 Tania: yeah you need to go to *Florenca* to

Tania approves of Saeko's visit to Italy by remarking that *Italy is a very nice a very pretty country* (line four) and shows even more supportiveness as she suggests that she should visit Florence. An upgrade reflects strong agreement and is an intensifier (Pomerantz 1984: 65 - 66) and can be further seen as Tania says to Saeko that *you need to go to Florence* (line six).

Restricted attitudes, therefore, can be seen through 'second assessments' (Pomerantz 1984) as interactants 'upgrade' the comments of others as interactants demonstrate a greater degree of closeness to others. Pomerantz offers other following examples:

- E: Hal couldn't get over what a GOOD buy that was (Jon)  
J: Yeah That's a r- a (rerry [good buy])  
E: [Yeah:h Great buy  
(1984: 66)

and

- C: ... She was a nice lady – I liked her  
G: I liked her too  
(1984: 67)

The upgrade examples indicate a closer sense of involvement between the interactants as they both offer matching assessments. By contrast, a downgrade can be seen as a weakened evaluation of a speaker's comment e.g.

→ E: e-that PA:t isn't she a do.[:ll?  
M: [iYeh isn't she pretty (Pomerantz 1984: 68)

and

→ F: that's beautiful  
K: isn't it pretty (Pomerantz 1984: 68)

Both the examples indicate that the downgrade shows agreement but a scaled-down or weakened evaluation of the initial assessment.

### 3.7.3. Face Enhancement

Restricted attitudes can lead to increased intimacy between interactants and consequently participants may want to enhance their relationship and increase the level of rapport. This has variously been described as intimacy enhancement (Aston 1989), face-boosting acts (Bayraktaroğlu 1991, 2001), face enhancement (Sifianou 1995) and rapport enhancement (Spencer-Oatey 2000b).

*Face* enhancing acts, such as compliments, boost the *face* of other interactants and aim 'to have a positive effect on interpersonal relations' (Spencer-Oatey 2000a: 18). As a speaker boosts the *face* of the hearer, the hearer is faced with choices: she can deny or downplay the *face* enhancing move; she can seek mutual *face* enhancement or reciprocate by enhancing the speaker's *face*; or, she can try to refocus the topic of conversation as seen for instance in the following extract.



Example 3.5.

Meal-time conversation between Mariana and Armando, Mexican PhD students, Blanca, a Portuguese PhD student, and the participant-observer (P/O). Mariana has been talking about how, extremely unwillingly, she had to look after a cat because the owner, her flat mate, had moved back to the United States.

- 1 Blanca: but it's fashionable to be a single woman and have a cat.
- 2 Mariana: yeah that's true
- 3 Blanca: it's quite a fashionable thing
- 4 Armando: no you know you know  
[general laughter]
- 5 Mariana: yeah we have like three kittens each [laughter]
- 6 Blanca: it's a fashionable thing to be a single woman and live in a nice flat
- 7 and have a cat.

Blanca's image of a single woman owning a cat seems to be aimed at boosting Mariana's image: *but it's fashionable to be a single woman and have a cat* (line one). Mariana accepts the assessment *yeah, that's true* (line two). Blanca repeats the comment *it's quite a fashionable thing* (line three). She now receives support from Armando who, with limited English, says *no you know you know* (line four). The use of *no* may be a humorous contradiction of *yeah* (line two) and the *you know* may refer to the fact that Mariana already knows about these things because she is being jokingly portrayed as a woman of fashion. The subsequent laughter seems to be a sign of appreciation from the other participants of Armando's humour. Mariana attempts to change the subject by talking about kittens but Blanca once again repeats her comment, *it's a fashionable thing to be a single woman and live in a nice flat and have a cat* (line six and seven).

*Face* enhancement can be seen as a way approving of another interactant's *face* and improving its image among other interactants. It provides an opportunity to develop closer and deeper social relations. While having little transactional value, *face*-enhancement is the

language of a *somebody* directed at another *somebody* as conversation reflects ‘restricted attitudes’ (see 3.7.2) – personal and unique talk between individuals.

### 3.8. Summary: Aston & CA

My summary of Aston’s work is condensed, selective and does not do justice to his intricate description of interactional speech. However, I have tried to show how Aston’s framework involving *face* and *facework* (see 3.3.) and *presentation of self* (see 3.4.) (for studying the interactive and negotiated dimensions) and conversation analysis (see 3.5) (in describing orderliness and sequence in talk) help interactants achieve solidarity and supportiveness (see 3.7.).

However, Aston’s framework is open to criticism, especially with regard to the use of conversation analysis to study second-language interactional language use. CA is usually carried out on first-language interaction and the analyst is usually a member of the culture she is studying (Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998: 112). This raises the question of whether conversation analysis can be carried out on L1-L2 interaction or L2-L2 interaction and whether L2 interaction is different from L1 interaction (I address this methodological problem in chapter four).

Normally, conversation analysis is carried out among L1 language users and not among second language users because language users are seen to build on joint understandings that they share through their knowledge and use of a common language. To confront these arguments, I now propose to examine the work of Meierkord (1998; 2000) who argues that L2 interactants do build on common understandings as they arrive at a working consensus with other L2 users.

### 3.9. L2-L2 Working Consensus

While Aston examined the interactional dimension in transactional studies, Meierkord studied the characteristics of successful L2-L2 interaction from a quantitative conversation analysis point of view, studying small talk in a student hall of residence in Great Britain (1998, 2000). Meierkord studied the English-language interactions of 17 different mother tongue speakers, aged between 20 and 30, and whom she divided into five broad cultural groups: European, African, Arab, Indian / Pakistan and Asian. In studying L2-L2 talk, Meierkord examined discourse structure in terms of opening, core and closing phases (1998: 3) and politeness phenomena which she saw as comprising ‘routine formulae or ritual illocutions, which occur during the opening and closing phase of a conversation, as well as back channels and other gambits that appear in the core phase’ (1998: 4).

Meierkord found that second-language speakers demonstrate a strong co-operative nature in L2-L2 small talk:

... cooperation among non-native speakers manifests itself... in collaborative overlap and the joint construction of what is usually called a turn. (2000: 2)

For instance, in the following example reflecting simultaneous speech (hence the open bracket before the participants’ names), Meierkord argues that the participants actively support each other during social interaction.

1	[Jean:	Go there, It’s a secure care[er]		
2	[Shiraz:		[the] best th[ing is]	
3	[Tsu:			[I thought]
4	[Tsu:	accountancy is go[od]		
5	[Jean:	[ ] [ ]		
6	[Shiraz:		[if you want to] do	
7	[Shiraz:	accountancy, do two things One is .. do		
8	[Shiraz:	accountancy a[nd] audit, n[e. .. A] and other ..		
9	[Tsu:	[Yeah] [And audit]		
10	[Shiraz:	specialize in liquidation as well. [becau]se when		
11	[Tsu:		[liquidation now].	

12 [Shiraz this time comes [.....] start liquidation. [laughter]  
 13 [Anja: [laughter]  
 14 [Tsu: [Yeah]  
 15 [Tsu: Yuh. These bankruptcy law eh lawyers [are  
 16 [Shiraz [that's  
 17 [Tsu: doing a lot of money a]t the moment  
 18 [Shiraz right they're making money now]

(2000: 5)

Meierkord argues that the use of backchannel responses e.g. *yeah* (lines nine and 14) and *and audit* (line nine) and the achievement of joint meaning over the specialised branches of accountancy reflect participant collaboration and supportiveness. I would argue the use of the words *accountancy* (lines four, seven and eight), *audit* (lines eight and nine), *liquidation* (lines 10 and 11) and *bankruptcy* (line 15) reflect the use of what Sacks calls *membership categorization devices* (1972: 332) whereby interactants reflect rhetorical and textual orderliness as they relate to common understandings.

Meierkord claims that there are similarities between L2-L2 interaction and L1-L1 interaction in terms of lengths of turns and the use of back-channelling. However, with regard to differences, L2 interactants demonstrated a heightened preference for short and safe topics, the use of cajolers i.e. appeals for sympathy (e.g. *you know* and *I mean*) and underscorers i.e. highlighting a point in conversation (e.g. *look* and *the point is*). Meierkord says that short topics may reflect uncertainty about the topic's acceptability or the inability of other interactants to develop the topic. While using less back-channelling devices than L1 interactants, L2 participants were involved in a considerable amount of sentence completions and restatements, underlining the collaborative nature of second-language talk. With regards politeness phenomena, Meierkord observed that the participants kept to well-known phrases which may have been a strategy to avoid misunderstandings or a reflection of participant fossilisation as interactants considered their use of politeness phenomena as sufficient and failed to develop them further.

While, through a quantitative study, Meierkord identifies a strong supportive nature in L2-L2 talk, I would argue that she could have also studied how L2 users try to negotiate interpersonal relations through a qualitative study. Using her analysis of discourse markers,

topics and formulaic expressions, a qualitative study could examine how L2 participants negotiate common understandings, help each other to save *face* and achieve interpersonal objectives. This could be achieved by examining how participants achieved a working consensus (Goffman 1959: 21).

Goffman defines a working consensus as a shared definition of a situation 'involving a degree of mutual considerateness, sympathy and a muting of opinion differences' (1963: 96). Reaching a working consensus involves interactants positioning the attainment of their individual goals within the context of the group's social objectives. An individual interactant decides which matters are important to her and those she wants to pursue. For the sake of group harmony, an individual participant may decide not to take a position on issues that she does not consider to be important. Therefore, reaching a working consensus involves collaboration with and adjustment to others (Goffman 1959: 20) and reflects how participants arrive at joint understandings as opposed to the focus of conversation analysis which is on the moment itself.

The concept of working consensus reflects the uniqueness of each situation and the shifting and developing nature of social interaction. The working consensus can be seen in terms of

the sustained, intimate coordination of action, whether in support of closely collaborative tasks or as a means of accommodating closely adjacent ones.

(Goffman 1983: 238)

Goffman's concept of working consensus could have enhanced Meierkord's study where she claims that L2-L2 interaction is characterised by speakers who 'need to negotiate the norms for every individual conversation depending on the specific participants' (2000: 1). However since her study was quantitative, Meierkord was not in a position to capture the emerging and dynamic nature of L2-L2 talk.

### 3.10. Phatic Dimension to Interpersonal Language Use

Another approach to studying the negotiatory dimension to interpersonal language use has been pursued by Coupland, Coupland & Robinson (1992) who, building on the work of Malinowski (1923) and Laver (1974, 1975, 1981), examine how speakers negotiate interactional goals through phatic communion.

Malinowski, an anthropologist, developed the concept of phatic communion to describe how 'ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words' (1923: 315). Arguing that language may be used to cement social relations, he claimed that phatic communion 'does not serve any purpose of communicating ideas' (1923: 316) or 'to frame and express thoughts' and that linguistic meaning is not relevant in the use of phatic communion which

serves to establish bonds of personal union between people brought together by the mere need of companionship and does not serve any purpose of communicating ideas.

(1923: 316)

Malinowski argues that phatic communion is 'a mode of action' (1923: 315) that can be seen to be 'serving the direct aim of binding the hearer to the speaker by a tie of some social sentiment or other' (1923: 315). Malinowski can be seen to be questioning the transactional focus of language use which is still so prominent in second-language teaching and learning today (as I discussed in Chapter 2).

Laver attempted to build on the work of Malinowski by arguing that phatic communion was not just 'a mere exchange of words' but was much more subtle and intricate as interactants attempt to achieve identifiable social goals (1974: 1, 1975: 216). Laver sees two social purposes for the role of phatic language: 1) 'the establishment and consolidation of the interpersonal relationship between two participants'; and 2) 'the comfortable management of the transition from noninteraction to full interaction, and the transition from interaction back to noninteraction' (1975: 232).

Laver examines the subtleties and intricacies of phatic communion by studying how interactants successfully 'break the ice' at the beginning of an encounter (1974: 2) and terminate an encounter so that it can be successfully resumed at a later date. Within the opening phrases of interaction, Laver sees phatic communion as embracing propitiatory, exploratory and initiatory functions. He asserts that the exploratory function of phatic communion 'allows participants to feel their way towards the working consensus of their interaction' (Laver 1975: 221). Laver acknowledges the close relationship between phatic communion and working consensus (see 3.9.):

... an important function of phatic communion is to help the participants to reach what Goffman (1959) has called the 'working consensus' of the interaction....  
(1975: 219)

Expanding on the work of Malinowski and Laver, Coupland *et al.* (1992) take a more negotiatory view of phatic language use arguing that interpersonal language use reflects participants' local interactional priorities. They argue that Malinowski and Laver approach interpersonal language use as deterministic and 'detectable in its surface form' (1992: 213) whilst phatic language, in their view, reflects 'on-the-ground negotiation by participants as talk proceeds' (1992: 214).

Coupland *et al.* argue that phatic language is found within all interaction and cannot be reduced to formulaic expressions and limited to the mere fringes of social encounters. Interpersonal language is negotiated between interactants 'relationally and in real time' (1992: 215 - 217). Its function reflects strategic language use as interactants pursue "interpersonal" or "social" as well as professional goals' (1992: 227). In examining elderly people's responses to *how are you?*, Coupland *et al.* argue that the interviewees pursued local strategies as they positioned themselves along the dimensions of positive / negative relational goals and high / low degrees of expressed or perceived commitment.

While claiming to look at negotiatory processes in phatic communion, Coupland *et al.* fail to fully explore the speaker-hearer dimension to phatic language, concentrating instead on interviewee responses to the scripted question *how are you?*. They examine categories of

responses. For instance, they offer the following examples of *qualified initial negative (global appraisals)*:

- AC: not too bad  
CJ: well I'm not so bad  
AS: well(.) could be better  
AM: not too bad not too bad (.) can't grumble I suppose  
CM: not too bad love (.) could be better I suppose (.) it's no good grumbling is it?  
(laughs)  
BF: coming on [it transpires she has had a major bladder operation]
- (Coupland *et al.* 1992: 223)

However, there is no sense of phatic language emerging in the interview data as interactants reach joint understandings and Coupland *et al.* do not discuss the hearer's response to interviewee utterances.

Malinowski, Laver and Coupland *et al.* ultimately present a speaker's or a hearer's view of interpersonal language use. Their view does not take full account of the dynamic, shifting and developing nature of interpersonal language use as the speaker(s) and the hearer(s) jointly negotiate understandings and achieve a working consensus which I identify in L2-L2 interpersonal language use in the university hall of residence data (see chapter five).

### 3.11. Pragmalinguistic & Sociopragmatic Resources

Aston's description of solidarity and supportiveness (see 3.7.) and Goffman's concepts of *facework* (see 3.3.) and working consensus (see 3.9.) and the phatic dimension to interpersonal language (see 3.10) use reflect the *doing* of interpersonal language use. I have argued that L2 users interact with other L2 users by seeking orderliness and sequence in talk and reaching a working consensus of a given interaction. However, I have not examined the resources that L2 users draw on when engaging in L2-L2 interpersonal language use. As I argued in 1.7., successful L2-L2 social relations rely on interactants employing common resources and understandings which I described in terms of



pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge (Thomas 1983, Leech 1983). The pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic distinction was first formulated by Thomas (1983) as she distinguished between two types of pragmatic failure with regard to appropriate language use. For any utterance to be successful, Thomas argues that two types of judgement are necessary: i) judgement regarding conveying the force of a linguistic token; ii) judgement regarding 'the social conditions placed on language use' (1983: 99). Thomas defines these two types of judgement in terms of pragmalinguistic knowledge and sociopragmatic knowledge.

Pragmalinguistic knowledge is reflected in the force that a language user wants to give an utterance in a specific context. The force of an utterance, argue Jaworski & Coupland (1999: 15), can be seen in terms of communicative intention (e.g. advice, request, suggestion etc.) and how the language user intends her utterance to be understood. For instance, the question *Are you thirsty?* may be intended as a request to buy the speaker a beer.

Kasper argues that pragmalinguistic knowledge includes the use of directness / indirectness, routines and linguistic forms which can intensify or soften communicative acts e.g. '*I was wondering if you would terribly mind feeding the cat*' (1997: 2). In terms of developing, establishing and maintaining social relations, force reflects what the interactant is trying to do interpersonally. For instance, she may be trying to show supportiveness or solidarity. The second-language user has to choose a way of expressing communicative intention through the use of an appropriate structure. Therefore, the use of pragmalinguistic knowledge involves making linguistic judgements before social ones.

Sociopragmatic knowledge reflects an understanding of the social conditions which affect language use. Speaker utterances are influenced by social considerations rather than by linguistic ones. Arguing that speakers will differ in their assessments of the social dimension to communication, Kasper & Rose see sociopragmatics as referring 'to the social perceptions underlying participants' interpretation and performance of communicative action' (2001: 2). When it comes to interpersonal language use, the L2 user needs to be

aware of the social context and factors such as ‘the size of the imposition, cost / benefit, social distance, and relative rights and obligations’ (Thomas 1983: 104).

While Thomas was interested in examining pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failure, I want to focus on how the use of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge can lead to successful L2-L2 interpersonal language use. However, as I argued in 1.8., I will adopt the term the umbrella term ‘pragmatic resources’ as opposed to trying to differentiate in each instance between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic resources. Pragmalinguistic knowledge, which I have argued, involves making linguistic judgments before social ones, can be identified in an L2-L2 context. On the other hand, in L2-L2 interpersonal language use, second-language users may not be engaged in an identifiable social community which reflects shared common values, beliefs and attitudes in the second-language context (see 4.12.1.). Therefore, social considerations affecting L2-L2 interpersonal language use may be difficult to detect and analyse since social judgements may reflect societal judgments from the interactants’ own L1 regarding, for instance, perceptions of imposition, power and distance. Therefore, I will not pursue in detail the pragmalinguistic / sociopragmatic distinction in the analysis but adopt the more general term ‘pragmatic resources’.

### **3.11.1. Identifying Pragmalinguistic Resources**

Pragmalinguistic knowledge can help provide linguistic resources for achieving successful social relations in the target language. Such knowledge can be identified at different levels.

On one level, the features of interactional or relational talk can be described within different spoken genres. I adopt McCarthy & Carter’s definition of genre as ‘underlying recurrent features which are prototypically present in particular groups of texts’ (1994: 24). Therefore, there are underlying textual features that identify for instance small talk (Coupland 2000a, Schneider 1988), play (Cook 1997, 2000) and gossip talk (Blum-Kulka 1997, 2000).

Small talk as a genre, for instance, may be perceived as predictable and prepatterned (e.g. Wardhaugh 1985: 196) or as supportive and collaborative and involving identifiable stages e.g. Laver's opening, medial and closing phases of phatic communion (1974; 1975) (see 3.10.). Meanwhile, play consists of a wide variety of genres such as puns, riddles, verbal duels and nursery rhymes. Cook argues that play involves establishing, maintaining and breaking relationships: it promotes co-operative behaviour as it increases contact between interactants, developing co-operative efficiency and calling on participants to understand different attitudes and responses (2000: 103). Co-operative efficiency can be seen in terms of turn-taking and restraint (Cook 2000: 103). At the same time, play involves a creative dimension as interactants develop new meanings and break listener expectations. I develop the concept of play as creative language use in 3.12 below where I specifically examine its use in L2-L2 interaction.

The description of interactional or relational talk can also be related to topics such as weather and holidays (McCarthy 2000: 96) or categories of topics such as noticings about the immediate local environment, the day's happenings and news updates (Drew & Chilton 2000: 150). Schneider's 1988 study of L1-L1 and L1-L2 small talk especially focused on weather as a topic of conversation: out of 33 fully-transcribed conversations, 23 contained weather sequences and, after including weather as a repeated topic, there were a total of 38 references to weather (1988: 213).

On another level, pragmalinguistic knowledge, with regard to establishing and developing successful interpersonal language use, involves understanding linguistic patterns. Spencer-Oatey (2000a: 21) points out that rapport management is often seen in terms of speech acts such as agreeing and sympathising. Along the same lines, Edmondson & House (1981: 200) argue that small talk reflects such illocutionary acts as remarks, tells and discloses. The components of speech acts allow the speaker to convey her rapport orientation. For instance, within the speech act of refusal, Spencer-Oatey argues that the speaker has several options:

1. Explicit refusal, e.g. *I can't make it.*
2. Expression of appreciation, e.g. *Thanks for the invitation.*

3. Excuse or explanation, e.g. *I'm busy*.
4. Expression of regret, e.g. *I'm sorry*.
5. Expression of positive feelings or wishes, e.g. *It sounds like fun / I wish I could make it*.
6. A conditional, e.g. *If you had told me earlier, I could have gone with you*.
7. Offer of an alternative, e.g. *How about Sunday?*
8. .... (Spencer-Oatey 2000a: 23)

Components of speech acts offer the speaker choices in how she wants to interact with the other participants. Spencer-Oatey further argues that speech acts offer ways of participating directly or indirectly. For instance, in the case of requests, directness may be expressed through grammatical mood e.g. use of imperative and obligation statements such as *You'll have to move that car* and indirectness through suggestory formulae e.g. *How about....* and query preparatory e.g. *Would you mind....* (Spencer-Oatey 2000a: 25). Meanwhile, Edmondson & House discuss directness and indirectness in terms of *directness markers* which they position along a scale: authoritative – unmarked – tentative (1981: 91). Along such a scale, *I want you to be here at eight o'clock tomorrow* is seen as authoritative and *Do you think you could possibly try to catch the earlier bus tomorrow?* as tentative. However, as Edmondson & House point out, the appropriate use and interpretation of directness and indirectness requires knowledge of the specific social context. For instance, *Do you think you could possibly try to catch the earlier bus tomorrow* may be seen as sarcastic and distancing within a family or intimate situation.

In the use of directness, interactants may also adopt softeners (Edmondson & House 1981: 101) or downtoners (Márquez Reiter 2000: 138, Spencer-Oatey 2000a: 23) as they try to make their participation more acceptable to other interactants. Softeners try to minimise imposition: asserting that *please* is the most common example of a softener, Edmondson & House also offer the following examples:

Close the door will you *if you don't mind*  
 I wonder if you could *possibly* close the door  
 Could I ask you to close the door

(1981: 102, authors' emphasis)

Pragmalinguistic knowledge, therefore, involves understanding interpersonal language as a feature of specific genres and its characteristics such as linguistic routines and expected topics. However, interpersonal talk should not be solely examined within non-transactional discourse. It needs to be understood within transactional language use: as interpersonal talk may be included within ‘business’ talk (Edmondson & House 1981: 200, Tracy 2002: 141):

Small talk does not *exclude* other types of talk. Thus for example Small talk may follow Business talk before a Closing, often to ratify the social relationship after a business negotiation.

(Edmondson & House 1981: 222, authors’ emphasis and capitalisation)

### 3.11.2. Identifying Sociopragmatic Resources

Sociopragmatic knowledge can help language users to manage social relationships in interpersonal language use. Such knowledge involves, first of all, understanding a range of social variables existing between speaker and hearer. These have been described in terms of distance, power, participant rights and obligations and degree of imposition. Secondly, the language user needs to respond to social variables by adhering to social rules of conduct through ‘appropriate linguistic behaviour’ (Thomas 1983: 99).

The challenge for the second-language learner is to assess and adhere to social preferences and expectancy norms which may differ between her L1 and her L2. One way of helping the L2 learner to deal with this challenge is to identify universal norms of appropriate interpersonal language use which can be applied across languages. Universal principles or maxims have been identified by Lakoff (1983), Brown & Levinson (1987) and Leech (1983) in their conceptualisation of linguistic politeness. Lakoff, for instance, developed the following ‘rules of politeness’:

1. Don’t Impose
  2. Give Options
  3. Make *A* feel good – be friendly
- (Lakoff 1973: 298)

Such 'rules' aim to give language users underlying principles when dealing with interpersonal language use. The problem with such rules is that they may be prioritised in different ways by different language users and may even appear to them to be contradictory. For instance, in trying to establish successful interpersonal language use, Lakoff's 'rule' one, *Don't Impose*, may characterise the initial moves made by a British speaker while 'rule' three, *Be friendly*, may be the guiding maxim for Mexican speakers. Furthermore, 'rule' one, which seems to call on interactants to respect social distance, may be seen to contradict 'rule' three, which seems to encourage closer and more solidary relations. In second-language interaction between non-native speakers, it may be even more difficult to agree on the interpretation of such rules and maxims. In order to overcome this potential difficulty, Aston argues that the Western learner already shares common principles and that similarities are 'likely to be far greater than differences' (1988c: 37).

In analysing the 'linguistic expression of social relationships' (1987: 49), Brown & Levinson's conceptualisation of politeness identifies relative power, social distance and ranking of the imposition (1987: 15) as key factors in achieving socially appropriate behaviour. Brown & Levinson (1987: 2) argue that, depending on the social context, politeness is expressed through different strategies: positive politeness (which they equate with solidarity), negative politeness (which they equate with restraint), and going off record (which involves the avoidance of imposition by the speaker). The choice of a specific strategy will often be directed at trying to minimise the potential threat of a given interaction on the hearer, which they label as the Face Threatening Act (FTA). By focusing on minimising the FTA as the principle motivation behind the linguistic expression of social relationships, Brown and Levinson do not consider more proactive resources employed to achieve successful social relations.

Leech (1983) draws up maxims by identifying the features of successful interpersonal language use which he describes in terms of tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy. For instance, in the first two maxims, speakers are called on to adhere to the

Tact Maxim:

- (a) Minimise cost to *other*
- (b) Maximise benefit to *other*

(Leech 1983: 132)

and to the

Generosity Maxim:

- (a) Minimise benefit to *self*
- (b) Maximise cost to *self*

(Leech 1983: 132)

Such maxims are useful in that they can help establish, develop and maintain social relations. However, as Eelen (2001: 54) points out, Leech's maxims favour the hearer at the expense of the speaker. Therefore, such maxims may not fully reflect the socially constructed nature of interpersonal language use as interactants work together to achieve successful interpersonal language use.

The rules and maxims offered by Lakoff, Brown & Levinson and Leech offer possible common social principles through which interactants engage in interpersonal language use. However, not only may such rules and maxims be interpreted in different ways, but second-language users may have difficulty in accepting differing norms of appropriate social behaviour. However, Brown & Levinson and Leech (as noted by Thomas 1983: 104), may be considered to be offering an ethnocentric model of politeness which may not be shared by all language users. This may be accentuated when two non-native speakers are trying to achieve successful interpersonal language use in another language and whose norms they may not be aware of. As Thomas (1983: 104) points out, in terms of teaching, it is perhaps easier to correct pragmalinguistic failure rather than sociopragmatic failure as sociopragmatic conventions closely reflect societal judgements, values and beliefs which may differ between the first-language and target-language cultures. In the case of L2-L2 interaction, sociopragmatic conventions may need to be constructed between interactants if they are creating their own norms of use within specific contexts such as L2-L2 small talk.

Norms of use in L2-L2 interpersonal language are established as participants achieve mutual intelligibility and acceptability which are encompassed within Hymes' definition of

communicative competence. Hymes defined communicative competence as the ability to actively take decisions as to what is *feasible, possible, appropriate* and *actually performed* in interaction (Hymes 1971: 281). Hymes stresses the importance of achieving acceptability within a specific speech community, rather than admonishing language users to adhere to external criteria such as prescriptive rules of language use. So, for instance, in this study L2-L2 small talk needs to be seen in terms of how participants achieve joint social, rather than linguistic, understandings.

### 3.11.3. Summary

Pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge provide resources for achieving successful social relations in the second language. As Thomas (1983) argues, the development of pragmalinguistic resources involves understanding the linguistic options and the force of each option. With regard to establishing social relations, sociopragmatic knowledge involves being able to make socially sensitive choices. However, as Kasper (2001: 52) points out, instant judgements concerning the use of sociopragmatic knowledge ignore the social norms against which communicative actions should be judged. This becomes even more difficult in the case of interaction between non-native speakers as they may be establishing their own norms of interpersonal language use in their own communities of use.

### 3.12. Creative Language Use

Aston's solidarity and supportiveness, Goffman's working consensus and Malinowski's phatic communion highlight the social dimension to interpersonal language use. However, while conforming to group social patterns and practices, language users also want to participate in personal ways. In the ELT context, Widdowson (1983, 1984), Tannen (1984,



1989) and Cook (1996, 1997, 2000) argue that second-language users engage in creative language use in order to express a more individual dimension to interpersonal involvement. I argue that creative language use also offers a more individual way to express solidarity and supportiveness.

### 3.12.1. Problem of Second-Language Creative Use

Widdowson (1984: 242) argues that a language learner does not just learn a language in order to follow and submit herself to the codes and conventions of language use but also to express personal concepts, perceptions and experiences. The first-language user often turns her knowledge of existing rules and codes of conduct into creative language use. Widdowson argues that this process can be observed in literature, especially with regard to poetry. For instance, he shows how Thomas Hardy ignores the use of negative placement in an attempt to express his own meaning:

→ You love not me  
And love alone can lend you loyalty;  
I know and knew it. But, unto the store  
Of human deeds divine in all but name,  
Was it not worth a little hour or more  
To add yet this: once you, a woman, came  
To soothe a time-torn man; even though it be  
→ You love not me? (1984: 244)

As Widdowson points out Hardy knew that *you don't love me* is the standard structure for *you love not me*. However, the conventional codified form presumably did not convey the meaning that he wished to express. While L1 users can engage in the literary use of language, second-language users are expected to demonstrate language proficiency by adhering to the rules of 'correct' language use and any deviation is often characterised as reflecting language deficiency (1984: 246). Therefore, if a L2 user said *you love not me*, she is more likely to be seen as deviating from established language practice rather than as

engaging in creative language use. Widdowson argues that the current teaching focus on linguistic and communicative competence ignores the efforts of the second-language user to engage in her own creative language.

While Widdowson focuses on the speaker in discussing creative language use, Carter and McCarthy argue that the study of literature and literary language also involves the reader / hearer in the construction of creative language use. For instance, Carter argues that the study of literature and literary language can help the learner understand extended meanings and the 'process of meaning creation' (1997: 155). This can be as seen, for example, through the pervasive use of creative language use in advertisements such as *You can be sure it's Schnell* promoting British Rover cars where the original Shell petrol slogan *You can be sure it's Shell* is revamped to include *schnell* (fast) in order to conjure up a parallel image of fast German cars (McCarthy & Carter 1994: 149).

At the same time, McCarthy & Carter argue that the study of poetry calls for an interpersonal response 'serving to create the active participation and involvement of the listener or reader' (1994: 146). The need for such involvement is found, for instance, in the Hopkins' poem *Heaven-Haven*.

1                    Heaven-Haven  
2            I have desired to go  
3                    Where springs not fail,  
4            To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail  
5            And a few lilies blow  
6            And I have asked to be  
7                    Where no storms come,  
8            Where the green swell is in the heavens dumb,  
9            And out of the swing of the sea.

(Hopkins 1963: 5)

Creative language use, they argue, can be seen through the use of alliteration e.g. *fields*, *flies* and *sided* (line four), variation in syntactic structure e.g. *I have desired to go* (line one) is modified to *and I have asked to be* (line six) and the foregrounding of the cohesive device *and* (line six).

Carter (1997, 2004) and McCarthy & Carter (1995) argue that there is a strong connection between everyday conversation and the literary use of language. For instance, the literary use of language can be found in the following conversation:

- B: Yes, he must have a bob or two.  
A: Whatever he does, he makes money out of it. Just like that.  
B: Bob's your uncle.  
A: He's quite a lot of money tied up in property and things like that. He's got a finger in all kinds of pies and houses and things. A couple in Bristol and one in Clevedon I think.

(Carter 2004: 95 - 96)

As Carter (2004: 96) points out, the creative use of language is often reflected through echoing as seen in the use of *bob* meaning money and *Bob* as a fixed idiom e.g. *Bob's your uncle*. Furthermore, having a *finger in all kinds of pies* is an extension of the idiomatic expression *to have a finger in every pie*. Everyday conversational literary language means that the second-language learner needs to know that language is not being used literally and the hearer may have to resort to the original meaning to understand the creative meaning. For instance, to understand the utterance *John is a horse when he eats*, the language user needs to know the idiomatic expression 'to eat like a horse' (Carter 1997: 144).

Carter argues for the importance of second-language learners being helped to understand literary language: 'The sooner language learners can come to appreciate this central component of language, the sooner they appreciate that they themselves and other users of language are essentially creative' (1997: 169). However, studying literature as creative language is problematic for the second-language user as literary language often assumes a high degree of cultural and social knowledge. For instance, Carter's example of the literary use of language in advertising, *Now is the winter of our discount tents*, can only be understood if the reader / listener is acquainted with Shakespeare's Richard III. Literary language works on the principle that there is no immediate and direct relationship between language and meaning. Therefore, the second-language reader / listener needs to go beyond developing linguistic knowledge to understand literary use and

may require a re-orientation to what was supposed to be their point of reference in the world, even a re-learning of the frames of reference within which differently possible worlds are created.

(Carter & McCarthy 1995: 307)

Understanding the literary use of a second language involves making reference to target-language norms and patterns of use. In L2-L2 interaction, such reference may not be available or relevant as L2 participants develop their own practices and patterns of use. For instance, as I discuss in 6.2.2., literary play on the 1997 film title “I Know What You Did Last Summer” fails to be appreciated by all the participants in the conversation.

### 3.12.2. Repetition: Creative Language Use in Everyday Conversation

Studying the pervasive use of creative language in everyday conversation, Tannen has examined the use of repetition as a way of creating meaning in a conversation. She argues that repetition contributes to making a point clear, is emphatic and adds new information as, for instance, in

And he knows Spanish,  
and he knows French,  
and he knows English,  
and he knows German  
and HE is a gENTleman

(Tannen 1989: 48)

The above pattern allows the speaker to insert new information with ease. The above example also demonstrates how repetition can aid cohesion as the use of *and he* indicates that the same person is being referred to throughout the text. However, Tannen goes further and argues that repetition also helps create interpersonal involvement as seen in the following example:

15 Deborah Hmmm ...  
16 Well then it works  
17 then it's a good idea

18 Peter It's a good idea in terms of eating  
 19 it's not a good idea in terms of time. (Tannen 1989: 78)

Peter's use of the pattern *it's a good idea* reflects disagreement but within a structure already provided by Deborah. It shows that Peter acknowledges and is responsive to Deborah's point of view as he offers his potentially conflictive contribution.

Tannen, therefore, sees a close relationship between creative language use and the use of repetition. Repetition is not just about filling space, or sounding fluent, reducing the new information load or connecting ideas, repetition also reflects bonding (1989: 48 - 51):

... repetition serves an over-arching purpose of creating interpersonal involvement. Repeating the words, phrases, or sentences of other speakers (a) accomplishes a conversation, (b) shows one's response to another's utterance, (c) shows acceptance of others' utterances, their participation, and them, and d) gives evidence of one's own participation. (1989: 52)

Tannen is emphasising the joint creation of interpersonal involvement. The collaborative use of repetition in the following example reflects *shadowing* – 'repeating what is being heard with a split-second delay' (Tannen 1989: 88) – as the interactants pick up on Mariana's use of the word 'stupid':

Example 3.6.

1 Mariana: no, no but you know what what the stupid cat did I mean  
 (Laughter)  
 2 Blanca: [[stupid cat]]  
 3 P/O: [[stupid cat]]  
 4 Mariana: no honestly

The example of *shadowing* here is co-operative and rapport-building, reflecting successful interpersonal language use between Mariana and the other interactants. Reciprocal

supportiveness is achieved through repetition. The repetition ratifies active listening as Blanca and the participant observer immediately repeat Mariana's key description about the cat i.e. its alleged 'stupidity'. The repetition is also humorous due to the spontaneity, simultaneity and allo-repetition (repetition of others) from Blanca and the participant-observer as they both say *stupid cat* (lines two and three) to which Mariana has to say *no honestly* (line four). Tannen argues that pleasure can often be drawn from dealing with the familiar and the repetitious (1989: 94) as can be seen in Blanca and the participant observer celebrating joint understandings (see 3.7.1.) regarding Mariana's description of the cat. Tannen summarises the relationship between repetition and creative and interpersonal language use by arguing that:

Repetition is a resource by which conversationalists together create a discourse, a relationship, and a world. It is the central linguistic-meaning strategy, a limitless resource for individual creativity and interpersonal involvement.

(Tannen 1989: 97)

### 3.12.3. Language Play

Given the problems of the cultural and social dimensions to L1 creative language use, the second-language user may find more common ground with other L2 users through language play. In 3.11.1., I discussed play as a genre. In this section I want to examine play in relation to creative language use.

Cook argues that not all communication is about transmitting and receiving information. Language play is also an important of second-language use:

Many conversations between friends and intimates contain little information, and may be regarded as instances of play and banter. These discourses are not used to solve a practical problem. They are not 'task based'. They are language for enjoyment, for the self, for its own sake.

(1997: 230)

Cook argues that the concept of language play fits in well with Aston's view that interaction is often 'motivated by the general desire to maintain harmony and well-being' (2000: 105) and language play can be achieved in different ways. Furthermore, play underlines the co-constructive dimension to creative language use which is achieved by interactants working together. To engage in creative language use, language users need to 'work' with other language users and build from established patterns and practices of language use as they depart from convention and break expectations.

Play may involve the patterning of forms which can be seen in terms of constructing phonological or grammatical parallels, emphasising exact or multiple word meaning or referring to alternative realities (Cook 2000: 123). Cook outlines the different features of language play in terms of linguistic form, semantics and pragmatics (2000: 123).

Linguistic form involves the patterning of forms as interactants 'play with grammatical structures to create parallelism and patterns' (1997: 228). Linguistic form also involves repetition (as discussed in 3.12.2.) which helps provide a supportive and interpersonal environment as texts are handed from one interactant to another (Cook 2000: 29).

In terms of semantics, Cook (2000: 123) points out that language users often play with the meaning of foreign-language words. For instance, Spanish speakers jokingly may say '*de nank you*' (which comes from 'thank you') and 'good morning in the morning' (which is a literal translation *buenos días por la mañana*). Second-language users may also humorously try to translate English-language words into Spanish. For instance, in the following example, Mariana, a Mexican PhD student, creates a parallel Spanish verb for the English verb 'to chop'. She also code-switches by using the English word 'onion' instead of the Spanish word *cebolla*:

Example 3.7.

Mariana:            como yo de mi chopear las onions  
                          (like me with my chopping onions)

Cook also points out that language users may often create an alternative reality. Such an alternative reality can be seen in the following example as Blanca, who is single, casts her self in the role of the future first lady of Mexico because, at the time, the president of Mexico was an eligible bachelor:

Example 3.8.

- 1 Blanca: the only person here with the problem it's me because I'm  
2 going to be the future first lady of Mexico so if I say  
3 something here that comes against [me  
→ 4 Mariana [we just have to be careful

The example shows that Blanca's alternative reality of being Mexico's first lady is a shared alternative reality as Mariana conspiratorially joins in with *we just have to be careful* (line four). Blanca's reference to the future first lady of Mexico reflects a shared understanding between the interactants. Aston argues (1993: 243) that the construction of rapport over time, restricted attitudes (see 3.7.2.) and a shared history allow L2 users to engage in creative language use since they share common understandings to which they enjoy access.

In terms of pragmatics, language users play with speaker meanings as a way of achieving interpersonal involvement. For instance, the following introduction to a song by blues singer Big Bill Broonzy creates a closeness with the audience due to his use of non-standard language:

This is one that I wrote back in nineteen and um forty five I think it was – forty five yeah – I did use the word 'wrote' but I don't know whether I 'wrote' it or 'writ' or what I done. But anyways I sings it.

(Cook 1996: 203)

While he never learned to read or write, Big Bill Broonzy plays around with the meaning of the word 'write' and the utterance *But anyways I sings it* reflects a playful use of non-standard language as he emphasises musical skills over literary ability.



Language play involves collaborating with other interactants in a safe and supportive environment (as seen in examples 3.6. and 3.8.). This environment may be more easily found in L2-L2 interpersonal language use where language proficiency is not judged solely in terms of adhering to the rules of ‘correct’ language use (see 3.9.). L2-L2 language play represents a potentially low-risk and low *face*-loss situation where fear of judgement from other participants may be perceived to be lower than that in L1-L2 social talk.

#### 3.12.4. Extending Meaning

Creative language use may involve language users in extending conventional understandings to new areas of meaning e.g. using words in unexpected ways to reflect different meanings and different realities. Creative language use is achieved by rearranging the “fixed and familiar” (Tannen 1989: 95) as language users “break expectations” (personal communication Courtney Cazden).

Extending meaning by ‘breaking the rules’ of accepted use can be seen in the following example with the word ‘binomial’ which is a technical term, often found in mathematics, biology and linguistics. However, Mariana, who is not involved professionally in any of these areas, extends the meaning to reflect how she feels with regards to her using English and Spanish:

#### Example 3.9.

Meal-time conversation between Mariana and Armando, Mexican PhD students, Blanca, a Portuguese PhD student, and the participant-observer (P/O).

- 1 Mariana: but I think something which is also like very good and
- 2 interesting is that you speak more than two languages. I
- 3 mean it’s interesting when one can achieve that because I

→ 4 mean sometimes I think of myself in terms of binomial like  
5 okay I'm this in Spanish and in English.

The use of the term *binomial* (line five) seems to represent the different facets of Mariana. It reflects a division in how she sees herself using when using Spanish and when using English.

Existing words can also be combined and used in novel and creative ways. For instance, in the following example, the participant-observer has been explaining the problem of comma splices. By contrast, Celia provides a down-to-earth explanation of how she perceives the function of comma splices.

#### Example 3.10.

Francesca, a Spanish MA student, Celia, a Mexican PhD student, Saeko, a Japanese MA student and the participant observer (P/O) are talking about the problems of sentence writing in English.

1 Celia: what mean splice?  
2 P/O: splice like to cut so that the comma's just cutting like up the  
3 sentence while you should really stop the sentence and put a  
4 period or full stop  
→ 5 Celia: but also it could be called a rescuing comma so you won't die  
6 because  
→ 7 Francesca (laughs)  
8 Celia: you get out of air  
→ 9 P/O mmm  
10 Celia: when you breathe those sentences.

Celia invents an apparently new term by renaming the comma splice *a rescuing comma* (line five). Rather than accepting the conventional proscription against comma splices,

Celia describes their usefulness. She is allowed to do this in a supportive environment as seen by Francesca's *laughter* (line seven) as she appreciates the innovative use of language and the participant observer's *mmm* (line nine).

To extend meaning, interactants need appreciative hearers who recognise what the speaker is trying to achieve. L2 users often find this supportive and appreciative environment among other L2 users rather than among native speakers (see 3.9.). The failure to develop a supportive L1-L2 environment may be due to the fact that, as Thomas points out, second-language users are often expected to adhere to standard behaviour and practices:

The non-native speaker who says anything other than what is expected often finds it difficult to get his / her views taken seriously.

(1983: 96)

By being expected to adhere to conventional language use, second-language users can find it difficult to come across in their own creative way in the target-language context.

### 3.13. Tension: Conformity & Creative Language Use

L2-L2 creative language use is problematic because second-language users may want to conform to others and, at the same time, interact as individuals. However, interacting in personal ways needs to be carried within a shared social context which reflects common prior knowledge, experiences and cultural knowledge. Tannen identifies this tension between conforming to other language users and interacting in personal ways in terms of:

... the need for involvement and the need to be independent; in other words, we juggle the need for and danger of being close.

(1984: 2)

Here, Mead's distinction between the creative *I* and the conforming *me* (1934: 175 - 176) is useful when examining L2-L2 interpersonal language use. The distinction highlights the

potential conflict between the second-language user's need to conform to social practice and her desire to engage in creative language use.

While recognising the fundamental social dimension to individuality (1934: 222), Mead also emphasises the potential of individuals to respond creatively to the changing nature of interaction:

... the individual is constantly reacting to the social attitudes, and changing in this co-operative process the very community to which he belongs.

(1934: 199 - 200)

Mead's assertion that the *self* is intimately linked to the selves of other individuals has crucial significance for second-language communication. Following Mead's arguments, creative L2 interpersonal language use cannot be achieved without support from other language users.

The *self* can be seen as consisting of the conscious *I* (subjective awareness and one's response to the world) and self-conscious *me* (objective experience) which reflects a more non-affective impersonal attitude towards the self (Mead 1934: 138). The subjective *I* reflects action, initiative and creativity and the objective *me* reflects conformity to and acceptance of group norms and social attitudes. The second-language user needs to interact as an individual (the subjective *I*) but also within a social context (the objective *me*). Therefore, any response by the *I* needs to work with the *me* of a social context:

It is a process in which the individual is continually adjusting himself in advance to the situation to which he belongs, and reacting back on it. So that the "I" and the "me," this thinking, this conscious adjustment, becomes then a part of the whole social process and makes a much more highly organized society possible.

(Mead 1934: 182)

The *self* only takes on an individual significance when it is contrasted with other *selves*: other interactants and other social groups. Mead sees creativity as based on an organized pattern of behaviour (1934: 221) as interactants break expectations and conventions but still interact in ways that are understandable to other participants. Creativity and the *I* only make

sense when seen against what is the norm or conventional. Therefore, the key to L2-L2 interpersonal language use must be the ability to communicate subjectively (i.e. to interact as oneself) and objectively (i.e. to position oneself in the environment of other interactants).

### 3.14. Becoming an L2 Somebody

L2 interpersonal language use involves interactional and personal choices. The ‘successful’ second-language user is aware of these choices as she seeks to establish, develop and maintain social relations in the target language. With respect to interpersonal choices, the second-language user can come across as solidary or supportive. Solidarity can be expressed through matching assessments (see 3.7.), including celebrating language use and doing agreement (see 3.7.1.). More intimate solidarity talk is achieved through restricted attitudes (see 3.7.2.) and *face* enhancement (see 3.7.3.). Supportive language use is expressed through news assessments (see 3.7.) and *supportive interchanges* (see 3.3.). With regard to personal choice, the L2 users can engage in creative language use through language play (see 3.12.3.) and extending meaning (see 3.12.4.). However, the successful L2 user needs to balance the need to conform to other language users with individual creative language use. At the same time, creative language use is not an individual enterprise and it can only be understood with reference to other language users.

However, I do not want to argue for a dichotomy between solidary / supportive and creative language use. Creative language use in L2-L2 interpersonal language use works alongside solidarity and supportiveness: creative language use can reflect an individual style of interaction whilst solidarity and supportiveness may reflect orientation towards others. At the same time, as I argued in 3.1.3 creative language use can only function through supportiveness from other language users.

As she expresses supportiveness and solidarity and engages in creative language use, the L2 user is moving towards interacting as a *somebody* in the target language. She develops ‘a

sense of community' with other interactants while reflecting the uniqueness of their relationship.

The concept of a *somebody* develops during an interaction as the interactants emphasise the uniqueness of a social relationship. Sacks (1970 - 1971) argues that storytelling can reflect the way an individual – as a *somebody* – feels about an incident and how she has experienced it. As the storyteller relates the narrative, her listeners may either share or appreciate the story and therefore a link may develop between the speaker and the hearer as *somebodies* involved in the storytelling. The *somebody* - *anybody* distinction is also explored by Schenkein who says that a salesperson can interact with a prospective client on an impersonal transactional level or, alternatively, she can specifically orient herself personally towards the client. Schenkein (1978) argues that both the impersonal transactional and the personal interactional identities are present in business encounters as the interactants move between official identity personalities (e.g. salesperson-client) and unofficial identity personalities (e.g. participants sharing common interests and experiences). It is the unofficial identity personality that allows the salesperson to interact as a *somebody*.

Aston builds on Sacks' view of a *somebody* as a individual who shares / appreciates personal feelings and experiences with specific interactants and Schenkein's identification of the personally-defined dimension to transactional relations. Aston (1988c: 303, 1989: 305, 1993: 235) claims that a key feature of interpersonal encounters are 'restricted attitudes' – attitudes not shared with an *anyone* (see 3.7.2.). Restricted attitudes reflect a degree of intimacy held between two *somebodies*. Restricted attitudes are personally defined between participants and reflect sharedness and appreciation as interactants explore the uniqueness of their relationship in terms of the supportiveness and solidarity (see 3.7.). The language of *somebodies* can be identified through the joint expression of extreme attitudes (1988c: 303, 1989: 305), the sharing of common ground on controversial topics as opposed to 'safe' topics (1988c: 304, 1989: 306). For instance, Aston offers the following example of a customer and a client sharing increasingly restricted attitudes regarding an author's excessive media exposure:

Customer: [He's too popular (0.1)] He-  
 Assistant: Well-  
 Customer: He's too telly-minded or [something (0.1)] [laughs]  
 Assistant: [Hhh (0.1)]  
 Assistant: Yes, appearing on: er  
 Customer: Hh.  
 Assistant: On Call my Bluff

(Aston 1988c: 295)

As the customer expresses a critical and controversial attitude about a popular author, the shop assistant supports the uncomplimentary remarks by supplying the name of the television programme on which the author appears. In this way, the interaction reflects the talk of 'us' or two *somebodies* rather than the talk of two *anybodies*.

### 3.15. Interpersonal Language Use & Choice

Interactional and personal choices reflect the jointly-constructed nature of interpersonal language use. Such choices can be seen in terms of Halliday's framework of *interpersonal* language use as both the *interactional* and *personal* dimensions help the L2 user to achieve successful social relations.

First of all, L2 users have *interactional* choices. Participants can establish, develop and maintain social relations through expressing supportiveness or solidarity depending on the degree of involvement or commitment they want to achieve with other interactants. Choices develop within L2-L2 in norms of use which I have argued can be described within Hymes' framework of communicative competence i.e. what is *feasible*, *possible*, *appropriate* and *actually performed* (see 3.11.2). The way choices are made can be examined at a local level through conversation analysis e.g. turn-taking practices and adjacency pairs and at a more universal level through interactional sociolinguistics (see 4.2.2.) e.g. *face*, *face-* enhancement, *celebrating* language use, supportive interchanges and working consensus.

Secondly, L2 users also have choices with regard to the resources that they wish to employ in a given social situation. I have described these resources in terms of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge which may come from the L2 user's first language or may develop in the second language. As I argued in 3.11, pragmalinguistic knowledge gives L2 users a range of linguistic resources for engaging in social interaction while sociopragmatic knowledge provides a source for social principles and social 'rules'.

Furthermore, L2 users have *personal* choices. There is a choice in regarding how the L2 learner *presents* herself and whether she wants to participate as a *somebody* or as an *anybody*. When interacting with other L2 users, second-language speakers can adhere to conventional language use or engage in creative language use which Mead has described in terms of the creative *I* and the conforming *me* (see discussion 3.13). Creative language use helps the second-language user to interact as a *somebody* by developing a greater degree of intimacy and sense of community with other interactants as she underlines the uniqueness of their relationship.

### 3.16. Conclusion: The Importance of *Somebody*

The concept of a *somebody* is key to successful interpersonal language use. A *somebody* is socially co-constructed as an interactant relates to other interactants through the use of solidarity, supportiveness and creative language use. However, the L2 learner may need help in understanding the choices available to her and how to employ supportiveness / solidarity, convention / creative language use and pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic resources in effective ways so that she can interact in the way she wants to in L2-L2<sup>4</sup> social talk.

An L2 user who can choose to be a *somebody* (or an *anybody*) has reached a level of expertise in how she interacts in the target language. She has different means at her disposal to achieve successful interpersonal relations: she uses supportiveness and solidarity to



express conformity with target-language users; she uses creative language use to interact in her own way in a given situation. However, she is well aware that creative language use can only be achieved within a social context. Since she frequently perceives native speakers as expecting her to conform to standard behaviour and practices, the L2 user often finds that she achieves more successful interpersonal relationships with other non-native speakers where she can also engage in creative language use. As I argued in 3.12.3., participants may perceive L2-L2 social talk as a potentially lower-risk and lower *face*-loss situation than L1-L2 talk.

The challenge for L2 teaching and learning is to provide the learner with opportunities and resources so she can express supportiveness, solidarity and creative language use and develop the ability to interact as a *somebody* in the target language.

In chapters five and six, I want to analyse how second-language users use this expertise and knowledge of interpersonal language use to achieve successful social relations in the target language especially in their interaction with other non-native language users. However, before engaging in analysis, I now need to describe how I attempted to study interpersonal language use within the second-language context. Therefore, I will describe in the next chapter the research project methodology and design.

## Chapter 4

### Research Design & Methodology

#### 4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I develop the research design by positioning my study within different models of discourse analysis and describing the type of research I am undertaking. I outline the research problem, the overarching research question and specific research questions regarding how second-language users achieve successful L2-L2 social relations. I discuss data collection methods, describing the participants and the empirical setting. While my data analysis builds on Aston's description of solidarity and supportiveness, I also review the problem of examining L2-L2 interpersonal language use and how the procedure of examining such discourse might differ from L1-L1 interpersonal language use.

#### 4.2. Locating the Research

Empirical data is important to my thesis because I need to 'localise' the theoretical underpinnings of L2 interpersonal language use – as described in chapter three – within a specific and situated empirical context (Brown & Dowling 1998: 10). Mealtime conversation gave me an opportunity to study how second-language users developed, established and maintained social relations in the target-language context.

The study of mealtime talk was carried out in a university hall of residence in London, England, where I recorded the conversations of postgraduate students in education in the context in which they naturally occurred. Mealtime conversation has been a rich source for

studying different aspects of interpersonal language use e.g. socialisation and sociability (Blum-Kulka 1990, 1997, 2000); bilingualism (Blum-Kulka & Sheffer 1993); expression of involvement and independence (Tannen 1981, 1984); and levels of involvement between participants (Eggins & Slade 1997: 170).

In examining second-language social relations, I want to observe language-in-use and identify L2-L2 patterns and practices as second-language users establish, develop and maintain successful interpersonal language use. Therefore, I have to observe how language users 'do' social relations in a specific context i.e. situated use. As Schiffrin (1994: 418) argues, one discipline is not enough to examine structure, function and context in discourse. Consequently, I adhere to three established approaches in examining L2 interpersonal language-in-use: conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics. Conversation analysis identifies the structural and sequential nature of naturally-occurring conversation (see 3.5.). Interactional sociolinguistics offers a way to study the function of language in developing social relations (see 3.9.). Pragmatic concepts / theories offer a way to examine how second-language users develop linguistic and social resources in order to interact in the target language (see 3.11.). These three approaches allow me to continue building on the theoretical framework developed in chapter three: Sacks *et al.* (conversation analysis), Goffman's concept of *face* and working consensus (interactional sociolinguistics) and Leech and Thomas (pragmatic resources).

It must be acknowledged that each approach to a great extent is not easily compatible with the others and I will not attempt to reconcile them. However, I believe each perspective has a contribution to make: conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics can each offer insights into the study of L2-L2 interpersonal language use as I outline below.

#### 4.2.1. Conversation Analysis: Structure

Conversation analysis supports my examination of interpersonal language use because it provides one way of describing how participants engage in social talk. It does this in four ways. First of all, rather than focusing on the single utterance, conversation analysis examines how interactants work on previous participant contributions in establishing, developing and maintaining social relations. Through studying turn-taking practices (see 3.5.1.), conditional relevance (see 3.5.2.) and adjacency pairs (see 3.5.3.), conversation analysis describes the sequential next-utterance organisation of language use. Therefore, CA analysis examines how participants reach common understandings through ‘stretches’ of social talk. Secondly, as Aston argues (1988c: 110, 1989: 115), conversation analysis provides a way of understanding how interactants use conventional understandings e.g. turn-taking practices (see 3.5.1.) and membership categorisation devices (see 3.9.) when engaged in interpersonal language use. CA examines routines and procedures which participants use in L2-L2 social talk. Thirdly, CA is emic i.e. data driven (rather than category driven) and does not impose an external frame of reference (Taylor 2001: 16). It describes local contextualized patterns and practices of language-in-use and examines how interactants seek social order in everyday conversation (Schiffrin 1994: 232). Therefore, CA analysis examines how interactants themselves seek order and structure in social talk. Finally, as Aston claims (1988c: 113; 1989: 18), conversation analysis allows one to deal with both interpersonal and transactional language use since it does not distinguish between achieving social or transactional outcomes but rather focuses on the local management of talk.

Conversation analysis, however, has limitations when it comes to analysing L2-L2 social talk. First of all, CA does not try to explain the processes whereby participants try to achieve successful social relations. For instance, it does not examine the processes of *facework* (see 3.3.) and *supportive interchanges* (see 3.3.) as interactants work together to satisfy mutual interpersonal concerns. This is one of the strengths of interactional sociolinguistics which tries to understand the motivation behind interpersonal language use

which can be described in terms of supportiveness and solidarity. Secondly, conversation analysis only examines unfolding discourse in a specific local context. It does not consider universal patterns and practices of interpersonal language use that participants may take from their first language which is one of the strengths of pragmatics. Thirdly, CA does not take into consideration intertextual references which may emerge within the target language or be taken from the interactants' first language. For example, instances of code-switching reflect reference to external texts which is not the concern of conversation analysis as it restricts itself to analysing the local management of talk in interaction.

#### **4.2.2. Interactional Sociolinguistics: Function**

Like conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics offers one way of understanding 'how language is situated in particular circumstances of social life' (Schiffrin 1994: 97). However, unlike CA, interactional sociolinguistics is theory driven, building partly on the work of Goffman and his concepts of *face* (see 3.3.), *supportive interchanges* (see 3.3.) and working consensus (see 3.9.). (This is not to say that CA is without theoretical foundations but rather data leads to theorising.) With regard to interpersonal language use, interactional sociolinguistics describes how participants seek alignments that lead to the establishment, development and maintenance of solidarity and supportiveness (see 3.7.). It allows me to look at the function of L2-L2 interpersonal language use as second-language users establish social relations.

#### **4.2.3. Pragmatics: L2 User Resources**

Like conversation analysis and interactional sociolinguistics, pragmatics is the study of language in action and, as Spencer-Oatey (2000a: 39) argues, pragmlinguistic and sociopragmatic resources reflect conventions through which interactants manage

interpersonal relations. Within the second-language context, pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics offer ways of examining how second-language users employ relational and social resources to achieve successful L2-L2 social relations. Pragmatics is theory driven as it categorises patterns of language use and, in the context of interpersonal language use, assumes that there are universal patterns behind language-in-use (c.f. Lakoff (1973), Brown & Levinson (1987) and Leech (1983)) (see 3.11.2.). Pragmatics allows me to look at the cultural, social and linguistic resources the L2 user brings to L2-L2 interpersonal language use.

#### 4.2.4. Methodological Differences

Building on the different insights into interpersonal language use provided by conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics, I use each as a lens to see the data in a different way. However, conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics represent very different approaches to discourse analysis. Conversation analysis examines how interactants construct a sense of social reality, 'offering very close and detailed analyses of the workings of specific devices or structures in the construction of talk' (Schiffrin 1994: 409). Meaning resides in the text. In contrast, interactional sociolinguistics offers a wider framework of social, cultural and personal meaning (Schiffrin 1994: 407). Social and linguistic meanings are created during interaction as interactants arrive at a working consensus and engage in *supportive interchanges* (see 3.3.). Pragmatics looks at social and linguistic resources and knowledge that the L2 user brings from her L1 or develops in the L2.

My purpose here is not to reconcile different approaches to discourse analysis but rather to argue that they each provide important insights into understanding L2 interpersonal language use. Conversation analysis helps me to understand structure and sequence and 'uncover the tacit reasoning procedures and sociolinguistic competencies underlying the production and interpretation of talk in organized sequences of interaction' (Hutchby &

Wooffitt 1998: 14). Interactional sociolinguistics offers a way to study the function of language in developing social relations. Interactants use language to create and sustain involvement as they interact with others (Gumperz 1982: 4). Pragmatics helps me to identify the resources used and the judgements made by second-language users when engaging in L2 interpersonal language use. It offers a way to examine how L2 users can interact interpersonally with other L2 users when they may not be adhering to target language norms of language use.

#### **4.2.5. Features of Interpersonal Language Use**

Despite their differences, conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics all reflect ways of examining interpersonal language use. Interpersonal language use is a social process whereby participants interactively work together to achieve develop successful social relations. Interpersonal language is not a matter of the speaker transferring meaning to the hearer or ‘...the product of two “speaker-hearers” who attempt to exchange information or convey messages to each other’ (Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998: 1). Interpersonal language use reflects social interaction as it involves using language to express involvement with and concern about others. In achieving successful interpersonal language use, interactants have choices with regard how they want to interact with others and choices in how they want to present themselves. Such choices involve expressing conformity with others or engaging in creative language use (as discussed in 3.15.).

#### **4.3. Research Problem**

In describing the features of interpersonal language use, I have indicated that the L2 user needs to conform to L2 social practices but also she may attempt to interact in her own individual way by engaging in creative language use. There is a potential conflict between

these expressions of interpersonal language use because the L2 learner needs to adhere to mutually acceptable patterns and practices of interpersonal language use within a given social context before she can engage in creative language use. At the same time, context may not be fixed, especially in phatic language use where small talk may create context. Therefore, the research problem I am investigating is: how can a second language user successfully interact in the target-language social context with other second-language speakers while also engaging in creative language use?

#### 4.4. Overarching Research Question

In trying to identify how second-language users achieve successful interpersonal relations in the target-language, I have been pursuing one overarching research question throughout this thesis:

How do L2 users achieve successful social relations with other L2 users?

Successful social relations call for engagement with and concern for other interactants. Furthermore, participants need to interact in positive, proactive and contextually sensitive ways. ‘Positive’ means that participants are trying to find ways to establish, develop and maintain social relations e.g. through the use of solidarity, supportiveness and creative language use. ‘Proactive’ language use means that the participants are trying to interact as a *somebody* who knows how to manage interpersonal language use and knows what she wants to achieve from L2 social relations. ‘Contextual sensitivity’ means that the second-language user is aware of the constantly changing nature context of interpersonal language use as participants establish, develop, maintain, enhance, celebrate or even lose relationships.

The positive, proactive and contextually sensitive features of interpersonal talk offer the second-language user choices with regard to how she wants to align herself with other



participants and how she herself wants to interact in the second language in terms of conventional vis-à-vis creative language use. Furthermore, the terms ‘positive’, ‘proactive’ and ‘contextually sensitive’ are important in describing successful L2 interpersonal language use as they provide a basis from which to develop pedagogical activities in the second-language teaching and learning context.

#### **4.5. Specific Research Questions**

In order to achieve positive, proactive and contextually sensitive L2 social relationships, the second-language user needs to engage in interpersonal language practices and patterns of use. Patterns and practices reflect common understandings which may come from L1 or may develop in L2. Therefore, my first specific research question is:

1. What are the interactional practices that characterise L2-L2 interpersonal language use?

Besides examining the interactional structure of interpersonal language use, I also want to examine the practices and patterns that reflect common understandings between the L2 users. Such understandings need to be examined within a specific localised context. I have chosen the context of small talk during meal times at a United Kingdom university hall of residence.

Since interpersonal language use reflects social action, I also need to understand how L2 interactants work together in co-constructed ways to achieve successful social relations and how they express interest in and affiliation to other participants. Therefore, my second specific research question is:

2. How do L2 interactants express concern for and engagement with other L2 users?

In order to achieve successful social relations in the target language, the second-language user already has a working knowledge of interpersonal language use from her first language. If this were not the case, the foreign language user would have to learn new ways of expressing herself interpersonally every time she learned another language. At the same time, the L2 user is developing her knowledge and experiences in the target language. This leads to my third specific research question:

3. What resources does the L2 user employ in order to achieve successful interpersonal language use in the second language?

Concern and engagement reflect conformity and conventional language use. However, L2 users may also want to demonstrate more creative and individual ways of expressing appreciation and rapport. This leads to my fourth research question:

4. How do L2 interactants engage in creative language use with other L2 users?

In examining conventional and creative language use, I can observe how the second-language user participates as a *somebody* who makes choices with regard to how she wants to interact with others.

Since an important aim of the thesis is to propose pedagogic intervention that will help the L2 user to come across supportively and creatively in the target language, my fifth specific research question is:

5. How can second-language users be given opportunities to develop interpersonal language ability within the L2 learning context?

## 4.6. Data Collection

In order to understand L2-L2 interpersonal language use, I needed to collect data that reflected how L2 users develop, establish and maintain social relations. My first attempts focused principally on the EFL classroom where I tried to examine interpersonal language use through the use of questionnaires and role plays. However, problems with lack of context and lack of social purpose led me to look outside the classroom in examining L2-L2 interpersonal language use.

### 4.6.1. Initial Attempts: Questionnaires & Role Plays

As Scott & Usher (1999: 67) argue, questionnaires aim to provide researchers with a large sample of standardised information. Such information can be analysed for frequency counts or underlying relationships between the respondents' answers. For instance, questionnaires may reveal recurring patterns of interpersonal language use. Through the use of questionnaires, I asked respondents to listen to dialogues taken from an ELT textbook, *Focus on Grammar: An Intermediate Course for Reference and Practice* (Fuchs, Bonner & Westheimer: 2000), and examine the textbook characters' use of interpersonal language. In a pilot study, I applied 25 questionnaires to intermediate-level high-school and adult students and, outside the classroom, to proficient language users. However, I came across data collection problems as the subjects interpreted and responded to the textbook contexts in different ways. Respondents varied in their perception of supportiveness, distance, politeness etc. Consequently, I found it difficult to identify patterns and practices of interpersonal language use.

Questionnaires did not offer opportunities for respondents to produce their own language. Therefore, I set up role-plays in intermediate-level EFL classes to examine how students tried to achieve successful social relations. As Eisenstein & Brodman (1993: 75) argue, role

plays allow the researcher to examine interactive aspects of language use. While not reflecting real-life use, role plays allow the researcher to examine patterns and practices that the L2 user tries to adopt. I set up five role-play situations to examine whether they provided opportunities for studying interpersonal language use. The role plays involved acquaintances and friends running across one another while queuing at a bank or outside a cinema and where there was a social obligation to talk to each other. In the role plays, interactants tended to use conventional expressions and seemed to be practising language structures rather than trying to develop successful social relations. More importantly, the role plays lacked a real-life purpose for engaging in interpersonal language use.

Questionnaire and role-play data were useful in that they provided me with insights into L2 interpersonal language use e.g. the use of adjacency pairs. However, such data collection methods did not overcome the problem of examining successful interpersonal language use in a real-life context. The classroom roleplays lacked a biographical dimension as students acted out small talk sequences when there was no real interest or motivation for engaging in social discourse with other students. (While of limited use for collecting data, roleplays do form a key part of my proposals for pedagogical intervention where, following Aston (1988c, 1989), I attempt to overcome the problem of lack of biographical detail and lack of L2 learner interest in roleplays – see 7.7.3.1.).

I also carried out interviews in Guadalajara, Mexico, with subjects who had lived or were living in the United States or the United Kingdom, with the purpose of trying to understand how the second-language user sees herself over time establishing and developing social relations in the second language and how she sees herself engaging in the creative language use in the target language. However, since I was unable to satisfactorily separate L2-L2 interaction from L1-L2 interaction, I have not used the interview data in this thesis. However, the interviews influenced my study of L2-L2 interpersonal language use in that they revealed that L2 users actively engaged in co-operative and creative practices in the target-language language context as they attempted participate in different social groups.

#### 4.6.2. Participant Observation

To study L2-L2 talk, I needed to gain access to authentic interpersonal language use in the second-language context. In order to examine transactional language use, researchers can observe subjects trying to achieve transactional goals. With interpersonal language the task is much more challenging. I needed to see second-language interactants participating in a 'natural' environment where there was a high likelihood of interpersonal language use.

As I was trying to find ways of obtaining naturally occurring data, an 'opportunity sample' (Brown & Dowling 1998: 29) emerged at meal times at the London university hall of residence where I was staying. I had already developed friendly relations with other residents, particularly with Mexican students. Because of this developing relationship and my own postgraduate studies, I was able to integrate myself with other students not only as a participant observer but, also, to a limited degree, as a 'practitioner observer' or 'legitimate participant' (Brown & Dowling 1998: 46) who was also studying at postgraduate level. Therefore, unlike some participant observation studies, I did not have to integrate myself into a community in order to observe it. For instance, in Blum-Kulka's (2000) study of dinner talk, the participant-observer was a guest.

Even though I was an L1 speaker, I was actively interacting in the same academic environment as the participants of the study e.g. sharing ideas, offering and receiving support and advice and sometimes attending the same classes in the university, I think that I produced a 'contextually acceptable performance' (Brown & Dowling 1998: 46) rather than just interacting as a participant observer.

I assured the participants that all recordings would remain strictly confidential and that they would be given anonymity.

### 4.6.3. Interviews

To gain further insights from the taped L2-L2 talk, I interviewed both Mexican and non-Mexican participants. In the interviews with the Mexican participants (see 4.8.), I explored aspects of L2-L2 interpersonal language use regarding the expression of supportiveness and solidarity (see chapter five) and creative language use (see chapter six). The interviews aimed to achieve some degree of triangulation with my own interpretation of the recorded information by interviewing participants after making the recordings. I interviewed non-Mexican interactants in order to gain insights into how other NNSs perceived the Mexican participants to be interacting (see, for instance, in example 3.1., where I report Blanca's perception of Armando's interpersonal language use). However, I purposely limited the number of interviews I carried out as I did not want participants to speculate on the nature of the research by scrutinising the interview questions.

Interviews were carried out in the hall of residence which was the participants' preferred location with one exception when an interview with Blanca, the Portuguese PhD student, took place in the university at her request since she did not want her comments and reflections to be possibly overheard by other hall residents. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. I carried out semi-structured interviews in order to gain further insights into how the participants viewed the interaction, their evaluation of their participation and that of others, and how they felt during the interaction. I showed transcripts of the meal-time conversations to the participants. Although the follow-up interviews were useful in understanding the L2 users' supportive, solidary and creative language practices, participants found it difficult to reflect on conversations in which they had been making instant choices with regard to the way they wanted to interact and, as Márquez Reiter (2000: 80) argues, interactants were reflecting on an event that was no longer in situ. This position also finds support from Malone:

We cannot understand how self-presentation takes place and how it structures interaction by studying what people say about their behavior in interviews or surveys, or by what ethnographers' notes describe, or by what can be culled about

attitudes and beliefs from cultural products, whether written down or enacted. It is the actual details of interpersonal behavior found in talk that must be studied.

(1997: 140)

Therefore, Malone seems to be advocating a conversation analysis view in trying to study interpersonal language use.

#### **4.7. Social Setting**

The postgraduate students belonged (among others) to two communities: the university, which reflected an academic community; and the university hall of residence, which reflected a fluid multicultural community. An atmosphere of temporality characterised the nature of interpersonal relationships in the hall of residence as students were normally in England for short periods of time. However, that did not mean that residents did not seek out opportunities to 'relate' to other residents especially since they were in a foreign culture of 'others' and needed to establish some sense of identity i.e. that of 'us'. In understanding the residents' attitudes and beliefs, I was able to use a study previously carried out on the same hall of residence by Santos (1999).

Social groupings at the hall of residence were often based on ethnicity, race or professional area of interest (Santos 1999). Certain groups appeared to be fairly well-established and seemingly 'closed' to outsiders, especially since their members would speak in their first language at meal-times. While reflecting a 'loose' social grouping, the Mexican participants more often than not interacted with those students who did not belong to 'closed' groups. Although they sometimes just talked with each other in Spanish, the Mexican participants often actively sought out opportunities to interact in English.

#### 4.8. Participants

While the hall of residence catered to a wide variety of nationalities, I was especially interested in trying to understand how Mexican EFL users expressed themselves interpersonally in the target-language context. I could equally have chosen EFL users from other nationalities – indeed the study includes substantial data from Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish interactants with lesser contributions from French, Hong Kong, Icelandic, Indian, Italian and South African participants.

I chose Mexican participants because I live and work in Mexico and I want to try to relate my findings and analysis to the Mexican second-language teaching and learning context. My knowledge of Mexican Spanish (including interpersonal language use), which I consider to be at a fluent level, may allow me to understand how the Mexican EFL speaker uses their first-language resources in English.

I studied the local empirical setting at the university hall of residence in three ten-week term periods between 2000 and 2002. I focused particularly on 16 Mexican participants who, while interacting among themselves, also interacted with students from a range of countries, especially from Japan, Portugal and Spain. Therefore, the language of interaction of the Mexican participants tended to be in English rather than in Spanish. While the university hall of residence caters to over 60 nationalities at any one time, interaction with a wider range of nationalities does not appear on the tapes because of the opportunistic nature of data collection and the reluctance of some subjects to be recorded.

Since I am interested in how L2 users construct “successful” interpersonal relations and express their individuality in the target-language context, I considered that 16 participants were sufficient to allow me to examine individual interpersonal experiences within a specific second-language context. None of the participants was informed about the purpose of the study beyond my openly stated interest in wanting to record L2 conversation.



The 16 participants (eight women and eight men) were all PhD students researching widely differing areas of education (e.g. child development, gender studies, mathematics and urban development). They studied in London for varying lengths of time while carrying out their research in Mexico. Their ages ranged from 28 to 48. None of the participants were English-language teachers. They reflected varying levels of English language proficiency and most of them had not taken a formal exam in order to be accepted on to the doctoral programme although two subjects had obtained their MA qualification in England.

Seven of the participants figure more strongly than others in the study. I offer brief biographies below in order to describe these participants as individuals rather than with any intention of trying to categorise them. Consequently, in no way does the biographical information aim to be comprehensive or even comparable between participants. Rather, I try to provide relevant background information which helps the reader to understand the participants' particular participation in the different examples of interpersonal language use (e.g. the fact that Celia is divorced is relevant in understanding example 6.5.).

To protect the anonymity of the participants, all names have been changed:

- Armando, late forties, works as a mathematics lecturer in a Mexico City university. Intermediate language user of English. While feeling limited by his level of English, Armando felt he could still express himself in the second language in the way he wanted to. He actively sought out conversation in English with other interactants.
- Celia, late forties, divorced, works as a lecturer in education in Mexico City and has two teenage children whom she raises on her own. High intermediate language user of English. She obtained her MA in England ten years previously. She has had trouble trying to finish her doctoral studies and said that she was in London to finish her degree and that she was not particularly interested in interacting with other students.

- Esteban, early forties, lecturer in a Mexico City university. Extremely proficient English-language user. He tended to interact with Spanish-speaking students from Latin America, especially from Argentina.
- Josué, late forties, married. Mexico City university lecturer in urban development studies. He is a near-native speaker of English who spent his youth in the United States. He was not particularly interested in interacting with other students but rather in being upgraded from MPhil to Ph.D. level.
- Lidia, late twenties, young mother with two young children who works in both a private and a public university in Mexico City. Intermediate language user of English. She actively sought out conversation in English with other students.
- Mariana, late twenties, from Mexico City, recently finished her MA in gender studies in England. Proficient English-language user. She was interested in knowing about the British culture and interacting with native speakers.
- Tania, married, early forties, works and lives in Cuernavaca as a school director. Intermediate English-language user. She recognised her limitations in English and actively sought out conversation in English.

Students willingly gave up their privacy and allowed me to tape them. Why? Perhaps for the simple reason that postgraduate students knew how difficult it is to obtain research data and therefore they were willing to help me out. Perhaps a sense of community at the hall of residence also helped me to obtain the information that I was looking for.

I recognise that the Mexican participants may not represent a balanced cross-section of language users with regard to age or Mexico's geographical regions – nearly all the participants came from the capital, Mexico City. However, I had to work with the participants at hand.

#### 4.9. Specific Choice of Data

Having adopted a qualitative analytic approach (see 4.2.) and having obtained naturally-occurring instances of L2-L2 interpersonal language use (see 4.6.), I was then faced with deciding which interactions to specifically focus on.

First of all, I selected examples that reflect complete patterns of L2-L2 interpersonal language use as opposed to others which are less complete. Secondly, I chose extracts which I felt could be used to highlight as succinctly as possible the analytic themes of solidarity, supportiveness and creative language use. Thirdly, I selected examples that are relatively short and concise as opposed to presenting long drawn-out extracts. Finally, I have tried to present extracts which are likely to be more interesting to the reader rather than merely offering everyday instances of interpersonal language use.

#### 4.10. Data Collection Procedures & Problems

When the participants arrived at the meal table, I asked for permission to record the conversation. Little surprise was made of recording as the participants knew I was an English-language teacher. Laughter was a common reaction as I asked permission to record a conversation e.g.

Example 4.1.

Participant / Observer:	you don't mind me taping this?
Armando:	(0.3) what?
Blanca	[(laughter)
Mariana	[(laughter)
Participant / Observer:	can I?

Armando: do I? don't worry about it

and jokes were often made about the recording, as seen, for instance, by Francesca's reference to her parents:

Example 4.2.

Francesca: you not use it with my parents

The participants were not openly informed about the purpose of the research and I feel that its concealed purpose was necessary in order to avoid participant bias in unnecessarily providing, manipulating, exaggerating or withholding (intentionally or otherwise) interpersonal patterns of L2 language use. However, the participants may have speculated on the purpose behind the research since I conducted follow-up interviews (as mentioned in 4.6.3.). In the interviews, I told participants that I wanted to clarify certain comments that they had made or what they understood other interactants to have said.

As I previously mentioned, meal-time conversations were not staged and I usually only taped when Mexican participants were present. I tried to avoid setting up conversations as I felt that the participants' subsequent conversation would seem to have an obvious transactional motive i.e. purely providing interpersonal data for my thesis. Due to classes at the university, study schedules, assignments deadlines, etc., the participants' attendance at meals was erratic. There were numerous occasions where no taping went on. Interactants could choose where to sit – which was sometimes at another table. As meals were served over a one-hour period, participants would often arrive in the middle of the recording session. There was little degree of control as the participants were free to talk about any subject and I made no attempt to include non-participants in the conversation.

The tape recorder, a large Sony Walkman with an external microphone, was openly placed on the table, and therefore, the recording process was obvious to anyone joining the table. Immediately after the recordings, I transcribed the data so I could start analysing the

management of L2-L2 interpersonal language. Data collection and data analysis went hand in hand.

No attempt was made to force participants to speak in English although English tended to be the language of conversation due to the presence of different nationalities at the table. However, there are numerous instances of code-switching in the data and the participants were recorded on two occasions speaking in Spanish when there were only Spanish speakers present.

Participant observation helped me to integrate into a specific context but, as to be expected, with choosing any data collection method, other problems emerged. Participant observation data collection tended to be extremely time-consuming as I needed to wait for a participant to appear at meal times and I had no guarantee that one would turn up or, as previously mentioned, would sit at my table.

Furthermore participant observation did not allow me to control subject variables such as age and language proficiency or to investigate different aspects of interpersonal language use such as comparing L2 user styles in achieving rapport with other L2 users.

#### **4.11. Data Analysis & Data Analysis Problems**

I adopted a qualitative analytic approach to examining L2-L2 rapport since I was looking for patterns and practices of interpersonal language use rather than trying to quantify the frequency of interpersonal language use. Through conversation analysis, I wanted to see how patterns and practices emerged during L2-L2 interaction in a specific local context. Through focusing on very specific aspects of interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics, I wanted to examine how interactants express solidarity and supportiveness, engage in creative language use and employ relational and social resources as they develop and manage L2 rapport. Therefore, I tried to benefit from three analytical approaches: an

approach derived from the data and two approaches imposed on the data. Such analyses helped provide me with a language of description as I continued to develop the concept of the L2 *somebody*.

The analytical approaches selected here are not without problems in studying L2 interpersonal language use. First of all, conversation analysis may be seen as an inappropriate approach for analysing L2-L2 discourse. Conversation analysts (e.g. Wagner, 1996, and Firth, 1996 quoted in Seedhouse 1998) argue that conversation analysis is normally undertaken within a first-language community where linguistic competence is taken for granted. It is not carried out among second-language users who may reflect different levels of L2 language proficiency. Conversation analysis often assumes that interactants understand and interact within a context in the same way and this may not be the case in L2-L2 interpersonal language use. This view has been strongly argued against by Seedhouse (1998) who claims that context and knowledge are not 'givens' but develop within a given local context: interactants are 'actively evoking and creating a context, a social world.....' (1998: 86). Conversation analysis examines the organisation and sequentiality of talk in terms of turn-taking (see 3.5.1.), conditional relevance (see 3.5.2.) and adjacency pairs (see 3.5.3.). This is carried out in a local context. The local context may reflect L1-L1, L1-L2 or L2-L2 conversation but, as Seedhouse argues, the same methodological principles apply:

Since every interactional environment is unique, each extract will have to be approached in a way which is uniquely sensitive to that environment, whilst at the same time uncovering the 'organisational machinery' which was able to produce this individual, unique environment.

(1998: 101)

The use of interactional sociolinguistics as an analytical approach may also be problematic as I am assuming that interactants want to achieve varying degrees of involvement and closeness. However, as Tannen (1984:18) points out, this may not be the case. Too much involvement and closeness may actually stifle successful social relations. I therefore consider in chapter six whether successful L2-L2 social relations can also be analysed in terms of interaction between L2 *anybodies* as opposed to L2 *somebodies*. Interaction

between L2 *anybodies* reflects competent language use but also detachment and non-involvement e.g. negative politeness as opposed to positive politeness (see 3.11.2.) as participants demonstrate distance and ‘mutual respect for territorial reserves’ (Aston 1988b: 93). Such interpersonal talk reflects attitudes and opinions that *anyones* might hold in an attempt to maintain cordial and acceptable, rather than personalised, social relations.

#### 4.12. Alternative Approaches to Data Analysis

While I have followed a conversation analysis approach and adopted very specific aspects of interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics in studying L2-L2 interpersonal language use, I could have adopted other approaches such as ethnography of speaking and critical discourse analysis. Ethnography of speaking would have allowed me to study the culture of the group in terms of beliefs, values and behaviour. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) would have allowed me to study the choices interactants made as they constructed and pursued their particular ideological interests and motivations within interpersonal language use. Such interests and motivations are often framed in terms of power and gender relations and can be manifested through dominance, racism and sexism.

##### 4.12.1. Ethnography of Speaking

Researchers using an ethnography of speaking approach are interested in studying the culture and behaviour of a specific group in terms of how it acts in the world and how community members understand the world (Cameron 2001: 47). Ethnography of speaking studies what it means to be a competent member of a culture. Hymes described this competence as *communicative competence* i.e. the speaker’s ability to adhere to norms of use regarding what is *possible, feasible, appropriate* and *actually performed* (as discussed

in 3.11.2). As Cameron (2001: 55) notes, Hymes's concept of *communicative competence* identifies the rules of speaking within specific communities.

I use Hymes' concept of *communicative competence* with regards to identifying how L2-L2 norms of interpersonal language use are established but I do not pursue *communicative competence* in the wider context of linking linguistic knowledge with cultural knowledge because the participants in this study are not all members of the same cultural community. As I discussed in 4.7., the participants were in England for short periods of time. They interacted closely at meal-times but only occasionally during the day due to the nature of their PhD studies as they spent considerable amounts of time on their own – reading, writing and researching. Therefore, I do not consider the participants to be members of a stable cultural community which can be identified through shared common values, beliefs and attitudes – or, at least, I did not have access to such a community.

#### **4.12.2. Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical discourse analysts normally start 'from some perception of a discourse-related problem in some part of social life' (Fairclough 2001: 236). Problems may be defined in terms of social practices e.g. medical interviews (Fairclough 1992: 138) or in the ways certain groups are portrayed e.g. the position of women in society. CDA focuses on 'the larger social, cultural and ideological forces that influence our lives' (Pennycook 1994: 121). Critical discourse analysts identify the problems to be overcome which are often described in terms of power and gender (Cameron 2001: 51). Therefore, CDA would seem to be useful in identifying patterns of power and dominance in L2-L2 talk and how differences are resolved.

Critical discourse analysts assume that language users seek orderliness and conformity. As members of a social group (e.g. as doctors or as academics), language users follow the same language codes and principles and practices of language use, understand situations in



the same way and share the same knowledge of the world (Eggins & Slade 1997: 62). However, it is difficult to assess whether L2 users share the same linguistic and social knowledge given that they engage in L2-L2 interaction with their own individual experiences, background knowledge, history, values and attitudes which come from both first-language and second-language use. While CDA may help me to identify the choices being made by L2 users, it is difficult to identify conventions and norms of use which underlie different social practices. For this reason, I have not followed a critical discourse analysis approach.

#### **4.12.3. Quantitative Approaches**

I followed a qualitative research method in order to study small talk in the university hall of residence. However, I could have attempted a study of the research problem quantitatively. A quantitative approach could have categorised speech events, identified paralinguistic and prosodic features of interpersonal language use and measured aspects such as turn-taking patterns, length of speaker contributions, the content of participant contributions as for instance in Tannen's (1984) study of dinner talk.

However, I adopted the qualitative approach for several reasons. First of all, qualitative research is interested in studying 'the socially-constructed nature of reality' (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 8) as opposed to quantitative studies which focus on measuring and subsequently analysing 'the relationship between variables' (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 8).

Secondly, I did not feel initially that I knew enough about the phenomenon I was looking at. I wanted to be with the participants and collect data before embarking on formal analysis. My research process began with a certain degree of tentativeness as I edged gradually towards describing and analysing L2 interpersonal language use. Thirdly, data-driven research released me, to a certain extent, from the constraints of having to follow pre-selected behavioural categories. I was able to pursue different possible avenues for

research as the study progressed and as I tried to uncover underlying patterns and relationships. Fourthly, interpersonal language can only be studied by observing individuals within a specific social setting. I wanted to study the interplay between conformity in terms of established practices and patterns of use and creative language use. I was especially interested in examining how participants interacted solidarily and supportively and how individuals tried to interact in a social setting rather than trying to find an underlying common denominator that would allow me to categorise interactants' behaviour. Fifthly, interpersonal language is not an all-or-nothing process. A quantitative approach which reduces interpersonal language use to tables and charts may not reflect the different degrees of 'success' the participants achieved in seeking to establish successful social relationships. I needed to be able to examine how participants approached and partially achieved their interpersonal goals, especially when they lacked pragmatic resources. Finally, I wanted to be able to continuously deal with and come back to the actual transcriptions rather than work on information that had been processed into data e.g. tables and graphs. Quantitative data may have resulted in reduced access (Seliger & Shohamy 1989: 115) to studying the phenomenon of interpersonal language use. Nevertheless, I recognise that transcriptions are at 'one remove' from the actual spoken voice since the transcriber (in this case myself) processes and interprets what was actually said by interactants.

#### **4.13. Alternative Approaches to Studying L2 Interpersonal Language**

In 4.11. I examined alternative methodological approaches to examining L2-L2 interpersonal language use. However, within the framework I chose of supportiveness, solidarity and creative language use, I could have adopted other approaches to studying L2-L2 interpersonal language use. First of all, I could have chosen a specific group of language learners to examine whether they develop a discourse community in terms of interpersonal language use and describe its characteristics and features. Such an approach would allow me to investigate in more detail the argument of Allwright (1998: 126) that language

learners are often just as interested in ‘getting along’ (i.e. socialising) as ‘getting on’ (achieving language proficiency) (see 2.9.2.).

Secondly, I could have studied content and topics in interpersonal language use, examining more closely the characteristics of L2-L2 discourse types. Such scrutiny may have allowed me to develop a model of L2-L2 talk and propose the development of a corpus of L2-L2 small talk.

Thirdly, I could have examined how individual L2 users develop interpersonal relations with other L2 users by studying how they develop, establish and maintain social relations in a variety of interpersonal situations and contexts. Adopting a case study approach, I could have examined how they employ interpersonal patterns and practices and how individual users choose between interacting as a *somebody* or an *anybody* in different interpersonal situations.

#### **4.14. Accountability in Interpretation of Recorded Data**

In trying to argue for acceptability of my interpretation of L2-L2 interpersonal language use, I need to be able to ‘verify’ my study. I purposely adopt Creswell’s term ‘verification’ rather than validation: verification is ‘a criterion for assessing the quality of a study’ (1997: 198) as opposed to validity which attempts to evaluate research procedures in positivist terms such as validity, reliability and generalisability.

In attempting to verify my research, I need to respond to issues such as the possibility of accepting alternative explanations (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 6 - 7), the amount of time spent with participants (Creswell 1997: 201), level of descriptive detail (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 10), multiple research strategies (Layder 1993: 120) and participant willingness to partake in the study.

As Denzin & Lincoln argue, qualitative research is characterised by different research methods and consequently different findings and interpretations (2000: 7). In the same vein, I do not claim that my interpretation of L2-L2 interpersonal language use is the only possible interpretation. Other factors could be at play. However, the study is my understanding and experience of the situation. Other interpretations are feasible e.g. L2-L2 interpersonal language may reflect the language of interactant power rather than the language of solidarity and supportiveness. Furthermore, I recognise that I present the participants in a certain light to support my arguments. I cannot even claim to effectively and comprehensively represent the participants and interviewees. As Tannen observes:

Capturing a person's speech for analysis necessarily creates an image of that person and her / his behavior that is out of proportion to the impact they might have had in actual interaction.

(1984: 34)

With regard to the amount of time spent with the participants in a study, Creswell argues that 'prolonged engagement' and 'persistent observation' are key verification procedures (1997: 201). As mentioned in 4.8., I spent three ten-week term periods at the university hall of residence. Except for two weekends during each of the term times, I always ate in the hall of residence and, more often than not, I ate with at least one of the key participants in the study. Therefore, even if I was not taping, I was constantly observing (or interacting with) the participants during or after meal times. Continuous interaction with the participants enables me to claim that my data is representative in the sense that the presence of the tape recorder did not seem to unduly affect L2-L2 talk. I make this claim because I often ate with the participants when on purpose I did not have the tape recorder with me – I did not want the participants to feel that they constantly faced the possibility of being recorded every time they sat with me. I observed no difference in the participants' interpersonal language use practices when the tape recorder was not present. I would argue, therefore, that the data reflects the participants' everyday mealtime behaviour. However, I need to be careful with this claim as the participants did ask me for feedback after the recording sessions.

Denzin & Lincoln argue that abundant description is valuable in trying to understand the social world (2000: 10). Copious descriptive detail allows readers to make decisions regarding other possible interpretations of a study and whether data analysis has possible implications in other settings, in this case the L2 classroom. I feel that the number of examples that I give in this thesis (56 in total) and their length (which varies from one line to 40 lines) do allow the reader to do this — space limitations prevents me from providing more examples. Since the mealtime conversations were recorded, detailed information is available to independent judges. I have presented carefully selected transcripts at academic presentations and workshops where my analysis has been questioned, confirmed or given further insights. I have taped the reactions of independent observers to allow me to further analyse contrasting points of view. Insights offered by independent judgements led me to focus on: a) the concept of choice in L2-L2 interpersonal language use; b) creative language use as participants interact in unconventional ways; c) the range of resources that L2 users employ in L2-L2 talk.

Layder argues that multiple research strategies such as follow-up interviews aimed at checking out patterns and practices previously identified through participant observation can help reinforce ‘qualitative insights’ (1993: 121). In this study, an underlying adherence to multiple research strategies can be seen in the fact that the recordings took place over a period of three years with three different groups of participants who did not know each other (see 4.8.). The participants provided the same comparable data. Furthermore, I interviewed participants after the recorded conversation which provided a limited degree of ‘triangulation’ with my interpretation of the recorded information (as discussed in 4.6.3.). As Denzin & Lincoln point out, triangulation is not a tool for validity but rather ‘reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question’ (2000: 5). In this study, triangulation similarly aimed to provide a greater understanding of L2-L2 interpersonal language use rather than act as a validity check. Multiple research strategies may also involve examining the findings of similar studies: I would argue that the results from my studies are compatible with similar studies of interpersonal language use. For instance, in her study of dinner talk, Tannen (1984) identified the positive features of interpersonal language which she described in terms of considerateness and involvement.

Interpersonal features of dinner talk included devices such as back-channelling, co-operative overlaps, and use of repetition (see 3.12.2.).

With respect to participant willingness to partake in the study, I asked participants for permission to tape the meal-time conversation. An individual participant may have felt under pressure to accede given that she had already sat down at the table and / or that she might not want to refuse permission in front of the other participants who had already consented. However, there were various other opportunities for the participants to have either thwarted or even undermined the research. First of all, there was the possibility that interactants (individually or as a group) could have decided not to participate in the study by purposely and permanently sitting at other tables as an evasion strategy. Such action would have allowed participants to frustrate the data collection process. Presumably the participants' continuing presence at my table during the ten-week term periods reflected tacit support of the research project. Furthermore, participants did not need any encouragement to engage in interpersonal language use. Researcher-prompted small talk would have undermined the study as L2-L2 interpersonal language use would have no longer been spontaneous and unplanned and more importantly, generated by the participant.

#### **4.15. Role of the Researcher**

I played two roles in the empirical research, one as a participant-observer in the university hall of residence in London and another as an interviewer.

##### **4.15.1. Participant Observer**

I acted as a participant-observer: that is, I needed to understand the 'language' of the interactants and observe how the participants established, developed and maintained

interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships are negotiated subjectively and I could only understand how L2 users attempt to achieve rapport by being part of the process. Rather than just gaining access to the L2 language users, I wanted to experience to some extent what participants were going through. Even though I was not a second-language user in England (which I was in Mexico), I was a postgraduate student, not familiar with London, whose home is in Mexico where I have lived for over twenty years.

While I was a fellow postgraduate student, I never stopped being a researcher. I could not, even if I wanted to. I am, as Scott & Usher point out, the person

who defines the problem, the nature of the research, the quality of the interaction between researcher and researched, the theoretical framework and the categories of analysis; and, of course, who writes the final text.

(1999: 17)

Furthermore, I was conscious that my role as a participant observer placed me in a stronger position to start my analysis before finishing the data collection stage. My ongoing analysis between mealtime conversations may have affected, however subconsciously, my participation. I cannot argue that I had no effect on the situation, as in the same way, the tape recorder must have had some influence. In order to try to compensate for any subconscious influence on the L2-L2 interaction on my part, I principally chose to study extracts of second-language interpersonal language talk where I did not play a major participatory role.

#### **4.15.2. Interviewer**

As an interviewer, I wanted the participants to be able to reflect on the data in their own way. I wanted the interviewees to feel that they are the experts – as I argue in chapters five and six – and not feel that they were being interviewed by a native-speaker and judged for their non-native-like use of language. The interviews were semi-structured (Brown & Dowling 1998: 73) in that interviewer-interviewee interaction reflected a conversation

which followed loose guidelines but aimed to give interviewees a degree of freedom to express how they developed and maintained L2-L2 interpersonal relations. However, I was always aware that my role was as a) a researcher with my own agenda; and b) a native speaker interviewing non-native speakers.

A key question to consider was whether the interviewees would have given different answers or related different experiences to a non-native interviewer or to a Mexican researcher. It is possible. However, an interview reflects its own unique relationship between an interviewer and an interviewee. In this study, interaction between the interviewer and interviewees often reflected relational talk as personal information was given with provisos such as such as:

Example 4.3.

Blanca: I don't am not so sure if I really want this example to be in here later on I will tell you

Example 4.4.

Mariana: don't make it public

or in Spanish:

Example 4.5.

Mariana: *no lo transcribas* [don't transcribe it]



#### 4.16. Relationship between Researcher & Participants

In the London university hall of residence context, I had a multiple relationship with the other residents staying at the hall. I was a member of the hall of resident community before the participant observations took place. Before even considering other residents as possible participants for my research, I had already engaged in rapport-building activities (e.g. disclosing personal information and expressing supportiveness). I would later be looking for evidence of similar activities in the participants' interpersonal language use.

Before the recording sessions, I was seen as a native speaker studying at postgraduate level. The fact that I lived in Mexico was of little interest to other students as many British students in the hall also lived and worked abroad, including another student from Mexico and others from Greece and Laos. Therefore, the taping of the mealtime talk can be seen as a continuation of my ongoing relationship with other students.

I am aware that I am in debt to the participants of the study in London and, as Labov (1982 quoted in Cameron, Frazer, Rampton & Richardson 1992: 151) argues, I need to 'repay' the subjects of research for the knowledge with which they have provided me. In pedagogic terms, I aim to repay the subjects of this research by using the results of this study to explore ways of teaching / learning L2-L2 interpersonal language use within the Mexican EFL context. Furthermore, I want to make this knowledge available to Mexican English-language learners so that they can make their own choices in how they want to interact interpersonally in terms of expressing solidarity and supportiveness and engaging creative language use.

Participants in the recordings were interested in obtaining feedback about their language proficiency and any grammatical errors they committed. I was reluctant to give them this since I thought that such feedback might affect further participation on their part in the studies, especially if they thought I might be interested in grammatical errors. Generally speaking, I was successful in being able to postpone giving any feedback they wanted

regarding my perception of their language performance. During and after the interviews, the interviewees said they were particularly interested in being informed of the results of the study which I have discussed with them.

#### 4.17. Ethical Issues

Following Cameron *et al.* (1992: 154), I have been concerned to treat the participants of this research as persons rather than objects. Like Tannen (1984), I have tried to use such terms as 'participants' and 'interactants' rather than impersonal labels such as 'subjects'. I have stayed in contact with most of the participants, either personally or through e-mail. Indeed, e-mail correspondence has given me further insights into the use of L2 interpersonal language use.

At the same time, I assured the participants that

- a. they would not be identified in the research and, therefore, I have changed the names of all participants in the study.
- b. I would not divulge information that the participants had specifically requested to be kept confidential as seen for instance in Blanca's and Mariana's requests (see examples 4.3. and 4.4) during follow-up interviews to not disclose certain information.
- c. information would not be used to ridicule or make fun of the participants.
- d. information would not be given to any third party.
- e. I would not play the tapes to third parties that would be able to identify them.

#### 4.18. The Issue of Recording

During the study, I was especially concerned as to whether the presence of the tape recorder would affect mealtime conversation. There is always a danger that the participants may want to present themselves in a certain way, or manipulate, exaggerate or withhold (intentionally or otherwise) interpersonal patterns of L2 language use.

However, I feel that the tape-recorder was not overly intrusive because interactants became oblivious to the use of the tape-recorder and performed to the 'audience' not to the tape recorder. The importance of successful achievement face-to-face interaction overrides the interactants' awareness of the presence of the tape recorder. Studies carried out by Blom & Gumperz (1972: 427) and Tannen (1984: 34) support this assertion. Furthermore, the participants as non-native speakers in the university hall of residence are continually monitoring their own use of interpersonal language use with L2 other speakers as they try to interact successfully in the target language. Monitoring their use of speech for an audio recording would be a secondary priority. As Malone argues, if participants are not attending to others and solely engaging in self-monitoring, interaction will come to a stop:

Self monitoring may occur, but conversations demand participant attention, and hence talkers are quickly drawn in, or the interaction fails.  
(1997: 152)

Finally, from their experiences in the second-language classroom, the participants as non-native speakers are used to being monitored and observed. In the end, no matter how far I try to downplay the effect of the tape recorder, I have to accept that observing the interactants in any shape or form necessarily must have an affect on their performance. In the final analysis, I am left with what Labov calls the Observer's 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.  
(1972: 209)

#### 4.19. Transcription Norms & Conventions

Transcribing the recorded conversations involves transferring language from the spoken medium to the written medium. I am aware that this process inevitably involves a loss. Written conversation cannot adequately capture key features such as tone, quality, pitch, amplitude, and pronunciation. But, at least, the process of writing down L2 interpersonal language use makes the ‘taped conversation studyable’ (Tannen 1984: 36).

Furthermore, the process of transcribing spoken discourse involves a degree of subjectivity in determining what is actually said as ‘very often whole utterances cannot be heard even if repeated several times’ (Márquez Reiter 2000: 79). The problem of subjectivity also emerges in studying turn-taking management as I decide, for instance, what counts as latching or as overlaps. In the final analysis, I have to recognise that all transcription is interpretative (Grundy 2000: 193).

Following Brown & Dowling (1998: 76) and Ochs (1979), I aim to make the detail of my transcriptions match the use I make of them. I want transcription to highlight language use that helps achieve my research goals in understanding L2 interpersonal language use. Therefore, transcription is selective rather than comprehensive.

The transcription conventions make little reference to nonverbal behaviour. While such information would have aided the analysis and understanding of L2 interpersonal language use, it would have been extremely difficult to collect in a discreet and unobtrusive way.

Transcription norms can be seen on page ten.

#### **4.20. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have attempted to position the review of literature in chapter three within a framework for conducting research. I now propose to use such a framework to examine how conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics provide different insights into studying L2-L2 interpersonal language use. By doing so, I will answer my overarching research question regarding how L2 users achieve successful L2-L2 social relations. In chapter five, I will examine interactional choices in L2-L2 interpersonal language use and, in chapter six, I will examine choices in creative L2-L2 interpersonal language use.

## Chapter 5

### Interactional Choices in Interpersonal Language Use

#### 5.1. Introduction

In chapter three, I described a theoretical framework for L2-L2 interpersonal talk in terms of supportiveness, solidarity and creative language use and outlined the choices potentially available to second-language users for developing successful relations with other L2 users. In chapter four, I outlined a methodological framework for conducting research and argued that conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics offer differing insights into the study of L2-L2 interpersonal language use. In this chapter, I attempt to answer my first two research questions regarding the characteristics of L2-L2 interpersonal language practices and how L2 interactants express concern for and engagement with other L2 users by examining (following the work of Aston 1988b, 1988c, 1989, 1993), how participants engage in solidary and supportive practices and by identifying interactional patterns and structures within L2-L2 talk. I will then try to answer my third research question as I study the resources that the L2 user employs in order to achieve successful interpersonal language use in the second language. I examine these in terms of pragmatic resources. In answering these three research questions, I examine the use of L2-L2 interpersonal language in a specific context and how certain features of interpersonal language use are more salient in L2-L2 talk than in L1-L1 and L1-L2 talk. I will develop my argument by drawing on the three theoretical perspectives: interactional sociolinguistics helps identify features of L2-L2 supportiveness and solidarity; conversation analysis reflects choices L2 users make regarding turn-taking practices, conditional relevance and adjacency pairs; and pragmatics reveals how L2 users call on pragmatic resources to develop, maintain and enhance relationships with other L2 users.

## 5.2. L2-L2 Interactional Sociolinguistics: Supportiveness & Solidarity

Just as Aston (1988b, 1988c, 1989, 1993), identified in L1-L1 and L1-L2 talk (see 3.7), the use of supportiveness and solidarity in L2-L2 talk reflects participant engagement in *face* work (see 3.3.), *supportive interchanges* (see 3.3.) and working consensus (see 3.9.). I argue, however, that L2-L2 talk reflects the second-language interactants' own patterns of interpersonal language use, often drawn from their L1, rather than adherence to target-language norms of use.

### 5.2.1. L2-L2 Supportive Language

L2-L2 supportive language reflects L1-L1 and L1-L2 language patterns in terms of concern at, and interest in, the feelings and experiences of others. However, L2-L2 interpersonal language provides an especially supportive non-face-threatening environment as participants achieve a working consensus. For instance, in the following example, while the second-language users do not share the same experiences, they create a safe and friendly environment within which participants can make their contributions without fear of rejection which is often the L2 user's concern when interacting with L1 speakers. The participants have been talking about unpopular animals. Blanca is now trying to describe an animal that she likes but thinks is generally disliked.

#### Example 5.1.

Conversation during an evening meal between Mariana and Armando, Mexican PhD students, Blanca, a Portuguese PhD student, and the participant-observer (P/O).

1 Blanca: an animal that I really like and nobody likes in general

2 Mariana: rabbit  
3 Blanca: is no is  
4 Mariana: crocodiles  
5 Blanca: no what do you call this  
6 P/O: cockroach  
7 Blanca: nice animal that goes like this [makes the sound of an owl]  
8 Mariana: owl  
9 Blanca: yeah  
10 Armando: what?  
11 Mariana owl  
12 Blanca: no there's another one  
13 Mariana: *búho* [owl]  
14 Armando *búho* owl  
15 Blanca there is another one not just that one  
16 Armando *tecolote* [eagle owl]  
17 Blanca I don't know we call it xxxxxx I don't know

In the conversation, the interactants work with Blanca in trying to identify the animal she has in mind. Blanca has said that there is an animal that she likes but does not know its name in English. The other participants demonstrate supportiveness as they try to help her find the word. Therefore, participants are trying to understand Blanca's world (i.e. show supportiveness as discussed in 3.7.) and, although they do not share her world, they can feel for her. While the other participants cannot claim to like the same animals as Blanca (i.e. demonstrate solidarity), they do offer a list of possible candidates: *rabbits* (line two), *crocodiles* (line four) and *cockroach* (line six). Some names on the list are strange but Blanca did say that it was an animal that *nobody likes in general* (line one). The fact that participants feel free to offer such a diverse list reflects a non-judgmental atmosphere as they engage in *supportive interchanges* (see 3.3.). There is a sense of playfulness that runs through the conversation as Blanca says she is trying to describe *a nice animal that goes like this* (line seven) and then makes the sound of an owl. In reply, both Mariana and Armando say she is referring to an owl – first giving the word in English (lines eight and



11) and then in Spanish (lines 13 and 14). Mariana and Armando use resources from their first language, Spanish (which Blanca speaks fluently), to show supportiveness and understanding. Blanca is still not satisfied and says *there is another one not just that one* (line 15). Continuing to show supportiveness and still using his first language as a resource, Armando now offers the word *tecolote* (line 16) in Spanish. Blanca finally reverts to Portuguese which is also of little help in finding the word in English.

The interaction reflects an attempt to reach a working consensus in understanding Blanca's preferences. Although the participants do not reach the transactional objective of knowing the name of animal, the participants achieve an interpersonal objective as they engage in considerable *face* work (see 3.3) in supporting each other's contributions and, furthermore, do not appear to be too concerned when Blanca rejects them. Supportiveness is achieved through offering suggestions (in this instance, the names of animals) and active listening in the form of preemptive turns e.g. interactants offer the name of animals before Blanca has a chance to finish explaining which animal she means (see 3.7.2.).

Nonthreatening L2-L2 interpersonal language use, as highlighted in example 5.1., is especially helpful in allowing L2 interactants to engage in more 'intimate' interactional language use such as troubles talk (3.5.2.) and self-disclosure (3.7.2.). For instance, in the following example, Blanca's troubles-talk reflects bonding between her and Mariana. While troubles-talk is also a feature of L1-L1 talk, a first language user may have been much more critical of Mariana's formulaic and unoriginal remarks. However, Blanca accepted them in the spirit in which they were given:

#### Example 5.2.

The participant-observer (P/O) is interviewing Mariana Mexican PhD student in the reception area of the university hall of residence. The interview is interrupted by Blanca, a Portuguese PhD student.

1 Blanca: you are not going to believe who was in the library

2 Mariana: um give us a hint  
3 Blanca: the man from the thing from the book launch  
4 Mariana: oh  
5 Blanca: the UNESCO man  
6 Mariana: no way  
7 Blanca: I had this man following me all day  
8 P/O: yeah  
9 Mariana oh no way poor thing  
10 Blanca when I saw the man I became  
11 Mariana oh no  
12 Blanca do you have this word in Spanish *lívida*  
13 Mariana *sí* oh poor thing she works so hard but she has been followed by this  
14 awful old man.

Mariana's use of *no way* (lines six and nine) and *poor thing* (lines nine and 13) may have struck an L1 user as overly repetitious and even bordering on insincere. However, formulaic and repetitious language does not hinder the message of supportiveness that Mariana is trying to send. She produces remarks that are not only supportive of Blanca's plight e.g. *oh* (line four), *no way* (line six) and *oh no way poor thing* (line nine) but summarise Blanca's experience *oh poor thing she works so hard but she has been followed by this awful old man* (line 13 and 14). In the example, Blanca provides information about the incident e.g. *the man from the thing from the book launch* (line three), *the UNESCO man* (line five), and *I had this man following me all day* (line seven) and *when I saw the man I became* (line 10). Perhaps Blanca was too upset or distraught to say what actually happened and can only provide partial information. However, Mariana engages in supportiveness as she understands what Blanca has gone through even if she cannot share Blanca's 'world' (see 3.7.).

The example suggests that language proficiency is not necessarily a key requirement for achieving successful social talk. Participants in L2-L2 interpersonal language use may be more appreciative of underlying supportive intention rather than judging utterances in terms

of linguistic originality. Blanca presumably understands that Mariana is trying to express supportiveness and accepts it as such. Indeed, Mariana may not have been quite so willing to express such supportiveness in an L1 environment where she may be criticised, or at least negatively judged, on her language use.

This assertion that L2 users are perhaps more willing to openly express supportiveness in L2-L2 talk is supported in follow-up interviews. For instance, José Luis, an Argentinean PhD student, felt more comfortable talking in English to non-native speakers. For instance, asked if he liked speaking in English, he replied

Example 5.3.

José Luís:      si, mucho, pero no cuando lo hago con hablantes nativos.... Aquellos que no son angloparlantes piensan que yo hablo y pronuncio muy bien, y ese “voto de confianza” hace que uno se desempeñe mejor

Translation:

yes, a lot, but not when I talk with native speakers.... People who are not [native] English-speakers think that I speak and pronounce very well and this “vote of confidence” makes one do better.

José Luís’s preference for interacting with non-native speakers seems to be a matter of confidence building and is reinforced by their ‘vote of confidence’ in him which can be seen as supportiveness and as a *face*-enhancing act (as discussed in 3.7.3.). By making another participant’s *face* look good, social relations are also enhanced between interactants.

Seeking rapport with non-native speakers can often reflect a deliberate socialising strategy. For instance, Mariana, a Mexican PhD student, said that she often sought out the company of non-native speakers, although she did have close relations with native speakers as well:

#### Example 5.4.

Mariana: I like sometimes you know being in an interaction with er non-natives English speakers er but with people I mean not all of them have a higher level than me but a bit higher may be some of them because you can you can realise about their strategies much more easily than from native speakers.

(Recorded interview 5 / 3 / 2001)

Mariana knew nothing about Krashen and *i + 1* (whereby the learner can progress from her current level *i* by being exposed to language which is at a slightly higher level i.e. *+1*) (Krashen 1981; Krashen & Terrell 1983). However, this seems to be the strategy that Mariana had adopted in wanting to interact with non-native speakers who *have a higher level than me but a bit higher may be some of them*.

The preference of both Jose Luis and Mariana for interacting with non-native speakers is a way in which they feel they can develop successful L2 social relations. They are not only given confidence by other second-language users who are faced with a similar situation but also they can learn from them.

#### 5.2.2. L2-L2 Solidary Language

While offering a nonthreatening environment in which to express supportiveness, L2-L2 interaction also provides opportunities to express solidarity. Solidarity reflects joint experiences and understandings which may be more difficult to achieve between non-native speakers who do not share the same background, values and attitudes. However, L2-L2 solidarity often develops as participants build on joint experiences in the target language. Furthermore, while reflecting L1 patterns, L2 solidarity can emerge as interactants 'celebrate' their ability to use a second language.

Living and participating in communities such as universities may provide joint experiences on which to build solidarity. For instance, in the following example of gossipy talk, the interactants share the same perception of a lecturer:

Example 5.5.

Conversation during an evening meal between Mariana and Armando, Mexican PhD students, Blanca, a Portuguese PhD student, and the participant-observer (P/O).

- 1 Blanca: he's from UCL from a physics whatever department and he's always  
2 there with his students so he has this attitude that you know  
3 Mariana: very arrogant  
4 Blanca: and the other day, by unfortunate choice, they were sitting next to  
5 me...

By saying *very arrogant* (line three), Mariana offers a matching assessment (see 3.7.) as she shares with Blanca the same opinion about the lecturer. In demonstrating solidarity, Mariana and Blanca are building from common experiences that they have had of university life.

At the same time, the L2-L2 interaction also reveals Aston's (1988c: 303, 1989: 305) 'restricted attitudes' – attitudes not shared with an *anyone* (see 3.7.2.). Blanca is critical about the attitude of the UCL lecturer but presumably she would not reveal such an opinion to an *anybody*. As Mariana matches Blanca's critical opinion with *very arrogant* (line three), they have established a level of solidarity as they are both willing to openly express the same attitude towards the lecturer.

However, L2-L2 joint experiences do not have to be limited to the target-language environment. L2 users often discover during the course of L2-L2 interaction that they share the same attitudes and experience the world in the same way (see 3.7.). In the following example which continues from 5.1., the participants move closer to demonstrating

solidarity and showing mutual understanding: they are still no closer to finding out how to say 'barn owl' in English although they do agree that the word is *lechuza* in Spanish. Now instead of trying to find the word in English, they decide to describe the animal.

Example 5.6.

Conversation during an evening meal between Mariana and Armando, Mexican PhD students, Blanca, a Portuguese PhD student, and the participant-observer (P/O) concerning different attitudes to owls. *Lechuza* is the Spanish word for a barn owl. None of the participants knows what the English word is for a *lechuza*.

- 1 Blanca: there are different kinds. It's not just the owl
- 2 Mariana: *lechuzas* are bigger.
- 3 Blanca: yeah and the owl is (mimics an owl) [ (laughter)
- 4 Mariana: [yeah small and]
- 5 P/O: [(laughter)
- 6 Blanca: [(laughter)
- 7 Armando [(laughter)
- 8 Mariana: [(laughter]
- 9 P/O: (imagine a picture of an owl)
- 10 Blanca: (yeah there's a round one) =
- 11 Armando: = the *lechuza* is biggest
- 12 Blanca: it's taller more elegant the owl is more (laughs)
- 13 Mariana: [yeah
- 14 Blanca: the owl is more
- 15 Mariana: can xxxxxx them.
- 16 P/O: I think in English they are all owls
- 17 Blanca: oh yeah
- 18 Blanca: [(laughter)
- 19 Armando [(laughter)
- 20 Mariana: generic

21 (general laughter)  
 22 Blanca: but they are very I mean most people are very superstitious  
 23 with them because they're supposed to be you know but I like  
 24 them  
 25 Mariana: [yeah my mother  
 26 P/O [they're supposed to be what?  
 27 Blanca: I like  
 28 Mariana: [my mother has a collection  
 29 Blanca: oh I like them. I like to hear them in a park near my mother's  
 30 house there's a nest and it's nice to hear them making the  
 31 Armando: (makes sound of an owl)  
 32 Blanca: (makes sound of an owl) yes

The conversation contains examples of both supportiveness (i.e. concern for and interest in others) and solidarity (i.e. empathy and mutual understandings). Examples of supportiveness can be seen through the elliptical use of *yeah* (line 13) as Mariana agrees with Blanca's comment that the *lechuza* is *taller more elegant the owl* (line 12) and the discourse marker *oh* (line 29) used by Blanca as a repair to dispel a possible misperception by other participants in that she does not like *lechuzas*. In this example, supportiveness reflects conventional language use.

However, in this extract, I am more interested in identifying instances of solidarity i.e. how participants *show* understanding. The conversation reveals that the interactants share the same attitudes and feelings and this is expressed through laughter, matching assessments (see 3.7.), self-disclosure (see 3.7.2.), collaborative use of repetition and the creative use of shadowing (see 3.12.2.).

1. **Laughter:** Laughter is a recurring feature of the university hall of residence data. It often seems to reflect enjoyment as the second-language users 'celebrate' their ability to use a second language. For instance, in example 5.6., laughter takes place in lines five to eight as the interactants enjoy Blanca's creative mime (line 3) of an owl. For

no apparent obvious reason, instances of laughter continue throughout the conversation i.e. in lines 18, 19 and 21. I take up the question of celebratory language use as an instance of solidarity in 5.4.

2. **Matching Assessments:** L2-L2 interaction was also characterised by talk about language as the participants tried to agree on what is a *lechuza*. The whole concept of the *lechuza* is a joint construction. Mariana sees the *lechuza* as being *bigger* (line two) and *small* (line four) – a contradiction that does not affect the conversation or the contribution of other participants. While the participants collaborate on a description of the *lechuza* (e.g. *tall*, *biggest* and *elegant*), no clear definition is reached. However, though their matching assessments, Armando, Blanca and Mariana demonstrate a shared understanding of the word *lechuza*.
3. **Collaborative Use of Repetition:** Mariana's overlapping *yeah small and* (line four) rapidly following on from Blanca's *yeah and the owl is* (line three) demonstrates an attempt at a joint construction of meaning even though Blanca has not indicated the size of *lechuzas*. The parallel use of *yeah* (lines three and four) suggests that interactants understand what other interactants mean.
4. **Self-Disclosure:** Participants reveal biographical information about themselves e.g. Blanca and Mariana's matching assessments about owls and their mothers (lines 25 - 30) and get to know each other better through self-disclosure (see 3.7.2.). Reciprocal self-disclosure reflects the 'investment' (see 3.7.2.) that Blanca and Mariana are making in the conversation as they develop the social relationship.
5. **Shadowing:** Shadowing – the near instantaneous repetition of an interactant's comments (see 3.12.2.) – can reflect common understandings as, for instance, when Armando makes the sound of an owl which is picked up by Blanca at the same time (lines 31 and 32). Blanca seems to appreciate Armando's collaborative gesture with a *yes* (line 32). As Armando and Blanca imitate the sounds of the owl, they engage in creative language use and seem to celebrate common understandings.



The use of laughter, matching assessments, collaborative use of repetition, self-disclosure and *shadowing* reflects the interaction of *somebodies*. The interactants are *showing* joint understanding rather than merely *claiming* that they understand how the other feels. Laughter and matching assessments demonstrate joint appreciation while repetition, shadowing and second assessments reflect close active listening. Achieving solidarity reflects a process of discovery as the participants find that they share the same attitudes towards *lechuzas* e.g. both Blanca and Mariana agree that *lechuzas* are elegant (lines 12 and 13) and are associated with superstition (lines 22 and 23) in both Mexico and Portugal.

However, an alternative pragmatic view may see the conversation as an attempt at dominance and one-upmanship, especially on the part of Blanca, as she seems to want to define *lechuza* (lines three, 10, 12) and her continual repetition of *I like* (lines 23, 27 and 29). When I interviewed Blanca about the *line* (see 3.3.) that she might be seen to be projecting, she said that she is always interrupting people: ‘when I realise it, it’s done’. Blanca’s comments indicate that even if she comes across as domineering, her underlying strategy is one of supportiveness and solidarity. Her comments would suggest that she has the necessary pragmalinguistic resources but not the sociopragmatic awareness. Pedagogic intervention might be useful in helping Blanca develop increased sociopragmatic awareness.

### 5.2.3. Solidary Language as Celebratory Language

As Aston (1988c, 1989, 1993) argues, language users often take pleasure at just being able to talk to each other and celebrate understandings (see 3.7.1.), language users often take pleasure at just being able to talk to each other and celebrate understandings. I went further and asserted that this may be even more so in a second language. I now want to support this claim by examining how L2 users can celebrate interpersonal relationships. Such celebration is reflected in the following example as keys are accidentally dropped on the

floor and the incident seems to provide common ground for the participants to share joint attitudes.

Example 5.7.

Mariana and Armando, Mexican PhD students, Blanca, a Portuguese PhD student, and the male participant observer (P/O) are sitting in the lounge area of a London university hall of residence and chatting after the evening meal. The conversation is interrupted by Lesley, a South African PhD student. She is passing by and her room keys accidentally fly out of her hands and land on the floor nearly hitting Mariana.

[General laughter as Lesley's keys nearly hit Mariana]

- 1 Mariana: thanks Lesley. I would like to (know our room)
- 2 Armando: why Lesley? why?  
(general laughter)
- 3 Armando: [[what is what is the problem with Mariana?]]
- 4 Mariana [[join us]]  
(general laughter)
- 5 Mariana: thank you very much I also trust you I will give you the  
6 keys of my room (laughter) is it drizzling?
- 7 Lesley: it's snowing
- 8 P/O: [[snowing?]]
- 9 Lesley: [[huge big whopping flakes]]
- 10 Mariana: oh
- 11 Blanca: God

A first reading may regard the above conversation as just an example of good-humoured small talk. Keys are accidentally dropped on the floor and there is a report about the weather outside. However, I argue that there is much more going on. Participants are celebrating shared attitudes, use of language and mutual understandings.

As the 'flying' keys nearly hit Mariana, her response is one of humour as she says *thanks* (line one) – saying that she would like to know what Lesley's room is like. Humour may be one way of trying to defuse a potentially awkward situation. Paralleling Mariana's ironic remark, Armando asks the question *why Lesley? why?* (line two). Armando does not seem to be using appropriate language (i.e. an accusatory interrogative as a possible way of teasing) but it is acceptable to the other participants as they laugh. Laughter may signal joint appreciation, shared attitudes and even enjoyment as the participants see a humorous side to the situation. Armando's utterance is interpreted by other participants as humorous questioning and he continues with his mock questioning with *what is what is the problem with Mariana?* (line three). He uses a straightforward interrogative that could be misinterpreted as a real question. He runs the risk of being misunderstood but the general laughter would suggest that his 'line' of questioning is appreciated by the other interactants. Mariana's and Armando's comments can be seen as matching assessments and mutual understandings of the same situation. During the interaction, there has been no response from Lesley and perhaps to avoid any possible misinterpretation, Mariana invites Lesley to sit down with them, *join us* (line four). However, the general laughter seems to spur Mariana on and once again she thanks Lesley but, now, with more formality: *Thank you very much I also trust you I will give you the keys of my room* (line five).

After this celebratory phrase, talk seems to become much more transactional in its features. Mariana now introduces a new topic. She notices the state of Lesley's clothes and asks if it is raining: *is it drizzling?* (line six). This seems to be a deliberate attempt to integrate Lesley into the conversation. Lesley participates by commenting that *it's snowing* (line seven) and her comment is recognised as new information by Mariana with an *oh* (line ten) and an upgrade (see 3.7.2.) from Blanca with *God* (line 11).

Celebration of language can be seen through the other interactants' appreciation of Armando's and Mariana's expression of humour and Mariana's repetition of her humorous comments. Celebration of language can be achieved despite, as in the case of Armando, an intermediate language level. His *why Lesley? why?* (line two) is not accurate and fluent language use but it is acceptable to the other interactants. His contributions support the idea

that successful interpersonal language does not necessarily need to be accompanied by a high level of language proficiency. Even though Armando has limited language abilities, he can be seen to be interacting as a *somebody*, a group member who is making active supportive and solidary choices as he sees the funny side to situations and expresses a sense of humour.

Celebratory language is the language of *somebodies* who view situations in similar and matching ways but, at the same time, have their own creative ways of expressing themselves – often despite language limitations. As Aston argues (1988c, 1989, 1993), celebratory language is ‘restricted’ language (as discussed in 3.7.2.) since it reflects attitudes that the interactants would not share with just *anyone*. The language reflects a sense of intimacy as the participants can laugh and joke about keys that were thrown across the floor.

While having little transactional value, the celebration of interpersonal language use helps interactants to develop and maintain social relations as they celebrate common understandings and meanings.

#### **5.2.4. Summary of L2-L2 Supportive & Solidary Language**

Second-language supportive and solidary language use reflects first-language patterns and practices. But it also reflects an L2 dimension which is non-*face*-threatening and which may encourage self-disclosure and the sharing of restricted attitudes. Furthermore, L2-L2 interaction allows participants to interact in a non-judgmental way even though their use of language (as in the case of Mariana in example 5.2.) or language level (as in the case of Armando in example 5.7.) may not reflect target-language patterns and norms of use. For this reason, the L2 user may feel more comfortable in L2-L2, as opposed to L1-L2 interaction.

When interacting with other L2 speakers, participants are often interested in achieving successful social relations rather than in achieving full and complete understanding. Interactants had little information to work on in examples 5.1. and 5.6. when discussing Blanca's favourite animal or trying to describe *lechuzas*. However, the participants did not give up but tried to reach a working consensus of agreed meanings.

The second-language interactants provided a supportive environment which allowed them to switch between the target language and the speakers' own first language when trying to express themselves (as seen in example 5.1.). Such a supportive environment was not hindered by a lack of language proficiency as seen by Armando's intervention in example 5.7. and allowed the interactants to celebrate language use.

By adding in biographical information, the interactants engaged in self-disclosure. At the same time, the extracts reveal a vibrancy and enjoyment about using language as interactants compete for turns and very often fail to complete them e.g. Blanca never completes her idea about owls and superstition: *most people are very superstitious with them because they're supposed to be you know but I like them* (line 22 - 24) as the conversation moves on to talking about owls and the interactants' mothers.

### **5.3. Conversation Analysis: L2-L2 Interpersonal Choices**

Besides examining sequence and organisation in talk, conversation analysis is a useful tool for studying choices available to interactants engaged in L2-L2 small talk. In the following example, I will study how turn-taking practices, conditional relevance and adjacency pairs reflect supportiveness and participant sensitivity to each other's contributions. Faced with expressing supportiveness or solidarity, Celia, a Mexican PhD student, opts for supportiveness when trying to understand funding problems in an Icelandic university even though she experiences exactly the same situation in Mexico (as I argue in example 5.9.).

Example 5.8.

Conversation during breakfast between Celia, a Mexican PhD student, and Ingrid, an Icelandic MA student. The participant-observer is also present. Ingrid is talking about funding problems regarding her university in Iceland and has been saying that students have to find their own ways of obtaining journals:

- 1 Ingrid: ... and the library is in really bad condition I mean like  
2 journals they stop stop having some of the journals  
3 because they can't afford it so students are um  
4 connecting companies in Iceland to um buy journals for their  
5 library  
6 Celia: (0.3) the students are doing that?  
7 Ingrid: yeah the students are doing that  
8 Celia: (0.2) I always thought that *Icelandia* was almost like um  
9 Denmark or or Switz& Switz&  
10 Ingrid: Sweden?  
11 Celia: Sweden I mean that it was a rich country  
12 Ingrid: well it is but they don't want to well the government does well  
13 doesn't want to spend so much money on education or welfare  
14 it is er there're there're on [the right wing  
15 Celia: [um um  
16 Ingrid: the government we have now and they just think that yeah  
17 they don't spend so much money on education health care  
18 social affairs  
19 Celia: (0.2) but is er I mean if they don't put money into education  
20 they must know that the whole system will [collapse  
21 Ingrid: [I know it's  
22 Celia: one of the first things of a rich country is to put money into  
23 education doesn't it  
24 Ingrid: yeah well I don't understand their policy I mean

Interaction starts off with troubles talk (see 3.5.2.) as Ingrid comments about library funding problems in her university in Iceland. The 0.3-second pause offers a turn transition place (see 3.5.1.) which allows Celia to self select (see 3.5.1.). Interactants have potential choices while responding to troubles talk: Celia tries to understand the predicament of students in having to buy their own journals by asking *the students are doing that?* (line six). Celia's response could be interpreted as a request for confirmation or an expression of disbelief. Either interpretation shows that Celia is following the conversation and is sensitive to the troubles talk as she responds to an adjacency pair: problem - expression of concern. Ingrid responds to Celia's request for confirmation / expression of disbelief by transforming Celia's question, *the students are doing that?* (line six), into an affirmative statement: *yeah the students are doing that* (line seven). Ingrid's response reflects the completion of another adjacency pair: request for confirmation / expression of disbelief - confirm information.

Celia further self-selects in a turn transition place as she picks up on a pause and comments (0.2) *I always thought that Icelandia was almost like...* (line eight). The fact that Celia says *Icelandia* instead of the English word, Iceland, does not affect conversation as she attempts to position Iceland economically alongside other Scandinavian countries. However, as Celia attempts to add *Switz& Switz&* (line nine), Ingrid does not correct Celia but sensitively anticipates what she is trying to say by offering *Sweden* (line ten). As she accepts *Sweden*, Celia continues to focus on whether Iceland is a rich country. Ingrid's use of *well* (line 12) is prefatory in that it acknowledges Celia's opinion as she adds *it is* (line 12) but indicates that she is going to clarify her answer and subsequently starts to describe government spending priorities in Iceland. Celia tries to find a turn transition place with an overlapping *um um* (line 15) but then allows Ingrid to continue.

Celia picks up on a third opportunity to self-select (0.2) *but is er I mean if they don't put money into education* (line 19) with a supportive move: Ingrid has said that money is not being spent on education, Celia goes further and claims that, if it isn't, *the whole system will [collapse]* (line 20). Meanwhile, Ingrid overlaps with *I know it's* (line 21) as she expresses supportiveness. The two participants now appear to be claiming joint

understanding as Ingrid supports Celia's comments with *yeah well I don't understand their policy I mean* (line 24). The *yeah* indicates agreement with Celia whilst *well* distances Ingrid from her government's spending priorities.

When an interactant reveals attitudes that she holds or information about herself, the other interactant is expected to respond. The response may be supportive (showing understanding and perhaps even sympathy) or solidary (demonstrating the shared feelings and experiences). Celia demonstrates supportiveness as she tries to understand Ingrid's point of view about Icelandic universities. It is not solidary because she does not claim to have had the same experience as seen in her question *the students are doing that?* (line 6).

While in example 5.8., she expressed supportiveness, Celia could have sought solidarity with Ingrid given that she does say later on in the conversation, just when Francesca, a Spanish MA student, joins the table, that, Mexico has experienced problems regarding lack of government funding:

Example 5.9.

- 1 Celia: another thing in Mexico thinking about resources just that there's not  
2 money but the money to that army has  
3 Francesca: *buenos días*  
4 Celia: at least doubled in the last two or three years at least  
5 Francesca: hi  
6 Celia: the budget for the army yes I don't want to give higher figures than  
7 those but the money to and there is also the money also goes to  
8 finance the bank we have this money from the xxxxxx uh it's some  
9 banks were bankrupting because some we have this er treaty  
10 commercial natel no what's it called what's the name of the *tratado*  
11 *del libre comercio* [free trade agreement]? *Estas guapisima* [you look  
12 very beautiful]  
13 Francesca: *buenos días*



14 Celia: *buenos días guapa guapa* means lovely *guapa* [good morning beautiful, *guapa* means lovely beautiful].

Celia's comments reveal that funding is also scarce in Mexico but she claims that the army and the nation's banks are receiving extra funding. Example 5.9. also demonstrates how conversation analysis can be used to examine interpersonal choices. Sitting down at the table, Francesca says *buenos días* (line three). She receives no response. Since Celia is talking and there is no apparent turn transition place, it may not be necessary to verbally respond to the greeting. On the other hand, to continue the conversation may be seen as a dispreferred response in a greeting - greeting adjacency pair. Francesca repeats her greeting this time in English with *hi* (line five). She still does not receive an immediate reply. However, Celia is aware of her presence: as she finishes her point about lack of government funding, Celia immediately compliments Francesca with *estas guapísima* (line 11). It is a personal comment in Spanish. Francesca repeats her greeting: *buenos días* (line 13). Celia now responds with the appropriate second-pair part, *buenos días* (line 14), and adds *guapa* (line 14). She explains the word to the other interactants: *guapa means lovely* (line 14) and repeats the word *guapa*.

Although Celia is not a proficient English-language user, she is skilful at establishing, developing and maintaining social relations in the target language: for instance, while she is engaged in transactional talk about the financial situation in Mexico, she neatly expresses appreciation (i.e. supportiveness) of Francesca being *guapa*. Similar to examples 5.1. and 5.6., the second-language user feels free to use her first language as a resource to express herself even though not all the other interactants speak Spanish. This she compensates for by translating the word *guapa* into English (line 14).

Conversation analysis can also highlight choice when L2 users use shared target-language experiences to express solidarity and supportiveness. In the following example, Celia expresses solidarity as she identifies with the plight of Francesca as she tries to express herself in written English.

Example 5.10.

Francesca, a Spanish MA student tells Celia, a Mexican PhD student and Saeko, a Japanese MA student, that she has a tutorial with her supervisor who has asked her to rewrite an assignment.

- 1 Francesca: I had to wake up one hour before I came to breakfast to don't  
2 feel stupid in the morning  
3 Celia: (laughs)  
4 Francesca: so I got time to prepare my brain  
5 Celia: mmm mmm (laughs)  
6 Francesca: so this time I change everything after one week depressed  
7 (laughs) I changed everything and she [reference to her tutor]  
8 was very happy she said to me I was a little bit worried so I  
9 was thinking this was completely different it was like yeah  
10 was a little bit depressed but now it is  
11 Celia: mmm  
12 Francesca: perfect so I was very happy yesterday  
13 Celia: that it's very good  
14 Francesca: mmm  
15 Celia: you know when I did my master's degree it happened  
16 something like that to me (0.1) the first tutorial (0.1) I wrote  
17 and wrote but I I don't know how it's I don't know how it's I  
18 don't know if it has to do with language but or with the way of  
19 the structure because it was like it was impossible I don't  
20 know what we are going to do but it doesn't seem you will be  
21 able to write anything at all and you won't er its well I think  
22 it's impossible ....

Francesca starts off with some self-mocking *I had to wake up one hour before I came to breakfast to don't feel stupid in the morning* (lines one and two). Laughter from the other

participants seems to express supportiveness which may have encouraged Francesca to continue with the subsequent comment *so I got time to prepare my brain*. Just as in L1 talk, not taking oneself too seriously, also seems to be a common feature of successful L2 interpersonal language use.

However, behind the joking facade, Francesca engages in troubles talk (see 3.5.2.): she is worried and reveals how depressed she was at first about the grade she received for her last piece of work and then how she felt when her tutor praised her resubmitted work. Celia is supportive of Francesca saying *that it's very good* (line 13).

The conversation suddenly takes on another dimension as Celia expresses solidarity with Francesca: She reveals that she was in a similar situation saying *it happened something like that to me* (lines 15 and 16). Celia tries to match Francesca's experience with her own similar experience. Rather than just express agreement, she 'does' agreement: *I don't know what we are going to do* (line 19 and 20) and empathises: *it doesn't seem you will be able to write anything at all* (lines 20 and 21).

Celia demonstrates intimacy and restricted attitudes – attitudes that a *somebody* rather than an *anybody* holds (as discussed in 3.7.2.). Celia had a choice. As a PhD student she could have sympathised with Francesca, an MA student, from a position of superior knowledge or experience. However, instead, she identified with Francesca and demonstrated a shared feeling of frustration and exasperation.

#### **5.4. Maintaining & Enhancing L2-L2 Relationships**

Just as in the first language context, social relationships are maintained, developed, enhanced and even lost in a second-language. Social relationships are rarely static and participants need to be aware of their potential for change. Successful L2 participation involves employing pragmatic resources so that social relations develop, are maintained or

are enhanced in the way that the individual participant wants them to, rather than allowing the situation or other interactants to guide or decide the outcome. In the following sections, I examine how the university hall of residence participants maintained and enhanced second-language social relationships.

#### 5.4.1. Maintaining Social Relations

While ELT textbooks often present social talk in terms of interactants exchanging standard formulaic expressions (see 2.8.2.), the second-language user in a real-life L2 context maintains interpersonal relationships through employing a range of pragmatic resources for engaging in social interaction.

In the following example, Yumiko is describing to Celia the Chinese writing system – reflecting transactional language use. At the same time, the interactants use pragmatic resources to express the interpersonal dimension to the conversation.

Example 5.11.

Conversation during breakfast between Yumiko, a Japanese MA student, Celia, a Mexican PhD student, and the participant observer (P/O) regarding the Chinese writing system:

- |     |         |   |
|-----|---------|---|
| 1   | Yumiko: | so I need to use  |
| 2   | Celia:  | phonetic  |
| 3   | Yumiko: | phonetic letters  |
| → 4 | Celia:  | how interesting   |
| → 5 | Yumiko: | yes it's a combination                                    |
| 6   | Celia:  | mmm   |
| 7   | Yumiko: | but the Chinese characteristics are important to to learn |

8

otherwise your sentences look like really childish.

→

9

Celia: so that makes your your writing more elegant

As Yumiko describes the Chinese writing system, Celia expresses her level of involvement in the conversation: she demonstrates interest by anticipating Yumiko's next utterance by saying *phonetic* (line two); she expresses supportiveness with *how interesting* (line four), *mmm* (line six) and *so that makes your your writing more elegant* (line nine).

Pragmatically, Celia's utterances reflect Lakoff's rules of politeness (see 3.10.2) as she wants Yumiko to feel good: she reacts to Yumiko's talk with *how interesting* (line four); and she compliments Yumiko on her writing: *so that makes your your writing more elegant* (line nine). Although Celia could be talking about writers in general, her comment *so that makes your your writing more elegant* (line nine) seems to be a deliberate face-boosting act (see 3.7.3.). At the same time, Yumiko's participation reflects adherence to Leech's modesty maxim (see 3.11.2.) as she responds to Celia's *how interesting* (line four) with *yes it is a combination* (line five) as she focuses on the topic rather than her account.

Within the context of target-language norms of use, Yumiko's participation could be described as distant and impersonal while Celia shows a degree of closeness. However, in L2-L2 use, the interactants build on each others' contributions as they expressed shared understandings: anticipation (*phonetic*, line two), confirmation (*phonetic letters*, line three), compliment (*how interesting*, line four), agreement (*yes it is a combination*, line five), appreciation (*mmm*, line six) and compliment (*so that makes your your writing more elegant*, line nine).

In 5.4., I have reflected Aston's argument (1993: 239) that solidary language may be characterised by participants taking pleasure at just being able to talk to each other and celebrating understandings. Celebratory language can also help maintain relationships. As I argued in 3.7.1., second-language users, even more than first-language users, may take pleasure at just being able to talk to each other in a second-language. They can be seen to appreciate their relationship as they 'do' agreement. For instance, in the following example,

Celia and Francesca seem to be taking pleasure and laughing at just being able to talk to each other:

Example 5.12.

Conversation during breakfast between Celia, a Mexican PhD student, and Francesca, a Spanish MA student:

- 1      Francesca:    where have you been sorry just to where have you been I  
2                    haven't seen you in a couple of days.  
3      Celia:        in a couple of days no  
4      Francesca:    yes and you're +...  
                         [laughter]  
5      Celia:        we saw us yesterday morning -  
6      Francesca:    no  
7      Celia:        okay the day before

The interaction reflects small talk where the participants are catching up on each other's activities. Francesca begins the interaction with a direct question asking Celia *where have you been* .... (line one). Since the interaction shows a mutually appreciated interest in each other's whereabouts, Celia does not appear to take such direct questioning as *face-threatening*. In formulating her question, Francesca may be using first-language linguistic resources as she rephrases the question asking *to where have you been* (line one); Spanish adds an *a* to *dónde* (where) as in *¿adónde fuiste?* (literally: To where did you go?). Seemingly having problems in constructing a negative reply, Celia denies that it has been *in a couple of days no* (line three). To which Francesca replies with *yes* (line four). But she is not allowed to finish as they both break into laughter. Celia then comes back with the counter-assertion *we saw us yesterday morning* (line five). The fact that it matters when they last saw each other would signal a high level of involvement between the interactants reflected through laughter and mock assertion and counter-assertion. Finally they agreed they saw each other *the day before* (line seven).

The opening question in the conversation was ostensibly about exchanging information regarding when Celia and Francesca last met. However, language is also being used to achieve another purpose: closeness and involvement. This example of L2-L2 talk shows that, while second-language users may not adhere to target-language norms of use in terms of grammar, there is a high level of tolerance regarding inaccurate language use as the participants seem to focus more on the message than on form.

#### 5.4.2. Enhancing Social Relations

Besides maintaining interpersonal relationships, the second-language user may also want to enhance relationships (3.7.3.) with other second-language users. She may seek increased intimacy with other L2 users and increase the level of rapport by engaging in *face* or rapport enhancement (Spencer-Oatey 2000b) (see 3.7.3.). So, for instance, in the following example, Mariana attempts to boost Blanca's *face*:

Example 5.13.

Conversation during an evening meal between Mariana and Armando, Mexican PhD students, Blanca, a Portuguese PhD student, and the participant-observer (P/O) concerning foreign-language proficiency. Mariana is asking Blanca how many languages she speaks.

- |   |         |  |
|---|---------|--|
| 1 | Mariana | = but for instance I mean that you speak like at least three |
| 2 |         | languages  |
| 3 | Blanca  | um   |
| 4 | Mariana | how do you feel in every each of them? You speak four or     |
| 5 |         | five, don't you  |
| 6 | Blanca  | four   |
| 7 | Mariana | you speak some Chinese                                       |

8 Blanca no, I don't, not  
 9 Mariana [laughs]  
 10 Blanca any more ....

Mariana starts off by asserting that Blanca speaks at least three languages. This could be interpreted as an indirect compliment which enhances Blanca's standing in the group since the other participants only speak two languages, English and Spanish. This is met with a noncommittal *um* (line two) from Blanca. *Um* is a filler which could signal hesitation or reflect adherence to Leech's modesty maxim (see 3.11.2.). Ignoring the communicative message behind the filler, Mariana asks Blanca *how do you feel in every each of them?* (line three), perhaps giving more importance to Blanca's opinion because of her linguistic abilities. Before Blanca has time to answer, Mariana enhances her *face* further by seeking confirmation that Blanca speaks even more languages, *You speak like four or five, don't you?* (lines three and four). Downplaying the assertion, Blanca opts for four languages. This is contradicted by Mariana, *you speak some Chinese* (line six), which receives another denial from Blanca. Mariana then laughs, possibly at Blanca's continuing modesty – whether it be false or real – or that she has caught Blanca out on the number of languages she speaks.

### 5.4.3. Summary of L2-L2 Interpersonal Resources

Second-language users do not necessarily follow target-language norms when maintaining and enhancing L2-L2 interpersonal relations. They may, like Celia and Yumiko in example 5.12., construct their own patterns of interpersonal language use: in their interaction they reflected anticipation, confirmation, compliment, agreement and appreciation. Furthermore, they may especially celebrate joint understandings as they discover they can communicate on an interpersonal level as seen in example 5.12. with Celia and Francesca. L2-L2 interpersonal language talk demonstrates a high tolerance for inaccurate language use as



participants seem to be more focused on developing, maintaining and enhancing interpersonal relations.

### 5.5. Challenges in L2-L2 Talk

Managing, maintaining, developing and enhancing social relations can involve a series of challenges in L2-L2 talk as second-language interactants may not necessarily approach a given social encounter with the same interpersonal goals as the other L2 interactants. Differences may emerge as interactants pursue greater or lesser degrees of 'affective convergence' as they negotiate shared attitudes or feelings (see 3.2.).

L2 social relations need to be seen as a co-construction by participants interacting together to achieve a working consensus – a shared definition of a situation which involves a degree of mutual concern and co-operation (as I discussed in 3.9.). Within a working consensus, participants express supportiveness and solidarity as they try to achieve conformity and convergence with other interactants. However, the achievement of a working consensus is not always a smooth process and, in the final analysis, it may not be achieved. A working consensus involves both collaboration with others and accommodation to others (see 3.9.).

In the following examples, Yumiko and Josué attempt to achieve a working consensus as they develop their own norms of interaction. In establishing and developing social relations, the participants employ pragmatic resources to achieve common understandings. However, interactants may have to be especially careful in how they use these resources and attentive to how they are being used by other interactants especially when neither participant is a native speaker, and, as in the following case, come from different cultural settings: Mexican and Japanese.

The encounter consists of three parts. Josué and Yumiko are getting to know each other.

Example 5.14.

Conversation during Sunday lunch between Yumiko, a Japanese MA student, and Josué, a Mexican PhD student, concerning the dessert. They are just beginning to know each other.

- 1 Yumiko: this is strange (0.1) uh I will finish but (laughs) it  
2 Josué: takes time  
3 Yumiko: (0.2) how about you? =  
4 Josué: = I'm not I'm not a fanatic of this type of ice cream it's  
5 sherbet (1.0) I like ice cream =  
6 Yumiko: = yeah I thought it was ice cream (1.0) and even if it is sher  
7 sherbet it's [not  
8 Josué: [not  
9 Yumiko: not really nice um

In the above extract, on the surface, small talk seems to reflect a conversation about whether the two participants like the dessert. I argue that a closer analysis reveals that the use of pragmatic resources reflects varying levels of involvement and commitment to each other.

Yumiko expresses her opinion about the dessert tentatively with use of the word *strange* (line one). Pragmatically, she seems to be adopting a strategy that reflects indirectness. She avoids outright criticism which might threaten the *face* of Josué perhaps in case he happened to like the dessert. The use of the word *strange* may be seen as a dispreferred response (see 3.5.2. and 3.5.3.) when talking about food. She then tempers the remark with *I will finish but...*(line one). Josué's answer *takes time* (line two) is noncommittal, impersonal and indirect. The interaction up until this point seems to demonstrate little sense of involvement and supportiveness. Josué has demonstrated distance and lack of commitment.

Then Yumiko seems to adopt a more direct pragmatic strategy and takes Josué straight on with a direct question: *how about you?* (line three). This may even be seen as ‘gutsy’ (personal communication Courtney Cazden) as she appears to be asking for a greater sense of involvement from Josué. It is the first pair part of an adjacency pair (see 3.5.3.) – the question in a question-and-answer sequence. There is still a sense of detachment (and perhaps even aloofness) in Josué’s reply: *I’m not I’m not a fanatic of this type...* (line four). He continues to project indirectness in his participation.

However, Yumiko builds on Josué’s answer with a supportive *yeah I thought it was ice cream...* (line six). The interchange now seems to reflect a concerted effort by Yumiko to seek involvement and supportiveness as she builds on Josué’s *not* with a downgrade (as discussed in 3.7.2.) *not really nice um* (line nine). But, in the end, Yumiko is left saying *not really nice* and there is still no strong sign of supportiveness from Josué. Negotiations have not gone very far and Yumiko and Josué do not seem to have established a working consensus: a sustained collaboration which reflects understanding and consideration.

An alternative reading may interpret the conversation as an act of discursual resistance by Josué. He seems determined not to collaborate or co-operate with Yumiko. He uses pragmatic resources to demonstrate social distance and lack of involvement. For instance, *how about you?* (line three) as the first pair part of an adjacency pair calls for a fairly direct ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer. However, Josué offers an indirect answer *I’m not I’m not a fanatic of this type...* (line four). Up to this point, Josué does not initiate any of the conversational exchanges.

In either interpretation, the construction of the dialogue reflects the local management of pragmatic choices. Yumiko employs both direct and indirect strategies when interacting with Josué who, for his part, only seems to interact with indirect strategies. At the same time, Yumiko attempts to achieve supportiveness and convergence while Josué’s participation reflects distance and a lack of commitment.

However, Yumiko seems to have interpersonal goals and is intent on reaching some sort of social relationship with Josué. She therefore can be seen to employ pragmatic resources in trying to reach her goal.

The topic of conversation switches to talking about the weather in London – reflecting perhaps an attempt to find a ‘safe’ topic of conversation (see 2.8.1.) as part of a *supportive interchange* (see 3.3.). The interactants talk about early spring flowers and unneeded winter clothes due to the relatively mild weather:

Example 5.15.

Conversation during Sunday lunch between Yumiko, a Japanese MA student, Josué, a Mexican PhD student, and the participant-observer (P/O) concerning the mildness of the weather and the early appearance of the spring flowers.

- 1 Josué: after I bought all my clothes my hat [my coat my gloves  
2 Yumiko: [yeah  
3 Yumiko: are you using that no you don't have to =  
4 Josué: = no I have them in the drawer (0.1) the gloves  
5 Yumiko: [mm  
6 Josué: but I go out with my little hat  
7 Yumiko: mm  
8 Josué: I like those little hats  
9 P/O: yeah  
10 Josué: I like those little hats  
11 P/O: but wait until February oh it is February (laughs)  
12 Josué: wait until March  
13 P/O: yeah wait until March  
14 Yumiko: yeah but I went around Russell Square this [morning  
15 P/O: [yeah  
16 Yumiko: and I saw crocuses coming out too

17 P/O: really yes  
 18 Yumiko: yes  
 19 Josué: what's that?  
 20 Yumiko: crocuses er a kind of flower for spring  
 21 P/O: yes  
 22 Yumiko: but they blossom quite early early in spring  
 23 Josué: in Safeway they have a very nice display of flowers outside on  
 24 the have you gone to Safeway? [Safeway is the name of a local  
 supermarket].

In the above extract, Yumiko and Josué collaborate in trying to achieve a working consensus; the participants begin to reach a level of agreement through the use of pragmatic resources including supportive remarks, accommodation by Yumiko and the expression of active listenership through backchannel responses such as *yeah* and *mm*.

The extract begins with Josué listing his winter clothes with the word *my* repeated four times. Yumiko demonstrates a degree of supportiveness by offering friendly advice saying there is no need for winter clothes with *no you don't have to* (line three). She seems to use pragmatic resources that reflect concern and involvement. Josué continues to talk about his clothes and Yumiko continues to express supportiveness through a series of backchannel *mms* (as discussed 3.7.2.). This time when Yumiko asks the first pair part of a question-and-answer adjacency pair, i.e. *are you using that no you don't have to* (line three), she receives a direct answer from Josué: *no, I have them in the drawer* (line four). Josué is now more 'revealing' about himself with references to *my little hat*. Providing personal information is one way of providing a basis for establishing common ground on which to develop social relations. However, his repetitiousness does not seem to move the conversation forward.

Once again taking the initiative, Yumiko now develops the conversation by talking about the mild winter weather and the early appearance of spring flowers. Yumiko may be trying to determine the topic of conversation which up until this point seems to have been selected

by Josué. For the first time in the conversation, Josué asks for information from Yumiko with *what's that?* (line 19) as if, at last, he is showing some sense of interest or involvement.

His comment *what's that?* (line 19) concerning Yumiko's remarks about crocuses could be interpreted in one of two ways: 'Sorry I didn't catch what you were saying'; or 'What are crocuses?' Yumiko goes for the second interpretation and tries to explain what crocuses are. Yumiko's explanation of crocuses, *er a kind of flower for spring* (line 20), highlights another specific feature of L2-L2 talk: interactants often talk about language and what words mean. Perhaps Josué is protecting his *face* (because he does not want to admit that he does not understand) and uses change of topic (reflecting pragmatic use of indirectness) to start talking about flowers on sale in a local supermarket. However, he still makes a contribution to keeping the interaction going with *have you gone to Safeway?* (line 24). Finally, Josué has at least built on Yumiko's comment by asking her whether she has seen the flowers in a local supermarket – the first overt sign of interest in Yumiko. An alternative reading of Josué's question *have you gone to Safeway?* (line 24) is that Josué is trying to catch Yumiko out about the location of Safeway. Nevertheless, the participants seem to have developed a degree of sustained collaboration even if Yumiko seems to be doing most of the interpersonal work.

The conversation then continues as Josué and Yumiko agree on the exact location of the supermarket and work with each other to explain to the participant observer where the Safeway supermarket is.

Example 5.16.

Conversation during Sunday lunch between Yumiko, a Japanese MA student, Josué, a Mexican PhD student, and the participant-observer (P/O) regarding the location of a local supermarket (Safeway).

1 Josué: in front of the institute back of the hotel Safeway

- 2 Yumiko: = Safeway mm =
- 3 Josué: = near the Russell Station
- 4 Yumiko: mm
- 5 Josué: train station
- 6 Yumiko: if you go to =
- 7 Josué: = no =
- 8 Yumiko: Russell
- 9 P/O: I mean I must have walked
- 10 Josué: in front of two bars no?  
(general laughter)
- 11 P/O: I must have just walked past it
- 12 Josué: yeah well I go there a lot I go buy my sandwiches or I go buy
- 13 my beer (0.1) I bought two umbrellas in that passageway I
- 14 ha& I have had shoes fixed in that passageway and there's a
- 15 little store where they sell flowers beautiful really beautiful

Josué takes the lead in explaining where the supermarket is located. Yumiko takes a supportive role with *mm* and *Russell* and finally a degree of mutual understanding is achieved through the humorous reference to the location of the bars. There is a display of shared knowledge and common ground between Josué and Yumiko. An alternative reading may claim that Josué dominates the exchange and does not allow Yumiko to play an equal role in the conversation as he forces her to play out a secondary and supporting role. Whichever interpretation is adopted, Josué once again talks about himself through an extended turn and distance and detachment seems to replace supportiveness – an example of the dynamic and changing nature of interpersonal talk.

Faced with choices in how they wanted the social relationship to develop, Yumiko and Josué use pragmatic resources in very different ways. Yumiko alternates between the use of direct and indirect pragmatic resources as she tries to engage Josué in conversation. She takes Josué on with direct questions e.g. *how about you* (example 5.15., line three) but also uses downgrades (as discussed in 3.7.2.) e.g. *not really* (example 5.15., line nine) in trying

to engage in interpersonal language. While basically reflecting indirectness, Josué barely opens up to Yumiko. However, he does provide topics to keep the conversation going as he becomes 'revealing about himself'. The conversation shows signs of achieving very limited common understandings. Talk edges towards the interaction of two *somebodies* rather than of two *anybodies* as they seek out personal details of each other lives and through the use of humour. As discussed in 3.14., the features of a *somebody* include restricted attitudes – attitudes not shared with an *anyone* – and uniqueness. Seeking out personal details and the use of humour can be seen as examples of *somebody* talk.

Yumiko reveals supportiveness, involvement and interest in Josué. Yumiko's participation seems to reflect adherence to a range of social rules or principles e.g. the use of tact in criticising the dessert and the expression of sympathy over Josué's use of winter clothes. Josué responds by emphasising social distance (see 3.11.2.). He does not seem to respond to the *face* needs of Yumiko as she expresses supportiveness and concern. However, it would be wrong to immediately conclude that the conversation was unsuccessful. The negotiatory aspect of interactional language in the above examples indicates that reaching a working consensus does not always run smoothly. It is not always about equal participant displays of supportiveness and involvement. Apart from Yumiko's opening remark about the dessert and her mention of crocuses, conversational topics were heavily influenced by Josué as he talked about his clothes and where he went to shop. It would seem that Yumiko did a considerable amount of accommodating towards Josué. By comparison, we learned very little about Yumiko.

At the same time, degrees of involvement and commitment vary during an interaction. For instance, Josué starts off by seemingly being non-committal at the beginning to the conversation, shows some degree of convergence in the middle but, at the end, he is talking about himself. Yumiko, on the other hand, presents herself as an involved and active listener who shows concern for Josué e.g. about his use of winter clothes. Developing social relations is not an all-or-nothing process. Participants vary in their use of pragmatic resources during an interaction as they pursue interpersonal objectives which may change during the course of the interaction. In the final analysis, I would argue that perhaps



Yumiko and Josué do achieve some degree of involvement as they talked about the weather, spring flowers and the location of a shopping centre and expressed humour about the location of local bars.

## 5.6. L2 User Choice in Target-Language Interpersonal Language Use

The previous examples reflect choice in L2-L2 interpersonal language use. However, I also want to offer an example of how participants were equally capable of exercising choice in managing social relations with L1 speakers in the university hall of residence. In the following example, Mariana, a Mexican PhD student, demonstrates assertiveness as she appears to have reached some judgement about the level of involvement and commitment she wants with Simon, a British teacher trainee.

### Example 5.17.

Conversation in the front hall of a London university hall of residence between Mariana, a Mexican PhD student, and Simon, a British teacher trainee. Mariana has been busy in conversation with the participant-observer (P/O) in the reception area. Simon has been waiting near the reception area to talk to Mariana and to lend her a book. He does not have the book with him. It is now around 11:30 at night and Simon interrupts:

- 1 Simon: is it bit late now for you?
- 2 Mariana: sorry
- 3 Simon: it's a bit late now isn't it for you?
- 4 Mariana: yeah I think it's better for to do this for tomorrow do you
- 5 think?
- 6 Simon: that's fine okay I'll give you the book
- 7 Mariana: sorry
- 8 Simon: when you need it

- 9 Mariana: yeah yeah maybe I'll just maybe do you normally go out  
10 during the mornings don't you?  
11 Simon: er not usually but I haven't got anything I haven't got  
12 lectures though I usually go down to the library [[to check  
13 Mariana [[okay]]  
14 Simon the e-mail  
15 Mariana: I'm going to the opera tomorrow evening with my friends  
16 so I might give you a call tomorrow at some point (laughs)  
17 Simon: okay  
18 Mariana: bye but thanks very much  
19 Simon: you're welcome

The encounter is ostensibly transactional but also involves interpersonal language use as Simon attempts to develop a closer social relationship with Mariana. The example not only demonstrates how Mariana resists social pressure from her interlocutor but successfully negotiates when she wants to receive the book.

Simon has been hovering around the reception area for over half an hour waiting to give Mariana a book which explains his opening remark: *is it bit late now for you?* (line one). As he repeats his question with *it's a bit late now isn't it for you?* (line three), Simon's question reflects what Laver (1975) termed the exploratory and initiatory stage of interaction (see 3.10.). Simon is trying to re-establish contact and the underlying question seems to be 'Are you available to talk?' Pragmatically, Simon expresses tentativeness and uses a softener or downtoner (see 3.11.1.) *a bit* in *is it a bit* (line one) and *it's a bit* (line three) when referring to the lateness of the hour. This strategy of indirectness leaves open the option of still meeting up and talking. He is trying not to impose on Mariana since he is potentially intruding on her privacy. However, she is in a public area – in the reception area of a London university hall of residence – and her companion is, at that moment, talking to somebody else. He seems to be 'presenting himself' (see 3.4.) as accommodating and willing to fit in with Mariana's plans.

While his start to the conversation reflects tentativeness and indirectness, Simon is also offering choices to Mariana. He is saying that he is ready and willing to talk but the repeated use of *for you* in *is it bit late now for you?* (line one) and *it's a bit late now isn't it for you?* (line three) could be seen as pressuring Mariana to say 'no, it isn't'. Mariana seems to resist this pressure and responds with an agreement on the lateness of the hour with *yeah* (line four). She denies social access in meeting together with the direct use of *yeah* – perhaps a dispreferred response (see 3.5.2. and 3.5.3.) from Simon's point of view given that he has been waiting around for some time to give her the book.

In contrast, Mariana is much more direct in her approach to the conversation. She might have used her pragmatic resources to find alternative ways of turning down the request as the *yeah* was a direct response to both the observation about lateness of the hour and that it was too late to get together. However, Mariana does proceed to negotiate an alternative time and shows tentativeness by using the hedge *I think it's better* (line four) and seeking agreement with the tag question *do you think?* (lines four and five). The use of *do you think?* in *yeah I think it's better for to do this for tomorrow do you think?* (lines four and five) is not grammatically correct but it is understood by Simon. Perhaps, Mariana is now attempting to protect Simon's *face* (see 3.3. and 3.11.2.) in that she has given a refusal and therefore is trying to employ the appropriate pragmatic resources. Simon answers with *that's fine okay I'll give you the book* (line six) – signalling the realisation of a mutually satisfactory arrangement. Lines four to six indicate that Mariana and Simon may have reached some degree of convergence.

An alternative reading suggests that Simon has been kept waiting and, while not wanting to impose on Mariana, wants to know if she still wants the book. Her repetition of *sorry* (lines two and seven) could be interpreted as rudeness. (In a follow-up interview, Mariana said that she was using *sorry* as a form of ongoing apology – perhaps an inappropriate use of a sociopragmatic resource.) Simon ends up saying that he will lend Mariana the book whenever she needs it, *I'll give you the book* (line six) and *when you need it* (line eight). Besides achieving convergence, this interpretation would suggest Mariana and Simon are also agreeing on how to proceed in a future encounter.

As the conversation continues, Simon seems to be willing to allow Mariana to take the final decision concerning the book. Pragmatically he may seem to be supporting Mariana's *face* throughout the conversation but he also demonstrates a lack of assertiveness. At the same time, Mariana demonstrates a considerable amount of unease (or perhaps embarrassment) as expressed through the hedges *yeah yeah maybe* and *just maybe* in: *yeah yeah maybe I'll just maybe do you normally go out during the mornings don't you?* (lines nine and ten). Mariana comes across as indecisive. She seeks agreement from Simon in that he goes out in the morning. Disagreeing with Mariana, and giving a dispreferred response, Simon says that he is available: *I haven't got anything* (line 11).

On the surface, Mariana seems to be making a proposal about meeting again as part of an adjacency pair (proposal - acceptance) (see 3.5.3.) and the proposal is accepted by Simon i.e. *I haven't got anything* (line 11). But Mariana does not follow through by finalising the arrangements and her follow-up comment about 'going to the opera' appears to lack relevance: *I'm going to the opera tomorrow evening with my friends so I might give you a call tomorrow at some point (laughs)* (lines 15 and 16). The use of 'my' in *my friends* opens up the possibility of Mariana wanting to distance herself and exclude Simon. Mariana could have left out the word 'my' or used 'some'. On the other hand, the use of 'my' could also reflect grammatical interference from Spanish where the use of possessive adjectives in such contexts does not necessarily reflect exclusion. Nevertheless, Mariana no longer projects the same degree of supportiveness during the rest of the conversation. She no longer seeks agreement and, instead, expresses social distance. She seems to be trying to put off any future encounter.

Given that Simon is doing the favour by lending the book, Mariana subsequently demonstrates a considerable amount of power as to when she is available to pick up the book. (This incident suggests that it may be over-simplistic to assume that the native speaker, in this case Simon, always has power over the non-native speaker.) Mariana seems to exert this power by saying *I might give you a call tomorrow at some point* (line 15) which seems to display a degree of aloofness that could even cause potential offence.

Another reading might suggest that the use of the formulaic remark, *I might give you a call tomorrow at some point* (line 15), is an attempt to introduce a sense of distance and guardedness. In a follow-up interview, I asked Mariana if she thought that Simon had perhaps more ‘romantic’ intentions in mind given the fact that he was still waiting around to give her a book at 11:30 p.m. Mariana did not think so but she did think that Simon was being too friendly. However, at the same time, she said that she did not wish to openly hurt his feelings (i.e. she wanted to protect his *face*). She said that she deliberately chose a strategy of guardedness and distancing. Her comment reflects the on-line use of pragmatic resources during an interaction. Interactants make decisions based on local and developing factors. Despite Mariana’s interpersonal intentions, the conversation finishes on an amicable basis able to be resumed at a later date. Nevertheless, Mariana’s closing remark *bye but thanks very much* (line 17) seems to reflect a composed farewell and Simon’s closing remark, *you’re welcome* (line 18), (which was not conveyed in a sarcastic manner) seems rather strange given that he has not provided Mariana with anything. The use of *thanks - you’re welcome* may be purely formulaic, signalling that the participants were generally satisfied with the encounter. On the other hand, the *thanks - you’re welcome* adjacency pair may reflect the interactants’ appraisal of the interpersonal experience rather than an evaluation on the failure to achieve the transactional objective.

Interpersonal language is often about varying degrees of involvement and co-operation and, when deemed necessary, distance and guardedness, according to the situation. Interpersonal language use does not reflect a fixed and given situation – it reflects choice in how the second-language user wants to interact with others. In example 5.17., Mariana seemed to be aware of these choices and used pragmatic resources in order to achieve her objective. She resisted Simon’s pressure to meet at that moment through the use of directness and she established that she would decide when they were going to meet. Mariana came across as an assertive *somebody* who combined *distance* (e.g. in determining her availability and resisting Simon’s over-friendliness) with conciliation (e.g. negotiating another time to meet) while also protecting Simon’s *face* so that the relationship remained intact and ready to be resumed at a later date.

In 2.5, I argued that it is often difficult to separate transactional language from interactional language. Example 5.17. suggests there is often a close relationship between transactional and interactional talk. Mariana successfully achieves the transactional objective of postponing a meeting to pick up a book but, at the same time, she maintains interpersonal relations on an amicable footing and on her own terms.

## 5.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to answer the specific research questions regarding how L2 interactants express concern for and engagement with other L2 users and the interactional practices which characterise L2-L2 interpersonal language use (see 4.2.5.). I have attempted to achieve this by employing Aston's categories of supportiveness and solidarity in relationship to L2-L2 interpersonal language use. I have used interactional sociolinguistics to show that concern and involvement in L2-L2 talk often takes place in an especially supportive non-*face*-threatening environment which is characterised by troubles talk (as seen in example 5.2., and also in 5.8. and 5.10.) and self-disclosure (as seen in example 5.6., and also in 5.15. and 5.16.). I have identified interactional practices through the use of conversation analysis and pragmatics. Conversation analysis allowed me to examine the choices participants make as they express supportiveness and solidarity in small talk. When making such choices, participants express varying degrees of involvement and closeness in L2-L2 talk (as seen in examples 5.8. and 5.9.). Pragmatics reflects the use of resources that L2 users bring to interpersonal language use as they maintain and develop social relationship. In L2-L2 talk, the use of such resources are especially reflected in participants taking pleasure at just being able to talk to each other and celebrating understandings (as seen in example 5.12. and also in 5.7.). Within the three theoretical perspectives, L2-L2 talk is further marked by a high level of tolerance of grammatical inaccuracy (as seen in examples 5.7. and 5.12.) and talk about language itself (as seen in example 5.6. and 5.15.).

So while L2-L2 communication does reflect L1-L1 and L1-L2 patterns of use, certain features seem to be more salient in L2-L2 talk. The non-threatening environment, choice in degree of involvement and celebrated understandings reflect ‘a sense of community’ among L2 language users. It is not a community which shares the same cultural and social values but it is a community in which participants share or relate to the same experiences or knowledge of the world through the medium of a second language. Moreover, it is not just a linguistic experience: second-language users actively engage with other language users in terms of feeling ‘*for* the other’ (supportiveness) or feeling ‘*as* the other’ (solidarity). The expression of supportiveness and solidarity further develops from the participants’ joint experiences of being PhD students, the need to use a second language to express themselves and temporarily living in a foreign country.

This sense of community means that participants are not just nondescript and anonymous *anybodies* but rather fully-fledged *somebodies* with their own knowledge, experiences and attitudes in the target language. In the next chapter I want to examine more fully this concept of the L2 *somebody* – an L2 user who interacts in both conventional and creative ways as she chooses how to present herself in a given encounter.

## Chapter 6

### Choice in Creative Language Use: L2 *Somebody* & L2 *Anybody*

#### 6.1. Introduction

In chapter five, I examined how second-language users are faced with choices when they interact with other L2 users. I described such choices in terms of Aston's supportiveness and solidarity (1988b, 1988c, 1989, 1993) as second-language users establish, develop and maintain social relations. At the same time, the L2 user is faced with other choices. Besides conforming to others by engaging in solidarity and supportiveness, she may also want to present herself in her own way in a given encounter. In this chapter, I argue that the second-language user can present herself in her own way in L2-L2 social talk by engaging in creative language use. Creative language use allows the second-language user to participate as a *somebody* as she makes choices in terms of conforming to others or interacting in her own way. Therefore, I now attempt to answer my fourth research question regarding how L2 interactants engage in creative language use with other L2 users. To examine the creative dimension to L2-L2 interpersonal language use, I will draw on the work of Mead (as discussed in chapter three) and, in doing so, add to Aston's concept of a *some* by arguing that a *somebody* is a creative language user. Besides studying and attempting to define the concept of an L2 *somebody*, I examine the interpersonal patterns and practices of an L2 *somebody* and consider the possibility that L2 users interact as different types of *somebody* depending on the social encounter. By looking at different types of *somebody*, I go beyond Aston's dichotomy of *some* and *any* and consider different ways of being a *somebody*. In describing the features of a *somebody*, I imply that a *somebody* is a desirable state. To examine an opposite view, I also study what it means to be an *anybody* and the legitimate option of the L2 user to interact as an *anybody* with other L2 users. Therefore, in



this chapter, I also examine the features of an *anybody* and how she engages in interpersonal language use.

In examining L2-L2 interpersonal language, I build on Aston's work (1988c: 385-386; 1989: 386-387, 1993: 243-244) regarding how second-language users engage in creative language use (see 3.12.3). I will use insights gained from conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics as described in chapter four. Creative language use is jointly constructed between interactants which I will examine through conversation analysis. At the same time, the jointly-constructed nature of creative language use reflects the achievement of common social goals which I will examine through interactional sociolinguistics. I will use pragmatics to examine how language users break expectations and extend language use in creative ways that are acceptable to other L2 participants.

In analysing creative language use within L2-L2 interpersonal language, I am not arguing for a dichotomy between solidarity / supportiveness and creative language use. Besides offering a way to present herself in her own way, creative language use allows the second-language user to interact in innovative and non-conventional ways in expressing supportiveness and solidarity.

## **6.2. Mead: Creative *I* & Conforming *Me* in L2-L2 Talk**

In chapter three, I examined Mead's concept of the creative *I* and the conforming *me*. I argued that, in L2-L2 talk, the *me* reflects conformity to and acceptance of group norms and social attitudes. In contrast, the creative *I* reflects the language user's ability to respond to the changing nature of interpersonal language use. However, in this chapter, I go further and claim that in the university hall of residence study creative language use not only reflects the creative *I* who seeks her own way of participating but also creative language use reflects how L2 participants jointly achieve interpersonal goals.

### 6.2.1. Creative Language Use: Achieving Common Understandings

Creative language use offers the choice to use language in unexpected and unconventional ways (see 3.12.). Especially within L2-L2 talk, creative language use gives L2 users an opportunity to break away from close adherence to the norms of standard and conventional language use, which, I argued in chapter two, is a strong feature of L2 teaching and learning practice. However, interactants still need to ensure that creative language use is carried out in ways that are acceptable and understandable to other language users. Therefore, while engaging in creative language use, second-language users seek out and draw on common resources and understandings which is often attempted through language play and language extension.

#### 6.2.1.1. Language Play: Joking & Teasing

Language play (Cook 1997, 2000 as examined in 3.12.3) is a common feature of first-language use and examples of joking, irony and teasing can equally be found in second-language use in the university hall of residence data (see examples 5.6., 5.7. and 5.10.). Joking and teasing allow the L2 user to interact in the target language in creative ways as seen for instance in the following extract. Celia, a Mexican postgraduate student, presents herself in a secretive, teasing and perhaps even romantic way.

#### Example 6.1.

Conversation during a meal between Celia, a Mexican PhD student, and Francesca, a much younger Spanish student, about recent events in their lives and what they have been doing. Celia needed to send letters to her daughters in a Mexico City university that was on strike. [While Celia and Francesca could have conversed in Spanish, talk is in English because there are non-Spanish speakers at the table]

- 1 Celia: and the other university the large one is already on strike  
 2 Francesca: last month you told me  
 3 Celia: mm my children are there (0.3) and their boyfriends as well  
 4 (0.3.) so yesterday I need to to give this little letters to  
 5 everybody um (0.3) so that was the day and I went to have tea  
 6 Francesca: to have tea?  
 7 Celia: with someone (0.1) not a male one  
 8 Francesca: where  
 9 Celia: (laughs) no?  
 10 Francesca: (laughs)  
 11 Celia: not a man =  
 12 Francesca: = why did you say to me I am not always thinking of the same =  
 13 Celia: = no (laughs) no I just went to chat and er  
 14 Francesca: [(laughs)

The conversation initially seems to reflect conventional language use as Celia relates what she did the previous day i.e. having tea in order to ask someone to take letters to Mexico: *yesterday I need to to give this little letters to everybody um (0.3) so that was the day and I went to have tea* (lines four and five). But she suddenly breaks away from conventional talk and presents herself as being rather secretive and even seems to drop a hint of a mysterious romantic life. She is teasing but she carries it off by throwing out ambiguous and elusive comments regarding the person with whom she had tea. The ensuing creative language use is a joint accomplishment as Francesca plays along.

When Celia says *I went to have tea* (line five), Francesca questions her with *to have tea?* (line six) as the postgraduate students in this study do not usually go and have tea in the afternoon. Celia deepens the ‘mystery’ by saying that she went *with someone # not a male one* (line seven). Francesca tries to work out details of the meeting by asking *where?* (line eight). Celia puts up ‘resistance’ with a *no* (line nine) but they are both laughing. They have reached a level of understanding and they are sharing the same attitudes – another example

of a solidary use of language. Celia repeats *not a man* (line 11). Francesca reacts with mock innocence by ‘protesting’ that she is not always thinking about men *why did you say to me I am not always thinking of the same* (line 12). Celia now tries to clear up her motives saying *no I just went to chat* (line 13). Once again joint participant laughter seems to indicate joint understanding.

The joking and teasing that mark the interaction reflect that there is an underlying current of supportiveness and solidarity running throughout the conversation. The creative use of language goes against a conventional account of ‘What I did yesterday’ and builds up expectation and interest. The use of humour can be seen as part of establishing a working consensus as participants try to interact as *somebodies* who bring unique and very personal contributions to a given interaction.

#### 6.2.1.2. Extending Language

Besides playing with language, creative language use also involves extension – using words and expressions in unexpected, spontaneous and unconventional ways (as discussed in 3.12.). To do so, and as I argued concerning all creative language use (see 3.12.), interactants need a knowledge of pragmatic conventions and of the principles and rules governing socially appropriate language use because any extending of words and expressions needs to be done in ways that are acceptable and understandable to other language users.

Language users can extend conventional understandings to new areas of meaning e.g. the unexpected use of words to reflect different meanings and different realities. Extending meaning (see 3.12.4.) can be achieved through ‘breaking the rules’ of accepted use or by using words and phrases in novel and creative ways.

For instance, in the following extract, the participants in the London university hall of residence study are talking in Spanish and are trying to create a parallel Spanish verb for the English verb ‘to book’:

Example 6.2.

The participant observer (P/O) is talking about people coming to London to go on the London Eye (a 450-foot high observation wheel on the bank of the River Thames):

- 1 P/O: mucha gente viene a Londres para subirlo tienes que ¿cómo  
2 Blanca [para el London Eye estaba cerrado  
3 Mariana [no ( )  
4 P/O se dice? tienes que....  
5 Mariana: er  
6 Blanca: bookar  
(Risas) (MUY FUERTES)  
7 Armando: bookar  
8 P/O: ¿bucar?  
9 Blanca: reservar

Translation:

- P/O: a lot of people come to London to go up on it, you have to  
Blanca [for the London Eye it was closed  
Mariana [no  
P/O: how do you say? You have to  
Mariana: er  
Blanca: bookar  
[Strong Laughter]  
Armando bookar  
P/O: bucar?  
Blanca: make a reservation.

The interactants have transferred the verb ‘book’ into Spanish by inventing a new verb ‘bookar’ which would be rejected by Spanish-language purists as an Anglicism. The use of the Anglicism reflects the expression of a jointly-held social attitude towards the use of language i.e. that a second language, in this case English, can be used as a resource for expressing oneself in Spanish. In contrast, the participant-observer, a native English-language speaker, seems puzzled by this word and the confusion needs to be explained by Blanca. It would seem that the participant observer was not alert to the possible use of English as a creative resource to express oneself in Spanish.

Extending word meanings gives the participants an added ‘freedom’ to express themselves in the second-language – a freedom which may not be willingly granted by native speakers who expect L2 users to conform to target-language norms (see 3.12.3.). However, such freedom of expression is constrained by the need to adhere to joint understandings and commonly-held knowledge among the interactants e.g. Blanca adds *-ar* to the English verb ‘book’ which reflects adherence to Spanish verb termination.

### **6.2.2. Creative Language Use: Jointly Constructed Relations & Social Goals**

To pursue my argument that creative language use reflects the joint achievement of L2-L2 social goals, I will use the same text to examine how conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics offer different perspectives on creative second-language use:

#### **Example 6.3.**

Conversation during an evening meal between Mariana and Armando, Mexican PhD students, Blanca, a Portuguese PhD student, and the participant-observer (P/O). The participants have just been talking about Chinese and religion.

- 1 Blanca: the Chinese don't do the same
- 2 Mariana: Gladys
- 3 Blanca: it's a Chinese woman because they don't associate like we do =
- 4 Mariana: = ah you know what I did yesterday? well sorry did you finish?
- 5 Blanca: we know what you did last summer
- 6 P/O: [(laughter)
- 7 Blanca [(laughter)
- 8 Mariana: no no not last did I did last summer no no
- 9 Blanca: it's the movie you know =
- 10 P/O: = yeah the movie
- 11 Mariana: oh (laughter)  
(general laughter)
- 12 no no, yesterday I was really tired I had to I had to =
- 13 Blanca: = and you had some *plátanos* (Spanish for bananas) =
- 14 Mariana: = no no  
(general laughter)
- 15 Mariana: not that not that okay I was feeling really tired but I had to to  
16 the library and normally I don't stop on my own at the at the  
17 um student's union just to have coffee or tea or whatever but  
18 I mean yesterday I had to because I had to carry on working I  
19 mean if I come back I don't go there again so =
- 20 Blanca: = so your destiny made you stop there
- 21 Mariana: yeah so.....

#### 6.2.2.1. Creative Language Use: Conversation Analysis

Conversation analysis reveals that creative language use in example 6.3. reflects adherence to orderliness and sequence i.e. in terms of turn-taking practices and orderly succession of

speakers as participants break with expected practices and patterns of interpersonal language use.

While the other interactants are talking about religion and Chinese people, Mariana attempts to shift the topic with the following gambit: *ah you know what I did yesterday?* (line four). Mariana starts off with an exclamation *ah* which she might be using to indicate (or give the impression) that she has suddenly remembered something. The use of *ah* could be seen as shorthand for 'by the way that reminds me'. At the same time, Mariana is trying to get an extended turn at talk, *you know what I did yesterday?* (line four), through the use of a 'ticket' i.e. 'permission' to talk (see 3.5.2.). It is not a particularly smooth transition as Mariana recognises that she has not followed rule-governed turn-taking practices (see 3.5.1.) and contributed at a possible turn transition place (see 3.5.1.).

In response, Blanca picks up on Mariana's use of the verb 'do' and says *we know what you did last summer* (line five). Instead of asking Mariana what she did yesterday, Blanca gives a dispreferred response by jokingly asserting that the participants know what she did last summer. The remark *we know what you did last summer* (line five) reflects an exophoric reference to the 1997 film title: "I Know What You Did Last Summer". One of the problems with exophoric reference in any language, but particularly in second-language use, is that L2 users may not share the same knowledge outside of a text or be able to immediately access such knowledge. While laughter between the participant/observer and Blanca indicates a joint appreciation of the creative language use, Mariana fails to pick up the significance of the remark and is unable to understand its relevance.

Mariana is focused on her turn and misses Blanca's humorous reply. Mariana feels that she needs to clarify her topic and quickly replies *no no not last did I did last summer no no* (line eight). However, Blanca feels that she also needs to clarify her topic: *it's the movie you know* (line nine). Blanca's comments are immediately supported by the participant/observer: *yeah the movie* (line 10). Mariana's subsequent use of *oh* (line 11) is an acknowledgement of her reorientation to already 'given' information. Mariana has found a discrepancy between her earlier evaluation of Blanca's comment and Blanca's follow-up



remark. Mariana has been so committed to telling her story that she failed to accurately evaluate the contributions of others. Mariana's use of *oh* is a backchannel device e.g. *mm* and *yes* (see 3.7.2.) indicating that she is now evaluating the information in a different way.

While her laughter may show her appreciation of the creative use of language, Mariana still insists on telling her story: *no no, yesterday I was really tired I had to I had to* (line 13). The use of *no* is repetitious and seems to stand in opposition to Blanca's comment.

While Mariana may feel that she now has her 'ticket' and tries to continue with her story-telling, Blanca is still playing with language and breaking convention and completes Mariana's utterance with *and you had some plátanos* (line 13). Blanca's pre-emptive turn completion reflects active listening. However, it represents a risk as it is not an expected response. Again, Mariana rejects Blanca's contribution with an emphatic and repetitious *no no* (line 14). The general laughter reflects the interactants' appreciation of Blanca's humorous remarks.

Finally, Mariana is allowed to commence her story. Her story assumes it is 'common knowledge' to the other participants that the student union is near the library and that if Mariana had come back to the hall of residence she would probably not go out again to the library. During the conversation so far, it may appear that the other interactants, especially Blanca, engaged in humorous phatic talk as a diversionary tactic as they did not want Mariana to tell her story. As once again she tries to begin her story, Blanca offers a pre-emptive turn completion when Mariana says *I don't go there again so* (line 19). Blanca picks up on Mariana's use of the word *so* and latches on with *so your destiny made you stop there* (line 20). However, Blanca's contribution is not diversionary. The comment *so your destiny made you stop there* (line 21) seems to even enhance the story by adding a sense of suspense. The expression *so your destiny made you stop there* is unexpected and creatively builds up a sense of dramatic expectation. She is inviting Mariana to continue.

Blanca's use of creative language use is jointly-constructed with other participants and reflects talk in interaction which, in this instance goes beyond the "Do-you-know-what-I-

did-yesterday?” routine which often follows a predictable structure and speaker sequence. Instead, the small talk reflects the interaction of *somebodies* who incorporate exophoric references e.g. film titles, bananas and the use of dramatic speech patterns as they build up participant expectancy and interest. Conversation analysis demonstrates how interactants take advantage of opportunities at turn transition places and exploit language patterns of use (e.g. Blanca’s use of *do* and *so*) in order to engage in creative language use.

#### 6.2.2.2. Creative Language Use: Interactional Sociolinguistics

Example 6.3. can also be examined with regard to how participants use creative language to achieve common social goals. The participants reach a working consensus through *facework* and *supportive interchanges* which allow Mariana to tell her story and this is partially achieved through the creative language use.

Mariana’s initial contribution to the conversation i.e. *ah you know what I did yesterday?* (line four), is a potentially *face*-threatening act (see 3.11.2). She does not appear to be listening to the other participants’ contributions and is neither protecting nor enhancing their *face*. Furthermore, Mariana’s attempt to change the topic is not a particularly smooth transition as Mariana herself realises since she engages in remedial work (see 3.3.) with *well sorry did you finish?* (line four). Realising that the intended topic change could be interpreted as a potential *face*-threatening act, Mariana offers an apology by saying *sorry*. The use of word *well* is conciliatory – an offer to the other participants that they continue with the current topic. The use of *well sorry did you finish?* (line four) shows that Mariana is aware and considerate of others and their needs and, furthermore, it shows ‘the speaker’s aliveness to the needs to accomplish coherence’ (Schiffrin 1987: 126).

A creative undercurrent runs through the subsequent turn as Blanca does not even pick up on the remedial work (i.e. the apology) but makes a joke, *we know what you did last summer* (line five), playing on Mariana’s topic *what I did yesterday*, which she is trying to

contrast against the original 1997 film title: “I Know What You Did Last Summer”. The mention of the film title is an example of breaking listener expectations. Blanca is using language in an unconventional way. This move is picked up by the participant-observer but not by Mariana. By readily accepting Mariana’s topic shift and making a joke of it in a creative way, Blanca is sending a message that no offence has been taken, interpersonal relationships are “on track” and have not been affected by the attempted topic change. Going beyond just expressing individual humour, Blanca demonstrates group solidarity by using the word *we* instead of the word *I* in saying *we know what you did last summer* (line five) as opposed to the original film title: “I Know What You Did Last Summer”. Again, the use of *we* can be seen as another creative use of interpersonal language and an attempt to achieve group solidarity.

Mariana presumably expected the other interactants to engage in a conventional *supportive interchange* (see 3.3.) and give her a ‘ticket’ for an extended turn. Mariana did not expect other interactants to engage in creative language use when she was carrying out repair work after attempting a topic shift. This is an example of creative language not being used in an immediately acceptable and understandable way to another language user. Blanca has a choice: She can continue to use language creatively or she can adopt a more conventional and predictable line of supportiveness. Blanca decides to engage in repair work as she attempts to explain her use of creative supportive language. Rather than trying to clear up the misunderstanding in a direct and straightforward way which may threaten Mariana’s *face*, Blanca appeals to common knowledge through the use of *you know* in *it’s the movie you know* (line nine). She is given further support from the participant-observer with *yeah the movie* (line ten). The use of *you know* is an attempt to create a joint focus which pays off as Mariana replies with an *oh* (line 11). Furthermore, Mariana’s *oh* (line 11) indicates that she just at that moment understands the attempted *supportive interchange*.

The use of *oh* reflects a lack of interpersonal alignment between Mariana and the other participants: Mariana wants to tell her story; Blanca wants to demonstrate supportiveness. The use of *oh* (line 11) reflects a re-evaluation of Mariana’s understanding of the conversation. The use of *oh* can play an important role in interpersonal language use as it

can reflect participant realisation of participant divergence as opposed to participant convergence (see 3.2.).

As Mariana continues trying to tell her story, *no no, yesterday I was really tired I had to I had to* (line 12), Blanca once again attempts to complete Mariana's turn with *and you had some plátanos* (line 13). Blanca's contribution could be interpreted by an outside observer as a *face-threatening* act since it ostensibly does not reflect supportiveness towards the current speaker. While the reference to *plátanos* (bananas) might seem to be irrelevant, the participants on a previous occasion had discussed the merits of bananas in helping ward off tiredness (as Blanca and Mariana informed me in separate follow-up interviews). The general laughter indicates that Blanca's creative use of language has now been appreciated by all the participants. Of course, pre-emptive turn completion may be a way of sabotaging a speaker's contribution and, in this case, sending a message that no 'ticket' has been given.

Ostensibly, Blanca asks Mariana whether she ate any bananas in order to build up her energies. The exophoric reference to bananas is unexpected and creative. It refers to a previous narrative told by Mariana when some bananas fell from the outside ledge of her bedroom window at four o'clock in the morning. The reference provokes laughter from the other interactants as they once again share an experience and recall the subsequent embarrassing explanations to the hall of residence security staff.

The reference of the banana 'incident' is an example of target-language experiences being a source for demonstrating solidarity, especially in communities such as a university hall of residence (as discussed in examples 5.5. and 5.10.). Solidarity can also be seen through Blanca's use of the Spanish word *plátano* (instead of the use of the English word 'banana') which was understood by everyone present. The code switching reinforces solidarity since, in recalling this incident, Blanca, a native Portuguese speaker who normally spoke in English, seems more intent on identifying herself with the Spanish-speaking participants.

The use of creative language calls for involvement between participants as they attempt to achieve joint social goals. Social goals can be specifically described in terms of *supportive*

*interchanges* and protecting or enhancing the *face* of other participants. *Supportive interchanges* are constructed from joint experiences and joint knowledge: in example 6.3., it is the language of *somebodies* who attempt to use film titles and incidents with bananas to express supportiveness and solidarity as they try to achieve common social goals.

### 6.2.2.3. Creative Use of Pragmatics Resources

Creative language use in example 6.3. can also be analysed in terms of how interactants employ pragmatic resources. Blanca, for instance, uses pragmatic resources such as language play and literary devices to express indirectness while, at the same time, employing other pragmatic resources to reduce social distance and achieve socially appropriate behaviour.

Mariana asks the other interactants whether they want to hear a story. By saying *ah you know what I did yesterday?* (line four), Mariana appears to be imposing on the other interactants, especially since they are talking about another topic. She appears to be breaking Lakoff's politeness rule 'Don't impose' (see 3.11.2). Realising that she is interrupting an ongoing conversation, she then seems to adhere to Lakoff's politeness rule, 'Give options' (see 3.11.2), as she says *well sorry did you finish?* (line four) and offers the interactants the option of continuing their conversation.

As a possible response, the other participants can express their attitude through a range of speech acts including acceptance or refusal to listen to Mariana's story. Given that small talk tends to be supportive, Mariana expects acceptance. However, acceptance is often not expressed in conventional ways e.g. *A: Do you want to hear a joke? B: If you must...* or *A: Do you know what just happened to me? B: No, should I?* In example 6.3., Mariana does not expect to receive an unconventional response such as that offered by Blanca who claims that the other participants know about her activities the previous summer: *we know what you did last summer* (line five). Rather than allow Mariana to feel uncomfortable, Blanca is

following Lakoff's rule: 'Make *A* feel good – be friendly' (see 3.11.2) as she seeks closer and more solidary relations. However, Mariana fails to appreciate Blanca's underlying interpersonal strategy as she is focused on transactional language use: *no no not last did I did last summer no no* (line eight). She is more interested in relating the events of the previous day.

Blanca's use *we know what you did last summer* (line five) is an indirect response but potentially full of secondary meaning (e.g. romance, potentially embarrassing or illicit activities). At the same time, through the use of *we*, Blanca is trying to reduce social distance between interactants. The use of *we* reflects group awareness and knowledge. Blanca engages in creative language use through play as *we know what you did last summer* (line five) contrasts with *you know what I did yesterday* (line four). Play has the social goal of improving cooperation between the interactants although Mariana fails to appreciate such playful comments.

Mariana seems more appreciative of Blanca's use of melodrama as creative language use which is aimed at encouraging Mariana to tell her story: As Mariana says *if I come back I don't go there again so* (line 19), Blanca's use of 'so' in *so your destiny made you stop there* (line 20) is an invitation to continue. Melodrama often has the function of emphasising sensationalism. Blanca's phrase has built up a sense of expectancy among the other participants which now allows Mariana to provide a vivid account of the previous day's events.

To understand creative language use, participants need to call on pragmatic resources. When successful, the use of such resources provides a dynamic dimension to interpersonal language use as seen in example 6.3. with the use of language play and different language genres e.g. the use of melodrama. Creative language use in such small talk aims to achieve closeness and a sense of togetherness which are reflected in the unique experiences of the group.

#### 6.2.2.4. Different Contributions

Conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics provide different insights into creative language use. Conversation analysis reveals how interactants use structured patterns and practices as a basis for engaging in creative language use. Divergence from structured patterns and practices allows interactants to understand how language is being used creatively. Interactional sociolinguistics examines how creative language use helps participants achieve common social goals and how it may refer to knowledge outside the immediate context (e.g. the banana incident) but which can provide a source of solidarity between interactants. Pragmatics reveals how both linguistic and social knowledge are important in helping interactants express creative language use. Creative interpersonal language is only successful when interactants actively work together and build from conventional and existing understandings. Creative language use seen in terms of talk in interaction, the achievement of joint social goals and employing common linguistic and social knowledge underlines creative language use as a process which is jointly constructed by *somebodies* within a given social context.

#### 6.3. Different Kinds of *Somebody*

A *somebody* can interact in different ways: Blanca interacts as a ‘playful’ somebody in example 6.3.. In the following example, Yumiko interacts as a cautious *somebody*:

Example 6.4.

Conversation during mealtime between a Yumiko, a Japanese MA student, and Celia and a Mexican PhD student. They are eating breakfast.

1 Celia: um

- 2 Yumiko: have you finished?  
3 Celia: no I haven't Yumiko  
4 Yumiko: I'm a bit slow

Yumiko seems to purposely adopt an indirect strategy in order to smooth the conversation over. In this interaction, Yumiko asks Celia if she has finished by asking a direct question *have you finished?* (line two). The response from Celia seems to be distancing and emphatic as she directly addresses Yumiko in her reply: *no I haven't Yumiko*. While Celia's response may or may not have been deliberately direct, Yumiko now seems to take a much more softer line by criticising herself for not having finished breakfast by saying *I'm a bit slow* (line four) and through using the understater *a bit* (line four). Yumiko appears to come across as a cautious, even self-deprecatory, *somebody*.

The L2 user's skills and knowledge allows her to interact as different kinds of *somebody* according to the way that she wants to participate. As with the use of supportiveness and solidarity, the L2 user is faced with choices, especially since interactants can develop, maintain, enhance or terminate relationships.

A distinct *somebody* holds her own views, values and attitudes which can be seen as she expresses supportiveness and solidarity; in examples 5.8. and 5.9., Celia and Ingrid can be seen as political *somebodies*; in example 5.17., Mariana can be seen as an assertive *somebody* as she achieves her own transactional and interactional objectives with Simon. In the following example, Celia interacts as a feminist *somebody*.

Celia, a Mexican PhD student, not only undermines the conventional family structure in an unexpected way but she also breaks expectations by using the word 'wife' in a novel and surprising way. She projects a feminist 'voice' in the target language that underlines the plight of the divorced mother and, at the same time, seems to offer a direct attack on Josué.



Example 6.5.

Conversation during mealtime between a Yumiko, a Japanese MA student, and Celia and Josué, both Mexican PhD students. They are joking about the need for a spouse. Josué has been going on about the virtues of his wife's cooking:

- 1 Josué: my wife my wife makes a very good roast beef with Soya  
2 Celia: um  
3 Josué: delicious  
4 Celia: I would like to have a wife  
5 Yumiko: (laughs)  
6 Celia: to cook for me and to make the delicious things because I  
7 don't do those things you speak about your wife and you  
8 speak about your wife I'd like to have a wife as well  
9 Yumiko: yeah I would like to have a husband who does cooking  
10 Celia: well that that can be good idea =  
11 Josué: = be arranged  
12 Yumiko: [yes  
13 Josué: we'll arrange it  
14 Yumiko: (laughs) thank you

The above conversation not only shows how second-language interactants can humorously co-construct their own meanings but also shows how, as expert language users, they can 'attack' other participants' positions and reinforce their own.

In example 6.5., Josué is praising his wife's cooking. He receives an *um* (line two)<sup>4</sup> from Celia which could signal hesitation or a dispreferred response. Josué is allowed to make another comment when Celia states *I would like to have a wife* (line four). This is received with laughter from Yumiko who perhaps thinks it is funny that a woman would want a wife. Reinforcing the seriousness of her comment, Celia explains exactly why she wants a wife. Celia picks up on Josué's use of *delicious* (line three) and says that she would like a

wife to make *the delicious things* (line six) for her. She then seems to attack her own *face* by saying *I don't do those things you speak about your wife and you speak about your wife* (lines seven and eight). Celia seems to see Josué as saying his wife is better than she is and she finally finishes off by saying *I'd like to have a wife as well* (line eight). Celia has now used the word 'wife' four times (in lines four, seven and twice in line eight). Rather than comparing herself to Josué's wife, Celia is saying that she would like to have somebody help her out. Celia is divorced and has two teenage daughters. The use of the word 'wife' once again shows a second-language user adopting creative language use with an unexpected meaning and imaginative use of a word. The word 'wife' is not an appropriate word but it is more than acceptable in this context and it breaks listener expectations in an easily understandable way. Celia doesn't want a husband (with perhaps the implication that they are of no use) but a wife who can help her with all the household chores that need doing including the cooking and preparing roast beef.

Yumiko seems to have got the message when she expresses supportiveness by showing agreement with Celia: *yeah I would like to have a husband who does cooking* (line nine). This receives a supportive second assessment from Celia: *well that that can be good idea* (line 10). Perhaps finding it easier to respond to the request for finding a husband who can cook rather than responding to the problem of finding a 'wife', Josué responds that Yumiko's petition can *be arranged* (line 11) and then he uses 'we' as in *we'll arrange it* (line 13) – perhaps trying to speak for the 'group'.

The above conversation illustrates the different ways in which participants can interact in a second language. Josué projects an image of being satisfied with his domestic life (e.g. his wife's cooking and his implicit recommendation to Yumiko about the desirability of married life) along with his apparent ability to fix other people's problems. Celia interacts as a 'feminist' *somebody* as she makes a serious point about the plight of the single mother who has to raise a family on her own. In both these instances, a second-language *somebody* can only take on meaning through interacting with other participants.

#### 6.4. L2 *Anybody*: Satisfactory Impersonal Relations

Faced with choices, the second-language user can decide to interact as a *somebody* or as an *anybody* in L2-L2 interaction. A *somebody* seeks close interpersonal relations and uses supportiveness or solidarity to develop social relations. An *anybody* is not interested in developing close interpersonal relations and uses supportiveness to reflect cordiality and amiability. She demonstrates attitudes and values that anyone might hold. In his discussion of an *any*, Aston (1988a: 96) sees an *anybody* as seeking cordial relations and wanting to demonstrate that she is a competent language user. She demonstrates respect towards others and engages in negative politeness (see 3.11.2.) as she respects territory of others and does not seek close interpersonal relations (1988a: 96). However, it would be wrong to classify a specific second-language user as either a *somebody* or an *anybody* as the distinction offers alternative ways of participating within a given interaction and a participant can change from interacting as a *somebody* to an *anybody* (or vice versa) in the same interaction – a theme I take up in 6.5.

An example of cordial relations can be seen in the following extract between Armando and Eleni:

Example 6.6.

During the evening meal, Armando, Mexican PhD student, turns around to talk to Eleni, a Greek MA student, who is sitting at another table, with a book in her hand:

- 1 Armando: hello how are you?
- 2 Eleni: fine
- 3 Armando: fine fine and you?
- 4 Eleni: tired
- 5 Armando: and what [xxxxxx] are you studying?
- 6 Eleni: sociology

One interpretation of the interchange might see as it as phatic communion (see 3.10) and creating of ties of union. Content does not seem to particularly matter: The *hello how are you?* (line one) receives the expected *fine* (line two) as part of an adjacency pair. Without being asked, Armando says that he is *fine* (line three) – perhaps predicting a corresponding adjacency pair asking how he is – and once again he asks how Eleni is. Her answer *tired* (line four) is not pursued. It is a non-preferred response as the preferred response is ‘fine’. Armando goes on to ask her what she is studying (line five). The conversation is supportive but does not reflect close agreement or concern. Aston describes such conversations in terms of impersonal supportiveness reflecting ‘the sympathy and understanding due of any competent consociate to another’ (1988a: 95). Armando could have followed up on Eleni’s remark about being tired. However, within the framework of impersonal supportiveness, Armando may have assumed she was tired because of her studies and therefore goes on to ask what she is studying (line five).

Participating as an *anybody* may reflect an interactant’s deliberate choice and is always an interactional option in L2-L2 conversation. However, participation as an L2 *anybody* may also result from a lack of interpersonal ability to participate as a L2 *somebody*. For instance, in the following example, Armando lacks the interpersonal resources to sustain the interaction with the other participants as he tries to express some very personal comments about the participant observer.

#### Example 6.7.

Meal-time conversation between Mariana and Armando, Mexican PhD students, Blanca, a Portuguese PhD student, and the participant-observer (P/O). The participants are talking about how hall residents seem to interact differently in different languages.

- 1 Armando: this evening I see him in a course [laughter]
- 2 Mariana: [laughter]
- 3 Armando: I saw him in course

4 Mariana: so it was you  
5 Armando I saw like an Englishman  
6 P/O: when?  
7 Armando: I saw you  
8 P/O: but why was I like an Englishman?  
9 Armando: why?  
10 P/O: but why was I like an Englishman?  
11 Armando: today  
12 Mariana: [laughter]  
13 Blanca: [laughter]  
14 Mariana: what made you think him English? at that moment?  
15 Armando: he's different he's different - different I need to think about it it is  
16 different I think yes (4.0.) I think you personality is more serious in  
17 English

Armando is trying to achieve a greater degree of involvement or intimacy with the group by expressing his perception of the participant-observer who he saw as more serious when speaking in English on a course.

Armando begins his contribution with a general comment about the participant-observer: *this evening I see him in a course* (line one) and which he repeats *I saw him in course* (line three). Perhaps not finding the immediate relevance of the remark, Mariana makes a joke, with an accusatory *so it was you* (line four), perhaps implying that it was surprising that the participant-observer was at the course. Armando now tries to convey the relevance of his remark with *I saw like an Englishman* (line five). The participant-observer is still not aware of the occasion and asks *when?* (line six). Armando initially seems to ignore the question and further repeats that he saw the participant-observer: *I saw you* (line seven). Now trying to help the conversation move forward in terms of the significance of the comment, the participant-observer asks Armando *but why was I like an Englishman?* (line ten). Armando's comments would seem to be obvious since the other participants knew that the participant-observer was English. Armando says *today* (line 11) which is an answer to the

question *when?* (line six). The conversation is marked by laughter from Mariana and Blanca as they were perhaps expecting an amusing observation from Armando given the obviousness of his comment. Now Mariana tries to draw out an explanatory comment from Armando with *what made you think him English? at that moment?* (line 14). However, Armando is unable to elaborate on his observation and repeats the word 'different' four times: *he's different he's different - different I need to think about it it is different* (lines 15 and 16). He asks the other participants for time to think about it *I need to think about it* which he appears to receive as he is granted a four-second pause. He finally says that the participant-observer is more serious in English (lines 16 and 17). While Armando eventually makes his point, it is not the language of a *somebody* who can manage rapport and develop relationships in his own way. He receives an inordinate amount of help and understanding from the other participants – help which may not be quite so forthcoming in non-L2-L2 social contexts.

A further example of Armando experiencing difficulty in participating as a *somebody* can be seen in example 2.1. as he is unable to keep the conversation going as he tries to describe his perception of how Carla, an Italian research student, interacts in English.

L2 *somebody*-L2 *somebody* and L2 *anybody*-L2 *anybody* interaction both represent successful interpersonal language use when they reflect deliberate ways of wanting to interact in L2 encounters: the L2 *somebody* seeks close interpersonal relations; the L2 *anybody* seeks more distance cordial relations. However, L2 *anybody*-L2 *anybody* interaction which reflects the failure to achieve L2 *somebody*-L2 *somebody* interaction represents an inability to develop successful second-language social relations.

### 6.5. Choice in Participating As an L2 *Anybody* / L2 *Somebody*

I have portrayed the L2 *somebody* as positive concept and the L2 *anybody* as deficient, if not negative, concept. I now wish to correct this impression by arguing that the L2 *anybody*

offers a very real choice with regard to how the second-language user wants to participate within any given interaction. As I argued in chapter two, participants cannot and do not always want to get on with everybody. At the same time, L2 users may not want to always interact with other interactants as a *somebody* but may on occasions purposely create distance and non-involvement. The L2 *anybody* offers a way of conducting favourable satisfactory relations without threatening the *face* of other interactants, reflecting negative politeness (see 3.11.2.). The L2 *anybody* also reflects the implementation of Lakoff's Rule 1, *Don't impose*, while seeking considerate, cordial and amiable social relations (see 3.10.2.). For instance in the following example, Celia, a Mexican PhD student, purposely creates a sense of distance with regard to herself and other hall residents:

Example 6.8.

- Interviewer: Do you seek opportunities to interact in English here in London?
- Celia: Not really but I think I'm overwhelmed with the idea of making my draft [for her PhD]. I don't feel as being in London..... If you'd have asked that five weeks ago I would probably be answering differently.
- Interviewer: What would you have said?
- Celia: Five weeks ago I wanted to met some people that I know were here [in the hall of residence].

(Recorded interview 2 / 3 / 2000)

At the time of the interview, Celia has decided that her PhD work was more important than developing successful social relations and, furthermore, she wants to be back in Mexico: *I don't feel as being in London*. Celia purposely wants to interact as an *anybody* rather than become involved as a *somebody* with other L2 users.

## 6.6. Participant Awareness of the Creative *Somebody*

As an L2 *somebody*, participants often interact in their own way through the use of creative language which allows them to express their individuality. I argued in 3.13. that solidarity and supportiveness reflect Mead's conforming *me* – adherence to group norms and social attitudes. Meanwhile creative language use reflects the L2 user's desire to express herself much more as an individual as embodied in Mead's creative *I*. As Mead argues, the creative *I* reflects both subjective awareness and one's response to the world. The creative *I* reflects the language user as a *somebody* who is expressing her own values, beliefs and attitudes in an individualistic way.

While insights gained through the follow-up interviews (see for instance in 3.1., 3.2., 3.3., 5.3., 5.4. and 6.8.) allowed me to understand what participants were trying to achieve during through interactional talk (for instance, see examples 5.6. and 5.17.), it is much more difficult to ask the participants to reflect on interpersonal language use that is spontaneous and unrehearsed. I have offered evidence of L2 users' creative practices in terms of language play (see 6.2.1.1.) and extending language (see 6.2.1.2.) i.e. extending conventional understandings to new areas of meaning. However, interviewees found it difficult to talk about creative language use although they easily recognised and accepted that they used it. Celia, a Mexican PhD student, commented that she saw play as an important way to develop relations in English.

Example 6.9.

Interviewer    What are good ways to develop social relations in English?    ^  
Celia:            To play talking in English with people that is learning English.

(Written communication 16 / 10 / 2003) .

Celia's ability to play with English has already been discussed in example 6.1. with her secret rendezvous *with someone not a male one* and *I would like to have a wife* (example



6.5.). Although she does not elaborate on her comment, what is important is that she uses it as an active strategy in developing social relations.

Armando, a Mexican PhD student, however, was aware of his attempts to be creative in English. For instance, he recalled how he used the name of a Czech exchange student, Voter, in a play on words:

#### Example 6.10.

Armando: por ejemplo el otro día Voter Voter dice estaba hablando de que la palabra agua que se puede encontrar en muchas lenguas y que es water in inglés, wasser en alemán. La dijo en checo no sé en checo o en otra lengua y dijo la palabra que sonaba como voster voster y yo le dije vodka.... vodka [riendo] sabiendo lo que significa para él por que él es de Checoslovaquia. (Recorded interview 13 / 2 / 2001)

#### Translation:

for example, the other day Voter Voter said that he was talking about the fact that word 'water' can be found in many languages and that it was *water* in English and *wasser* in German. He said it in Czech, I don't know in Czech or in another language and he said a word which sounded like voster voster and I said vodka.... vodka (laughing) as I knew what this would mean him since he is from Czechoslovakia.

Armando was trying to play with words and extend the meaning of 'water' in English to the word 'voster' for vodka and attempted to do this through building on shared knowledge with Voter. As discussed in example 5.7., Armando's limited language ability did not stop him from interacting humorously and supportively with other interactants.

While interviewees found it difficult to talk about creative language use, they were aware of the tension between the need to conform and the desire to be creative. Jose Luís, an

Argentinean PhD student, for instance, says that he tries to be creative when interacting with native English-language speakers but feels that he is being judged on correctness and adherence to norms of use rather creativity:

Example 6.11.

José Luís: Puedo ser muy creativo en inglés si sé que el que escucha no es hablante nativo, eso me da “permiso” par intentar expresarme “mejor”, es decir con más sutilezas de matiz y énfasis, sin correr el riesgo de quedar como un inculto ... pero si el hablante es nativo ... ay, ay, ay, se complica, especialmente porque ese interlocutor no va a hacer ningún esfuerzo por intentar comprender lo que digo, o no va a “reconocer” los meritos de mis intentos por ser sutil, ya que la incorrección gramática / fonética de lo que digo va a impedirle apreciar mis intentos. (Written communication 18 / 10 / 2003)

Translation: I can be very creative in English if I know that the speaker is not a native speaker, this gives me “permission” to attempt to express myself “better”, that is to say with more subtlety in shades of meaning and emphasis, with running the risk of coming across as uncultured ... but if the speaker is a native ... ay, ay, ay, ay, it gets complicated, especially because that interlocutor is not going to make any effort to try to understand what I am saying, or is not going to “recognise” the merits of my attempts to be subtle, given that grammatical or phonetic incorrectness in what I say is going to prevent him from appreciating my attempts.

Jose Luís argues that he feels more comfortable interacting with a non-native speaker than with a native speaker whom he sees as judging him on his adherence to conformity rather than on how he is trying to be creative. Such a view would support Meierkord’s

observation that L2-L2 speakers demonstrate a strong co-operative nature in L2-L2 small talk (see 3.9.).

## 6.7. Conclusion

I have attempted to answer the research question regarding how the L2 user engages in creative language use with other L2 users by arguing that second-language users work together as *somebodies* who build on each others' contributions as they jointly-construct L2-L2 social relations, achieve common social goals and employ pragmatic resources. I have also argued that creative language use offers a way to express Aston's concepts of solidarity and supportiveness (1988b, 1988c, 1989, 1993) in L2-L2 interpersonal language use.

I have built on Aston's description of *some* and argued that the L2 *somebody* is knowledgeable, skilful, assertive and creative about managing interpersonal relations. I have offered examples showing the L2 user as a creative language user who plays with language and extends meanings. I have tried to show that creative language use as expressed through language play, and language extension often reflects interactant supportiveness and solidarity. For instance, the joking and teasing between Celia and Francesca in example 6.1. and Blanca's remark *we know what you did last summer* in example 6.3. reflect attempts at participant supportiveness and solidarity. I have also gone beyond Aston's description of *some* and identified different *somebodies* which gives the L2 user choices in how she wants to interact on a *personal* dimension in interpersonal language use.

Furthermore, I examined the concept of the L2 *anybody* and argued that it is a viable option in L2 interpersonal language use if the second-language user wants to interact as a cordial competent language user who is not interested in developing close social relations. I have also argued that there are times when the L2 user may want to interact as an *anybody* rather

than as an L2 *somebody*. However, in pedagogic terms, the L2 *anybody* should represent the interactant's choice and not reflect failure to interact as a L2 *somebody*.

## Chapter 7

### Pedagogical Intervention: Developing Interpersonal Language Use

#### 7.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I attempt to answer my research question regarding how second-language users can be given opportunities to develop interpersonal language ability within the L2 learning context. I adhere to the position of Aston (1988c, 1989) and Thomas (1983) that a pedagogy of interactional speech should not aim to prescribe behaviour but rather provide the L2 learner with resources to achieve satisfactory interpersonal relations. At the same time, pedagogical intervention is faced with the potential challenge of having to prepare learners to deal with spontaneous and often unpredictable L2-L2 interpersonal language use as seen as in chapters five and six. Furthermore, the L2-L2 environment may be emergent and ephemeral as seen in the university hall of residence context where students were normally in England for short periods of time (as discussed in 4.7.). Given that pedagogy tries to anticipate, to a certain extent, possible contexts of language use, I, first of all, need to respond to arguments that the naturally-occurring and spontaneous features of L2-L2 talk militate against teaching interpersonal language. Secondly, I need to confront the potential pedagogical difficulty of relating L2-L2 talk in one communicative setting and community of language users (i.e. the university hall of residence) with another (i.e. the L2 classroom).

In this chapter, in making out a case for pedagogical intervention, I will argue that L2 teaching practice can provide second-language learners with opportunities and resources that help them to establish, develop and maintain successful social relations in the target language. I will discuss these opportunities and resources in terms of pragmatic knowledge, supportiveness and solidarity and creative language use.

Pedagogically, I am confronted with two objectives regarding 'teaching' L2 interpersonal language use. First of all, I have to raise the L2 learner's awareness of resources for establishing and developing social relations – resources that may already exist in the first language. Secondly, I have to provide opportunities, even if to a limited degree, whereby L2 learners can maximise available resources to achieve successful L2-L2 talk and engage in creative language use in the L2 classroom and beyond the classroom.

I will discuss ways of raising L2 learner's awareness of resources by following Aston's approach to pedagogic intervention where he distinguishes between 'knowing about' (declarative knowledge) and 'knowing how to use' (procedural knowledge) with regard to L2 interpersonal language use (as outlined in chapter 1). In examining the development of declarative and procedural knowledge with regard to developing successful interpersonal relations, I will follow Aston's argument that learners need to be given opportunities for *noticing* and *structuring* interpersonal language use through *deconstruction* activities and opportunities to practise and experiment with interpersonal language use through *construction* activities (1988c: 325).

Secondly, to provide opportunities for L2 learners to engage in L2-L2 talk and creative language use in the L2 classroom, I propose to adopt the pedagogical mode, *Illustration-Interaction-Induction* (as outlined in chapter 1), which I argue helps develop interpersonal language use. The *Illustration-Interaction-Induction* mode is a scheme for noticing and increasing the L2 language user's awareness of interpersonal language use (McCarthy & Carter 1995: 217). Such a mode allows the second-language learner to use L2 interpersonal language to interact appropriately with other target-language users within a specific social context while, at the same time, enabling her to participate as a distinctive and creative individual with her own history, values, beliefs and attitudes.

In this chapter, I am not entering into the argument as to which variety or norms of English should be taught to L2 learners in the ELT context. That is a decision to be taken at the institutional, classroom or personal level. Rather, I am examining how opportunities for

developing and practising L2-L2 interpersonal language use can be carried out within the L2 classroom context using existing classroom resources and materials.

While I am not arguing for the specific suitability of my data in examining the *Illustration-Interaction-Induction* mode, I do want to show how real-life interaction can be used to help increase the learner's awareness of L2 interpersonal language use. L2-L2 interpersonal language use reflects interaction between non-native speakers who may not necessarily take their bearings against an ideal L1 norm. Furthermore, the use of data may help the L2 learner to reflect on possible ways of being an accurate and fluent foreign language user while still participating as an individual with her own values and attitudes.

## **7.2. Against Teaching Interpersonal Language Use**

The achievement of successful L2-L2 social relations involves an interpersonal language ability which I define as the ability to interact with other interactants in contextually sensitive and supportive ways while responding to developing and changing relationships in the second-language context. Interpersonal language use involves conforming to language practices and patterns of use while, at the same time, participating in creative and unexpected ways. The EFL teacher is faced with the challenge of whether this ability can be taught in the second-language classroom context.

Just as it is impossible to teach people how to make friends (notwithstanding much self-help literature), it is also impossible to teach people to achieve successful interpersonal language use. Successful social relations involve at least two interactants and an interactant can never predict how another interactant is going to react. Interpersonal language is a joint construction between two interactants rather than the expression of communicative intent by one speaker. At the same time, interpersonal language use is not about getting on with everybody: it is impossible to know with whom an individual interactant in a given situation is going to achieve a successful relationship.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the classroom situation is an inappropriate context for promoting interpersonal language use. Arguments may claim that the L2 classroom often fails to reflect the dynamic and unplanned environment of L2-L2 encounters and that a classroom community cannot replicate opportunistic and emerging interaction which frequently marks social talk among communities of L2 users. Furthermore, at an individual level, it may be contended that learners already know how to achieve rapport in their first language and have their own ways of interacting interpersonally and, therefore, do not need to be taught how to develop social relations in the target-language context. I will now examine these arguments against trying to promote interpersonal language use in the L2 classroom.

### **7.2.1. Spontaneity & Unpredictability of L2-L2 Interpersonal Language**

A strong argument against teaching interpersonal language use is that the spontaneous and often unpredictable nature of L2-L2 interpersonal language use in target language contexts is not reflected in the predictable and controlled language of the L2 classroom. For instance, Brown & Yule (1983b) argue that the L2 classroom does not provide opportunities for engaging learners in the study and practice of naturally occurring conversation. Rejecting such arguments, Aston (1988c: 32) contends that opportunities can be provided for teaching interactional language use by designing and grading interactional activities as is the current practice with transactional tasks. I describe activities aimed at developing L2 interpersonal language use in 7.6. and 7.7.

Brown & Yule's position reflects a 'transactional' view of classroom practice 'where learning a second language involves achieving pre-determined and fixed goals and the classroom context is seen in terms of a fairly predictable and static framework of fixed impersonal categories. However, such an argument ignores the socially dynamic dimension to classroom language use and those learners who wish 'to get along' rather than 'to get ahead' (as discussed in 2.9.). Furthermore, in the classroom, learners talk about themselves



and want to get to know other students, especially since they are in the same boat with regards to trying to learn another language, facing common difficulties, enjoying common interests and especially when they find that they can actually communicate with one another in the target language and perhaps celebrate language use (see 3.7.1.).

An initial step to exploiting the second-language classroom as a social context is to view the L2 learner not just as another learner but as individual with her own interpersonal aspirations within the classroom as well as within the target-language context. Secondly, language teaching needs to offer opportunities for learners to use and develop language that has an interpersonal purpose. All too often L2 teaching and learning focus only on language that has a transactional purpose i.e. language that is directly related to learning and practising the target language.

### **7.2.2. L2 Communities of Language Users**

Target language L2-L2 talk often reflects an emerging community of language users and ephemeral encounters are frequently opportunistic and unplanned. As seen in the university hall of residence data, participants established, developed and maintained interpersonal relations as a community of second-language users who intermittently met at meal times and found themselves sharing the same experience of temporarily living and studying in a foreign country. In L2-L2 talk, participants were faced with interpersonal choices in terms of whether to express solidarity and supportiveness, demonstrate lack of involvement or concern, or even to convey detachment and distantness with other participants. By contrast, the L2 classroom may reflect a relatively stable community of language users who are more likely to share the same cultural and social values and who are considered to be pursuing common language-learning objectives. Furthermore, the classroom encounters are scheduled and habitual.

However, a classroom community can only be considered to be stable and unchanging when learners are seen to be trying to achieve the same fixed transactional objectives i.e. learning another language. When engaged in interpersonal language use, the language classroom may reflect a very different community of language users. The interrelationship between the classroom and the wider world is noted by Breen & Littlejohn:

Any classroom, in its social composition, is a microcosm of the wider society in which it is located. For it to function, a classroom community realises its own values and priorities through either implicitly or explicitly accepted procedures and routines.

(2000: 20)

I have gone further and argued that the classroom context is not a smaller version of the world but a very real world and that the classroom may reflect a very real social situation for the language learner (see in 2.10.). Social relations are established, developed, maintained, enhanced and even lost in the second language classroom. While learners are ostensibly in the L2 classroom to learn, Aston claims that in the case of non-obligatory schooling a major reason for learners to attend classes is

...to enjoy the company in class and make friends there, regardless of their eventual learning progress.

(1988b: 358)

### **7.2.3. Predominance of L1 as Classroom Interpersonal Language**

A further argument against trying to teach interpersonal language reflects a matter of classroom reality: the interpersonal language of the classroom is normally the learners' own first language. So, for instance, in Mexico, the interpersonal language of classroom learners is often Spanish. Learners are more inclined to express solidarity and supportiveness and engage in creative language use employing first-language resources because these represent common understandings and knowledge already shared by the class members. Despite teacher requests to use English, the interpersonal dimension within pair work and group

work is often carried out in Spanish as participants establish and maintain classroom relations. Aston (1988c: 331-332, 1989: 332-333) also noted that in Italian EFL classrooms learners needed to re-establish L1 interpersonal communication after engaging in transactional activities in a second language and, subsequently, often engaged in small talk in Italian. This tendency of learners to use their L1 means that classroom teaching and learning should continually try to reflect an interpersonal dimension so that the L2 users themselves do not, consciously or unconsciously, divide classroom activities into transactional teacher-directed and textbook tasks, to be carried out in the L2, and interpersonal talk which is outside that framework and carried out in the first language.

#### **7.2.4. L1 Interpersonal Language Knowledge**

As experienced first-language users, L2 users already have an understanding and knowledge of interpersonal language use from their first language. Brown and Yule argue that this understanding and knowledge can be transferred from the L2 user's first language:

In language teaching it seems reasonable to assume that much of what the student has learnt about the nature of primarily interactional speech in his own language can be transferred to the foreign language.... Much of what the student produces in primarily interactional language may be modelled more or less directly on his native language experience....

(Brown & Yule 1983b: 23)

Therefore, an argument can be made for not promoting pedagogical activities which focus on interpersonal language use because L2 learners already have the required knowledge from their first language.

However, while the L2 user's first language does provide a strong basis for developing interpersonal language use, successful L2-L2 interpersonal language use may not be achieved in the same way in the target language as it is in a first language. As Spencer-Oatey (2000a: 42) argues, there may be different pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic

conventions between different languages. This problem may be further complicated when English norms and practices are not necessarily being adhered to as participants try to establish, develop and maintain interpersonal relations. For instance, regarding pragmalinguistic conventions, the use of directness / indirectness may be managed in different ways or, in the case of sociopragmatic conventions, expressions of concern and involvement may be more overt in one society than another.

A similar argument against advocating pedagogical activities which focus on interpersonal language use may hold that learners should develop declarative knowledge (i.e. knowledge about the language) in the classroom and develop procedural knowledge (i.e. knowledge of language use) in the target-language environment. Since they already know how to do social relations in their own first language, learners could be ‘taught’ the social and cultural differences in interpersonal language use in the L2 classroom. Teaching practice would therefore reduce second-language learning to building up declarative knowledge without giving the learners the opportunity to develop and practise procedural knowledge. At the same time, I have also argued that L2 interpersonal language use between non-native interactants may not reflect the use of target-language practices and patterns of use.

This view against developing interpersonal language use in the classroom might claim that second-language learners need more help in conveying target-language transactional meaning. However, as I argued in chapter two, transactional and interactional language are very often present in all interactions, working together to different degrees by mutually interrelating the ‘interpersonal’ with ‘the business at hand’. Therefore, it is just as important for language learners to develop both interactional and transactional language ability.

#### **7.2.5. Personal Nature of Interpersonal Language Use**

A further argument against dealing with L2 social relations in the classroom is the claim that interpersonal language use depends on the individual user’s intentions within a specific

social context. Participants in real-life interaction have their own interests and motivations and such features of interpersonal talk are difficult to replicate in the language classroom (Seedhouse 1996). Furthermore, interpersonal talk tends to be dull and uninteresting to the outside observer:

... most naturally occurring conversations are extremely boring unless you happen to be an active engaged participant in one. It is quite rare that it is actually interesting to overhear a conversation unless it is about oneself or gossip. Conversations are for people who are participating in them to achieve their purposes in – being friendly, hospitable, comforting, or whatever. They usually concern local, transitory, matters and deal with purely personal concerns.

(Brown & Yule 1983b: 33)

However, I would argue that the L2 classroom is an everyday real-life situation where *being friendly, hospitable, comforting or whatever* are real concerns. The second-language classroom offers opportunities for observing and analysing interpersonal language use – opportunities that may not be available in the L2-L2 context where participants have to interact spontaneously and under pressure and without the opportunity to rehearse L2 interpersonal language use. This is the objective of developing interpersonal language activities in the L2 learning context – giving learners the opportunity, within the safety of the language classroom, to practise and experiment with L2 interpersonal language use.

### 7.3. Need for Pedagogical Intervention

Arguments against teaching interpersonal language use focus on unpredictability and spontaneity in interpersonal language use. In contrast, I argued in chapter three that interpersonal language is structured, displaying orderliness and sequence, and reflects practices and patterns of use which I described through conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics. Therefore, I would argue that there is a role for pedagogic intervention to help learners to understand these structures, practices, patterns of use and choices in interpersonal language use. Choices can be examined in terms of different ways for expressing solidarity and supportiveness and engaging in creative language use and,

consequently, can provide language users with options with regard to how they wish to participate within a given social context.

I also argued in 2.7. that there may be a 'gap' in the L2 user's interpersonal language use. Sometimes, participants demonstrate a lack of pragmatic knowledge that covers an appropriate range of illocutions and making socially sensitive choices. As I discussed in chapter two (see example 2.3.), Joohyun seems to be unaware of the inappropriateness of her remarks:

Example 7.1.

Joohyun: What do you think about the life of a PhD student?

[Silence]

Joohyun: I mean do you think it is worth it?

(Reconstructed dialogue 12/1/2002)

Her formulaicity, formality and social distance are potentially *face* threatening to the other interactants and do not lay the groundwork for subsequent successful social relations.

In the following example Yoshiko, a Japanese MA student, does not seem to have the pragmatic resources to react to an informal greeting:

Example 7.2.

Tania: Hi how are you?

Yoshiko: I'm all right thank you and how about you?

(Reconstructed Dialogue 10/1/2001)

Similar to Joohyun in example 7.1., Yoshiko responds with a formulaic answer which reflects a degree of social distance. While the interaction reflects a *greeting-greeting*

adjacency pair, Yoshiko may be unaware of the informality and conciseness in Tania's greeting and, in contrast, her reply is comparatively long and 'distant'.

However, such a gap should not be seen solely in terms of proficient and less proficient language users although weaker language learners do need help as seen with Armando in example 5.7. (when Lesley's keys were thrown across the room) and in example 6.7. (when he tries to describe his perception of the participant-observer). Mariana is a proficient language user but there are occasions when she could have benefited from pedagogical help with interpersonal language use e.g. her use of formulaic language during Blanca's troubles talk in example 5.2. A further example is provided by Blanca who is also a proficient language user but recognises that she tends to dominate conversations and needs to be more sensitive to the contributions of other participants (see example 3.3.). Pedagogical intervention can also help learners to extend choice during interpersonal language use through studying examples of successful language use.

I argued in 2.10. that the L2 classroom can a very real communicative setting for L2-L2 talk, especially for L2 learners interested in 'getting along' (see 2.9.2.). At the same time, there is a case for pedagogical intervention that attempts to give L2 learners the opportunity to notice and structure interpersonal language use and reduce the time-consuming process of learning a language in a 'natural setting'. Pedagogical intervention, as Widdowson argues, needs to find ways

of short-circuiting the slow process of natural discovery and can make arrangements for learning to happen more easily and more efficiently than it does in 'natural surroundings'.

(1990: 162)

As pedagogy attempts 'to speed up' and structure the learning process, I would argue that it also has to help learners to raise their self awareness of how they interact and develop their own ways of learning in the target-language context because no amount of classroom teaching can prepare learners for every context. In the case of interpersonal language, pedagogical intervention may have to provide ways in which a L2 user can learn when under pressure in interpersonal contexts.

#### 7.4. *Noticing & Accessing Supportiveness & Creative Language Use*

L2 learners need to be given opportunities to practise and develop interpersonal language use in the language classroom. Opportunities can be seen in terms of *noticing* and *structuring* (Batstone 1994: 39 - 40). It is not enough to just expose L2 learners to interpersonal language use; they need to *notice* how target-language users achieve successful social relations. To *notice* interpersonal language use, learners need to be consciously directed towards interpersonal language use and the significance of different patterns and practices needs to be drawn out. This can be achieved through deconstruction activities (Aston 1988c, 1989) which call on learners to *notice* how target-language users achieve successful social relationships. Besides *noticing* language use, learners also need to be able to practise and experiment with rapport. This can be achieved through construction activities (Aston 1988c, 1989) which help learners to access and employ interpersonal language in communicative situations.

##### 7.4.1. Deconstruction Activities

Deconstruction activities offer opportunities for learners to reflect on successful interpersonal language use. Aston (1988c: 362, 1989: 363) argues that deconstruction activities put the language user in the position of an observer. As she engages in analysing conversations, the L2 learner can be encouraged to become an ethnographer examining how target language users achieve successful social relations. An ethnographer gathers her own information, looks for patterns, procedures and practices as she builds up her knowledge of L2 interpersonal language use. The L2 learner can be given opportunities to study how target-language users express supportiveness, solidarity and creative language use. Such activities lead to the development of declarative knowledge i.e. knowledge about the language – in this instance, knowledge about L2-L2 interpersonal language use. Such knowledge will consist of interpersonal language ‘information’ and ‘procedures’ for using



the information. Deconstruction activities offer the L2 learner the opportunity to observe how language users can interact as a *somebody* in the second-language context.

#### **7.4.2. Construction Activities**

Construction activities involve the manipulation of language to achieve a result, in this case, the development of L2-L2 interpersonal language use. The L2 user needs to be able to access interpersonal language resources under the pressure of real-life communicative constraints (e.g. opportunities to interact and time limitations). She needs 'procedures for action' (Johnson 1996: 82) which can be seen in terms of procedural knowledge, i.e. knowledge of language use – in this instance, knowledge of interpersonal language use. Such knowledge consists of the ability to establish, develop and maintain interpersonal relations. As Aston argues (1988c: 352), construction activities call on students to negotiate rapport, developing their knowledge and experience of how successful social relations are actually achieved in the second language. Construction activities offer the L2 learner the opportunity to practise and experiment with being a *somebody* in the L2 learning context.

#### **7.5. Illustration-Interaction-Induction**

In offering learners opportunities to notice and structure L2 interpersonal language use, I need to use a pedagogical mode that allows learners to build on existing first-language knowledge or from knowledge that may already be developing in the target-language<sup>4</sup>. Such a mode needs to provide a way of allowing the teacher to directly provide opportunities for studying interpersonal language use while, at the same time, allowing the second-language user to develop her own resources. Furthermore, a pedagogical mode needs to allow the L2 learner to participate in her own distinctive way if she so chooses.

The *Illustration-Interaction-Induction* (*i + i + i*) mode, as developed by Carter (2004), Carter & McCarthy (1995), McCarthy (1998) and McCarthy & Carter (1995), can go some way towards satisfying these objectives. The *Illustration-Interaction-Induction* mode outlines a process that allows the second-language learner to become aware of target-language interpersonal language practices and patterns of use and also allows the second-language user to engage in creative language use. The *Illustration-Interaction-Induction* mode is based on the principle that observation, awareness and drawing conclusions help the second-language user to develop L2 interpersonal language use.

In proposing to use the *Illustration-Interaction-Induction* mode, I am not attempting to offer an alternative to current communicative approaches to language teaching which, as I argued in 2.2., aim to help the language learner to ‘use the language appropriate to a given social context’ (Larsen-Freeman 1986: 131). Instead, I am arguing for a supplementary strand that encourages the language learner to reflect on and to be more sensitive to L2 interpersonal language use. I will now discuss the different components of the *Illustration-Interaction-Induction* mode and the ways in which they can help develop L2-L2 interpersonal language use.

#### **7.6. Pedagogical Mode: *Illustration***

The *Illustration-Interaction-Induction* mode uses real data to examine interpersonal language use. Therefore, at the *illustration* stage, L2 learners are asked to look at real-life instances of language use or, at least, at texts that are developed on the basis of real data. McCarthy & Carter describe *illustration* as ‘examining real data which is presented in terms of forms relative to context and use’ (1995: 217). Such an approach would give the L2 users opportunities for examining how pragmatic language resources are used in real-life language use.

In real-life data, L2 learners can examine the different choices that language users face in the second-language context. McCarthy & Carter (1995: 217) argue that such an approach is in line with communicative approaches to language teaching which aim to enable students to respond appropriately in different ‘communicative’ contexts and recognise different genres. For instance, language learners can look at such communicative acts as thanking (see below 7.6.1.) or the discursal use of a specific expression such as *you know* (see below 7.6.2.) and examine how they can be actually expressed in different ways. On the other hand, at a higher level, language learners can look at an extract from a conversation to examine how a range of resources, for instance back-channelling (see below 7.6.3.), may be employed in interpersonal language use. At this stage, there is still no examination of how the learners themselves actually achieve successful social relations. The *illustration* stage provides opportunities for *noticing* (as discussed in 7.4.) resources available for achieving L2-L2 social relations by making reference to effective L2 usage rather than to L1 norms.

### 7.6.1. Thanking: Patterns & Practices of L2-L2 Use

I now propose to take one communicative act, that of thanking, and briefly examine how students can be encouraged to notice how interactants express gratitude. Different approaches may be adopted here. A pedagogical approach that exploits deductive teaching may try to heighten the student’s awareness of different forms of gratitude before looking at the text. On the other hand, the language learner may be asked to look at a given text and identify how the interactants express gratitude.

An examination of the expression of gratitude in the university hall of residence data indicates that the most common expressions of gratitude were *thanks*, *thanks very much* and *thank you very much* as highlighted in the following examples:

Example 5.7. (line 1)      Mariana:      *thanks Lesley. I would like to ....*

Example 5.7. (line 5)	Mariana:	<i>thank you very much I also trust you ...</i>
Example 5.17. (line 18)	Mariana:	<i>bye but thanks very much</i>
Example 6.5. (line 14)	Yumiko:	<i>(laughs) thank you</i>
Example 7.2.	Yoshiko:	<i>I'm all right thank you and how about you?</i>

Students can be encouraged to study the use of gratitude in the data in different ways. At the level of formality and informality, learners can be encouraged to examine the use of the informal use of *thanks* (in examples 5.7., line one, and 5.17.) against the more formal *thank you* in the other examples. Students can be encouraged to examine other ways of expressing gratitude e.g. *that's very kind of you, many thanks, I appreciate it, you shouldn't have, I'd like to thank you, you saved my life* and where and how they are used. An examination of formal and informal language would hopefully give the L2 user a wider range of options for expressing gratitude.

In terms of communicative action, language learners can be encouraged to examine in both L1 and L2 the underlying functional meaning and the context in which *thank you* is used. As Aijmer (1996) argues, gratitude may reflect a different number of functions from accepting an offer (as seen in example 6.5.) through to closing a conversation (as seen in example 5.17.). The study of interactional data may reveal that *thank you* is often used in service encounters to mark the satisfactory completion of a transaction, as for example when a ticket is sold on a train:

Conductor (handing over the ticket): 'Thank you.'  
 Passenger: 'Thank you.'  
 Conductor: 'Thank you.'

(Coulmas 1981: 91)

An example of the use of *thank you / thanks* to mark the satisfactory completion of a conversation can be found in the university hall of residence data in example 5.17. when Simon offers to lend Mariana a book and the conversation ends with

- 18 Mariana:       bye but thanks very much  
19 Simon:         you're welcome

The use of the *thanks - you're welcome* adjacency pair would seem to reflect a satisfactory interpersonal experience especially since Simon did not lend the book to Mariana.

Further examination of L1 or L2 data by learners may reveal that the expression *thank you* may not always express gratitude. For instance, a comment such as *I can manage by myself thank you very much* is a rejection of help and the umpire's use of *thank you* towards the end of a long round of applause during a tennis match may be a way of asking the crowd to be quiet so that play can be resumed.

The intensity of gratitude can be increased through upgraders (see 3.7.2.). Learners can be encouraged to look for ways the interactants intensified gratitude in the data presented here. Analysis indicates that *very much* (in examples 5.7., line five, and 5.17.) seemed to be the only upgrader used with *thanks* and *thank you*. Students could look at other upgrading expressions such as *thank you so much* or *thanks a lot*. An examination of context may reveal that the upgraders were unnecessary or even inappropriate.

In a follow-up activity, students can look in the data for responders to gratitude e.g. *That's okay* or *Great pleasure*. Responders to gratitude tend to be a strong feature of U.S. English and most interactants in the university hall of residence study appeared to speak American English. In American English, *thank you* often forms the first part of an adjacency pair sequence (see 3.5.3.) such as *thank you – you're welcome* or *thanks – that's okay*. However, in the data here, there is little evidence of the use of responders. One instance of a responder is actually given by a British native speaker in example 5.17., who seems<sup>4</sup> to be demonstrating influences of American English in his speech through his use of *you're welcome* (which appears to be coming more into use in British English):

- 18 Mariana:       bye but thanks very much  
19 Simon:         you're welcome

The use of real data allows second-language users to examine adjacency pair sequences. Of course, *thank you* may also be the second part of an adjacency pair sequence when asking how somebody is e.g. *how are you? - thank you*, as found in the example 7.2. above:

- 1        Tania:        Hi how are you?  
→ 2        Yoshiko:      I'm all right thank you and how about you?  
(Reconstructed Dialogue 10/ 1 / 2001)

Exercises that examine formality and informality, underlying functional meaning, upgraders and adjacency pair sequences can give the L2 users a greater range of options when engaged in interpersonal language to express solidarity and supportiveness and to use language creatively by 'breaking' expectations and accepted patterns and practices. Therefore, such exercises can develop the language user's pragmatic resources in the target language. Given that the L2 user brings pragmatic knowledge from her first language, the language teacher may also want to build on that existing knowledge (see 7.7.).

### 7.6.2. *You Know*: Jointly Developing Interpersonal Relations

The use of *illustration* in examining gratitude can help learners examine patterns and practises of interpersonal language use. The use of *illustration* can also be used to examine how interactants jointly develop and maintain interpersonal relations. For example, instances of *you know* can be found throughout the university hall of residence data. While the use of *you know* is an information state marker (Schiffrin 1987: 294) which attempts to transfer speaker knowledge into shared knowledge, there is also a social dimension as the speaker reveals her interdependence with the hearer. The use of *you know* aims to enlist hearer agreement as the speaker attempts to achieve a joint focus in the interaction and create rapport between interactants. Language users can therefore be encouraged to examine how the use of *you know* aims to achieve successful interpersonal language use and reduce distance between interactants. For instance, in example 7.3. (taken from

example 5.6.), Blanca uses *you know* to refer to implicit knowledge that there are people who do not like owls on superstitious grounds. She seems to assume that other interactants are aware of this although she never actually completes what she is going to say about superstition and owls:

Example 7.3.

→ 1 Blanca: but they are very I mean most people are very superstitious  
2 with them because they're supposed to be you know but I like  
3 them

By using *you know*, Blanca tries to bring other interactants on board with regard to her line of thinking about owls which she thinks goes against a generally held view. *You know* is a tool for achieving convergence as it aims to maintain a relationship or even enhance it because the expression *you know* aims to make the hearer feel closer to the speaker.

At the same time, as in example 7.4. (taken from example 5.10.), *you know* can prepare the ground for an upcoming comment in which the speaker wants to share information with the hearer (Schiffrin 1987: 274):

Example 7.4.

→ 1 Celia: you know when I did my master's degree it happened  
2 something like that to me (0.1) the first tutorial (0.1) I wrote  
3 and wrote but I I don't know how it's I don't know how it's I  
4 don't know if it has to do with language but or with the way  
5 of the structure because it was like it was impossible I don't  
6 know what we are going to do but it doesn't seem you will be  
7 able to write anything at all and you won't er its well I think  
8 it's impossible [for

Celia's use of *you know* tries to integrate the hearer into her experience of the problems of writing assignments in English. *You know* can also be seen as a check on how the discourse is progressing as the speaker tries to verify whether her information is being received and understood by the hearer (Schiffrin 1987: 281).

In the following example (taken from example 6.3.), learners have the opportunity to contrast two different uses of *you know*. In line four, Mariana uses *you know* as an opening comment and as a 'ticket' to tell her story (see 3.5.2.). In line nine, Blanca uses *you know* as an appeal to shared knowledge i.e. that every one knows the film "I Know What You Did Last Summer".

#### Example 7.5.

- 1 Blanca: the Chinese don't do the same  
2 Mariana: Gladys  
3 Blanca: it's a Chinese woman because they don't associate like we do =  
→ 4 Mariana: = ah you know what I did yesterday? well sorry did you finish?  
5 Blanca: we know what you did last summer  
6 P/O: [(laughter)  
7 Blanca [(laughter)  
8 Mariana: no no not last did I did last summer no no  
→ 9 Blanca: it's the movie you know =  
10 P/O: = yeah the movie

In the data, the use of *you know* is a pragmatic resource which attempts to show a lack of distance as both Mariana and Blanca appeal for involvement from the other interactants. (Further examples can be seen below in 7.7.2.). The *illustration* stage can also help L2 learners identify other pragmatic resources that are rapport-focused and aim to develop social relations.



### 7.6.3. Backchannel Patterns

In the previous discussion, I have used the illustration mode to examine specific pragmatic resources. However, the second-language learner can be asked to examine texts for a range of pragmatic resources that reflect interpersonal language use. In the following text, for instance, the L2 learner might be asked to look for signs of active listening, especially backchannel signals. As I argued in 3.7.2., backchannel responses e.g. minimal responses, preemptive turn completions and clarification requests reflect the level of participant involvement during an encounter.

In the following text where Josué is narrating his experiences as a veterinarian, students can be asked to examine how Yumiko engages in active listening.

#### Example 7.6.

Conversation during Sunday lunch between Yumiko, a Japanese MA student, Josué, a Mexican veterinarian and PhD student concerning the mistreatment of animals.

- |   |        |   |
|---|--------|---|
| 1 | Josué: | well I found with my students about two years ago a dog tie         |
| 2 |        | up in on near a tree - I saw the dog one year later it was still    |
| 3 |        | tied to the tree  |
| → | 4      | Yumiko: uh uh   |
|   | 5      | Josué: with a chain but then I asked my students you should try and |
|   | 6      | get close to the animal to see what he needs what do we find        |
|   | 7      | the chain has eaten his skin  |
| → | 8      | Yumiko: oh  |
|   | 9      | Josué: skin   |
| → | 10     | Yumiko: hey because it was too small for them =                     |
|   | 11     | Josué: = it had eaten one side of the neck                          |
|   | 12     | Yumiko: his story is so realistic                                   |

- 13 Josué: yeah oh yeah - I one day they took a dog to my clinic
- 14 Yumiko: ah ah
- 15 Josué: and they wanted ear cropping they cut the ears
- 16 Yumiko: mmm
- 17 Josué: Doberman special ears
- 18 Yumiko: mmm
- 19 Josué: I was working alone and I smell something bad - kept on
- 20 working the dog had a harness and they used to bathe the dog
- 21 with the harness so every time they bathed it the harness was
- 22 small and
- 23 Yumiko: mmm
- 24 Josué: and they cut all around - his body and when I finished the
- 25 ears I had to started sewing them up - -
- 26 Yumiko: poor dog

Yumiko is constantly providing minimal responses as seen in *uh uh* (line four), *ah ah* (line 14) and *mmm* (lines 16, 18 and 23). The use of *oh* (line eight) – perhaps indicating surprise – reflects that the story has not gone the way Yumiko expects it to. Meanwhile, *hey because it was too small for them* (line ten) can be seen as a preemptive turn completion which seems to reflect close listening of Josué’s narrative. Yumiko’s final comment *poor dog* (line 26) reflects not only appreciation of the dog’s plight but also reveals an understanding of the story.

#### 7.6.4. Summary & Pedagogical Criteria

The *illustrative* phase offers the language learner an opportunity to look at real data – an opportunity that is often missing in the L2 classroom. It allows her to examine how pragmatic resources are used in real-life interpersonal language use. Examples of interpersonal language use can be obtained through corpus linguistics – not as a way of

showing how interpersonal language should be achieved but rather as an instance of how certain interactants in a given context make interpersonal choices. While I am not advocating the teaching of L2 norms, Seidlhofer (2001) reports on the development of a corpus of English as Lingua Franca and such a corpus may help identify L2-L2 patterns and practices of interpersonal language use. At the same time, the practical circumstances of teachers working in Mexico make access to corpus linguistic data difficult and expensive. A weaker alternative is for learners to examine interpersonal choices made by interactants in Spanish-language texts and consider what sorts of choices the interactants might have made if they had been interacting in English.

In the case of looking at real data involving second-language users, a learner can examine the resources that she can bring to bear from her first language. One of the strengths of *illustration* is that learning can take advantage of the L2 user's existing knowledge. This enables L2 learners to get around the problem of having to imitate target-language patterns and practices. Especially when the data reflects L2-L2 interaction, *illustration* allows the language learner to examine the ways in which she can express herself acceptably and appropriately while still conveying her own values, attitudes and beliefs.

### **7.7. Pedagogical Activities: *Interaction***

While the *illustration* stage can be used to encourage second-language learners to notice how pragmatic language resources are used in real-life language use, the *interaction* stage involves discussion about language use. Building on their observation of second-language use in real data, learners talk about the interpersonal use of language and how second-language speakers engage in interpersonal relations. The *interaction* stage involves the second-language user as an individual, as a *somebody*, with her own opinion, sharing and discussing her view of L2 interpersonal language use.

The *interaction* stage provides an opportunity for second-language learners to discuss how L2 users achieve successful interpersonal language use based on their personal perception, knowledge and experience and on the study of real-life language data seen at the *illustration* stage.

However, the *interaction* stage goes beyond discussion. Learners are also engaged in activities that aim to raise awareness of interpersonal language use and how language users establish, develop and maintain social relations. Therefore, learners are

introduced to discourse-sensitive activities which focus on the interpersonal use of language and the negotiation of meanings and which are designed to raise conscious awareness of these interactive properties through observation and classroom discussion.

(McCarthy & Carter 1995: 217)

Building on the work of Aston (1988c, 1989), I will discuss *interaction* activities in terms of deconstruction and construction activities (see 7.4.1. and 7.4.2.). Deconstruction activities give the L2 user the opportunity to observe and analyse how language users achieve successful interpersonal language use. (Deconstruction activities are also used at the *illustration* stage as interactants are asked to examine patterns and practices such as the use of formality and informality or the use of upgraders.) On the other hand, the learner also needs opportunities to develop her own ability to establish, maintain and enhance social relations. Construction activities provide opportunities for practising interpersonal language use whereby the language learner can use her existing L1 knowledge or her developing L2 knowledge along with the experience of examining of real-life data and analysis and observation gained from deconstruction activities in the classroom. I build on the work of Aston (1988c, 1989) by giving students the opportunity to examine the potential tension between the need to conform to target-language patterns and practices and the desire to interact creatively in a second-language. I also develop the work of Aston by specifically outlining construction activities which can be developed from existing classroom activities given the already heavy teaching load placed on the EFL teacher as I discussed in 2.9.2.

I propose to outline possible discourse-sensitive activities by examining activities that heighten both the learner's awareness of and provide opportunities for practising the expression of supportiveness and solidarity in the target-language. With supportiveness, activities need to focus on how second-language speakers express concern, co-operation and appreciation as they try to identify with what the speaker is feeling or experiencing. Meanwhile, with solidarity, activities need to focus on how second-language speakers express engagement, rapport and empathy as they reflect shared experiences and attitudes.

### **7.7.1. Deconstruction Activities: Supportive Language**

In deconstruction activities, the learner is asked to identify interpersonal language use within a specific context. Therefore, the language user needs to work with real-life data. In the case of supportiveness, the language learner needs to identify how the interactants succeed in achieving (or fail to achieve) successful interpersonal language use in terms of concern and co-operation and appreciation. To undertake this analysis, the language user can call on her experience of noticing (see 7.4.) at the *illustration* stage along with her own L1 knowledge in order to examine and discuss possible choices and their implications in how L2 users achieve supportiveness.

In the following example, the second-language learner can be asked to examine how interactants achieve successful interpersonal language use. The extract starts off with Celia talking about her worries or 'troubles talk' (see discussion 3.5.2.). Opportunities for participants to display supportiveness occur at different points during the conversation e.g. during Celia's troubles talk (line 1), Celia's complaint about a small salary increase (line 23) or the humorous criticism of Celia's life style (line 29).

Example 7.7.

Breakfast conversation between Celia (a Mexican PhD student), Francesca (a Spanish MA student), Yumiko (a Japanese MA student) and the participant observer. Celia has been worried for several days about impending university strikes in Mexico. Her daughters are studying at one of the affected universities, called UNAM, while Celia works at another, called UAM.

- 1 Celia: yesterday the whole day I mean not the whole day but  
2 quite a lot of the day I used to business by e-mail I mean  
3 there was someone asking requiring my services in  
4 Mexico because of this or that I needed to write letters to  
5 different peoples um (0.1) my business there uh (0.2) the  
6 other thing is I need to see to see with my children and  
7 everybody how they were because of the (0.2) police coming  
8 in the university.
- 9 Francesca *¿se han puesto en huelga perdona no sé como se dice en*  
10 *inglés se han puesto en huelga votaron huelga?*  
11 [have they gone on strike? I'm sorry I don't know how to say  
12 it in English have they gone on strike they voted to go on  
13 strike]
- 14 Celia no there are two universities one is my university there is  
15 [[the larger university]]
- 16 Francesca [[ *autónoma*]]
- 17 Celia [[*la UNAM is one UAM is*]]
- 18 Francesca [[ *UAM autónoma*]]
- 19 P/O: UAM are they on strike?
- 20 Celia no we were going to start the strike yesterday but it er aborted  
21 (laughs)
- 22 P/O oh yeah
- 23 Celia: yeah so we didn't go on strike we got twelve per cent salary

24 rise this is nothing for Mexican terms and two per cent in  
 25 er um facilities that's nothing and it er represents for me  
 26 about er um (0.4) my coat the coats I ha& have er that's the  
 27 difference of the er salary I receive in Jan& in January  
 28 twelve per cent will mean a coat monthly =  
 → 29 P/O: = she wears these fur coats made of leather =  
 30 Yumiko: = yeah  
 (general laughter)  
 → 31 Yumiko: gorgeous coats made of fur  
 (general laughter)  
 → 32 Yumiko made of fur  
 33 Celia made of fur  
 (general laughter)  
 → 34 Celia: fur yes that was not bad actually  
 → 35 Yumiko: and it's nothing for you  
 (general laughter)  
 36 Celia yes (laughs) and the other university the large one is already  
 37 on strike  
 38 Francesca last month you told me  
 39 Celia mm my children are there (0.3) and their boyfriends as well  
 40 (0.3) so yesterday I needed to to ....

From a pedagogical point of view, discussion and analysis may centre on whether the interactants are really demonstrating supportiveness or, if not, how they could produce supportive language. Lines 1 - 8 can be seen as troubles telling (see discussion 3.5.2.). Second-language learners can be asked to examine the reaction of other participants to Celia's problems. A response comes from Francesca who asks in Spanish whether the university has gone on strike. Francesca talks in Spanish because she says that she lacks the necessary vocabulary in English. L2 learners may examine whether Francesca's question (lines nine and ten) reflects interactional or transactional language use. Is it a request for

information or an expression of concern? It can also be examined as alienating talk since Yumiko does not speak Spanish.

Furthermore, learner analysis could examine the potential conflict between the need for interactants to conform to target-language practices and patterns and the desire to engage in creative language use. Celia complains about the small salary increase that was awarded at the university where she works and talks about what this means in terms of coats (lines 23 - 28). By putting her salary increase in terms of coats, Celia may also be appealing for concern and sympathy from the other interactants. L2 learners can be asked to examine whether the reaction of the participant-observer is supportive as he jokes about the types of coats Celia wears (line 29). However, at the same time, L2 learners may be asked to examine the creative language use behind the move due to his use of irony. Learners can also examine how the move offers an opportunity for other interactants to engage in creative language use. For instance, the participant-observer's humorous comment seems to be appreciated by Yumiko as she spontaneously builds on the joke with supporting humorous comments: *Gorgeous coats made of fur* (line 31), *made of fur* (line 32) and *and it's nothing for you* (line 35). Further consideration can be given to Celia's own assessment of the joke: *fur yes that was not bad actually* (line 34). The humorous comments may be seen as supportive of Celia's situation and this 'laughter-together' (see 3.5.2.) can be seen as a 'time-out' (see 3.5.2.) as Celia subsequently continues with her troubles-telling.

### **7.7.2. Deconstruction Activities: Solidary Language**

The language conveyed in example 7.7. is supportive rather than solidary. The interactants may show concern and sympathy for Celia but they are not in the same situation. They do not have daughters studying at university, their universities are not on strike and they are not faced with small salary increases. However, solidary language does emerge in the university hall of residence data which can be examined for the use of rapport and empathy as interactants reflect shared experiences and attitudes.



In the following example, the interactants demonstrate shared interest and rapport as they engage in gossip. They have been overhearing other people's conversations and they are encouraging one another to say what they have heard.

Example 7.8.

During a meal-time conversation, Mariana, a Mexican PhD student, tells Blanca, a Portuguese PhD student, Armando, a Mexican PhD student, and the participant-observer about a Spanish-language conversation she overheard in the university reception area.

- |      |          |   |
|------|----------|---|
| 1    | Mariana  | ... I listened to these two guys I just heard someone         |
| 2    |          | speaking Spanish and then well you always catch a few         |
| → 3  |          | words and [laughter] then <u>you know</u> I had well the only |
| → 4  |          | corner which was available <u>you know</u> to rest =          |
| → 5  | Blanca:  | = by chance =   |
| → 6  | Mariana  | = by chance was   |
| 7    | Blanca:  | (laughter)  |
| 8    | Armando: | (laughter)  |
| 9    | Mariana: | next to them but aaahhhhh they were kind of interviewing I    |
| 10   |          | mean one of the guys and it was really interesting I thought  |
| 11   |          | it's the first time I mean =                                  |
| → 12 | Blanca:  | = we want to know the details, come come =                    |
| → 13 | Armando: | = yes yes come  |

Pedagogically, L2 learners can be asked to examine whether the participants are just 'showing interest' in Mariana's story i.e. supportiveness (as seen in 7.7.1.) or whether they 'show feelings for the other' i.e. solidarity. The use of *you know* (as discussed in 7.6.2.) aims to create a sense of involvement and rapport between interactants. It calls for a conventional response of supportiveness. However, Blanca replies with an ironic and preemptive *by chance* (line five). L2 learners can also study the use of repetition e.g. *you*

*know* (lines three and four), *by chance* (lines five and six) and *come* (lines 12 and 13) which reflects creative patterns in interpersonal language use as participants express engagement and empathy (as discussed in 3.12.2).

In deconstruction activities, the discussion and analysis of how target-language users engage in interpersonal language use does not have to focus just on successful outcomes. Activities can equally focus on missed opportunities, misunderstandings or a lack of pragmatic resources as interactants fail to achieve affective convergence. For instance, in the following example, L2 learners could examine why Armando ignores Mariana's remark.

#### Example 7.9.

Conversation during an evening meal between Mariana and Armando, Mexican PhD students, Blanca, a Portuguese PhD student, and the participant-observer (P/O).

- 1 Armando: for example, do you know Carla?
- 2 Blanca: yeah
- 3 Mariana I don't know her =
- 4 Armando = Carla is er like an excellent example. Maybe

Armando does not demonstrate concern about or interest in the fact that Mariana does not know who he is talking about. He shows a lack of supportiveness. Learners could examine the whole of the conversation to see whether it is a missed opportunity or perhaps, whether Armando's conversation is only directed at Blanca.

### 7.7.3. Construction Activities: Supportiveness & Solidarity

Besides identifying and discussing the expression of successful interpersonal language use in the second language, L2 learners should be given the opportunity to practise and to experiment with classroom activities aimed at establishing, developing and maintaining social relations. In this section, I wish to discuss the type of pedagogical activities that can help learners develop an interpersonal ability in the second language.

Rather than calling on teachers to design original activities for developing L2 interpersonal language ability, I want to adapt activities that the classroom teacher already has at hand i.e. from textbook activities or supplementary classroom material. Given the current demands of classroom teaching in terms of the teacher needing to successfully cover the programme, apply an end-of-course exam and perhaps ‘finish’ the book (as I discussed in 2.9.2.), it may be more realistic to adjust and expand activities rather than put new demands on the teacher in terms of extra activities. While I argued in 2.12.1. that ELT textbooks tend to ignore L2-L2 interpersonal language use, textbook activities provide opportunities for learners to engage in L2-L2 interpersonal language use among themselves. Therefore, I propose to take exercises from the same textbooks discussed in chapter two and offer ways in which a slight modification of an activity can give learners an opportunity to develop their L2 interpersonal ability. The activities are taken from *Passages 1* (Richards & Sandy, 1998a), *Atlas 2* (Nunan, 1995), *American Inside Out Intermediate* (Kay & Jones, 2003) and *Cutting Edge Intermediate* (Cunningham & Moor, 1999). Given that I have taken activities from high beginner (e.g. *Atlas 2*) to low advanced (e.g. *Passages 1*) textbooks, I am arguing that exercises to develop interpersonal language ability do not have to be limited to advanced-level students.

### 7.7.3.1. Roleplays

Aston sees roleplays as ‘particularly appropriate as a means of engaging the learner in interactional speech in the classroom’ (1988c: 326). Roleplays offer opportunities for learners to act out the interpersonal dimension to second-language use and, subsequently, examine and reflect on the implications of certain types of behaviour in real-life situations. Roleplays have the potential to offer both an interpersonal context and a personal history of the interactants. These two aspects are important in order to make L2 interpersonal language practice more meaningful and more related to specific individuals rather than portraying anonymous actors.

Roleplays often reflect transactional language use but they can be given an interpersonal dimension. For instance, in *Atlas 2*, students are presented with a communication activity where there are two roles: the prospective new member of a health club and the trainer at the health club. The prospective new member wants to get into shape and goes to the trainer for advice. After the prospective member fills in a health profile (e.g. on eating habits, smoking habits, etc.), students are then asked to do the following task:

Pair work Now discuss what your partner needs to do to get into shape.

Example: “You should eat more grains and fruits and vegetables, and you should cycle for 20 minutes every day. You shouldn’t eat so much junk food and you shouldn’t smoke.”

(Nunan 1995: 127)

Instead of solely concentrating on the use of the modal verb *should*, students could also be encouraged to develop an interpersonal dimension to the activity. Losing weight, exercising or giving up smoking are familiar and common problems which few people seem to be able to solve easily. Therefore, the conversation can be given an interpersonal dimension as the interactants talk about and perhaps share these problems. Talk can be supportive (if the trainer understands the problems) or solidary (if she has experienced the same problems).

Roleplays allow the learner to explore levels of involvement as she may want to seek closeness or, alternatively, maintain some sense of distance. Close involvement, for instance, may be reflected through personal topics and stories and through a high level of supportive overlaps (Tannen 1984). Interpersonal talk gives the learner an opportunity to examine how pragmatic resources such as directness / indirectness and tentative use of language can help achieve closeness or maintain distance when giving advice. Such activities can take the language learner well beyond the initial purpose of the exercise to practise the use of *should / shouldn't*.

### 7.7.3.2. Giving Advice

While practising functions is a common feature of communicative approaches to language teaching, I argued in 2.9.3. that students are given few opportunities to engage in the joint construction of interpersonal language use. Too often activities focus on the speaker rather than on both the speaker and hearer working together as seen for instance in the following activity:

#### Exercise 4

What should you do?

Group work: What should you do in these situations? Give advice to other people in your group.

- ▶ You've been asked to give a short speech at a friend's party.
- ▶ Someone admires something you own.
- ▶ You meet someone who has a serious health problem.
- ▶ You meet someone whose relative has recently died.

A: It's important to be prepared if you've been asked to give a short speech

B: Yes, you should take it seriously. But it's also acceptable to make a joke to relax.

(Richards & Sandy 1998a: 47)

In the above exercise the teacher is advised to give a model dialogue before putting students into groups where they are then encouraged to give reasons and suggestions.

Although the exercise is designed for group work, there appears to be little need for negotiation between learners and to achieve convergence as they practise giving advice. I would suggest that the activity could also be developed beyond just giving advice by taking one or two of the situations (or by modifying them slightly) and giving learners the opportunity to practise the achievement of successful interpersonal language use.

The first step, as suggested by Aston (1988b, 1988c, 1989), is for learners to try to add more biographical details to interactants in a given situation. Such information can be taken from personal experience, from people the learners actually know or, at least, from people about whom they have a lot of personal information (Aston 1988c: 337 – 338, 1989: 338 - 339). In exercise four, above, the meeting with a person with a health problem can be modified to a meeting between two friends where one of them has had an accident and fractured her arm. As learners build up the biographical details of the interactants, the more restricted (see 3.7.2.) the interpersonal language becomes. As a consequence, talk that develops is more likely to reflect the interaction of *somebodies* rather than *anybodies* – although this will depend on the context. The next step is to decide whether, in the case of the health problem scenario, for instance, the friend only identifies with the friend who has had the accident (i.e. feels *for* the other and expresses supportiveness) or has actually experienced the same situation (feels *as* the other and expresses solidarity). By deciding which stance to take, there is an issue of achieving successful interpersonal language use as interactants try to achieve positive rapport. Learners can attempt to achieve supportiveness or solidarity by utilising pragmatic resources that they have previously looked at during the *illustration* stage.

### 7.7.3.3. Script Writing

In Mexico, soap operas and sitcoms are extremely popular. ELT textbooks in Mexico seem to have picked up on this interest by providing a story line which runs through the textbook. Soap and sitcoms may be the subject of a complete unit. For instance, *Inside Out*

*Intermediate* (2003) devotes unit nine to soap operas while *Cutting Edge Intermediate* (1999) asks students in module 12 to write a soap-opera script.

Soap operas and sitcoms have the advantage of projecting a context and biographical details of the interactants. As mentioned in 7.7.3.2., practising L2 interpersonal language use needs to reflect both an interpersonal language context and the personal history of the interactants. These two aspects are important in order to make L2 interpersonal language practice more meaningful and more related to specific individuals rather than portraying anonymous actors in any context.

One of the problems with learners writing their own scripts is that not all interactants in a given roleplay may have access to the same biographical details. One solution would be to take a sitcom or soap opera where learners have the same access to biographical information (or could easily make themselves familiar with such information). In using a popular sitcom, learners can share the same knowledge of the characters – their history, attitudes, values, including their likes and dislikes. Students can then be asked to develop the story line in a certain direction that calls for achieving successful interpersonal language use. A popular choice in Mexico, for instance, would be a television series such as ‘Friends’. At the same time, Scollon argues that by analysing and comparing television sitcoms in different languages, L2 learners can study contrasting patterns and practices of social interaction and try to put them into ‘the context of daily usage’ (1999: 195).

#### **7.7.3.4. Summary & Pedagogical Criteria**

I have built on Aston’s work (1988c; 1989) in examining how deconstruction and construction activities offer one way of developing interpersonal language use in the L2 classroom. Deconstruction activities offer the L2 learner an opportunity to study the use of interpersonal language within a specific context. Construction activities offer the opportunity for the learner to use and experiment with interpersonal language use. To give

the learner opportunities to practise ‘doing’ social relations, I have taken activities from real-life data and textbook activities which are easily accessible sources for busy ELT teachers who are working to a tight schedule.

Activities aimed at practising interpersonal language use are more successful when interactants have their own identity and personal history. Individual identity and personal history can lead to the expression of restricted attitudes and interaction between specific individuals rather than between anonymous L2 language users.

As Aston (1988c: 206, 1989: 210) argues, deconstruction and construction activities need to be followed by a debriefing session about how learners felt in their attempt to achieve successful social relations. Debriefing gives an opportunity for learners to consider whether they have the necessary resources for achieving successful interpersonal language use, whether they can access those resources and, most importantly, whether they can use them.

I have considered a number of activities: role plays, conveying communicative functions and writing. Such activities may not reflect real-life use or predict what learners actually do in target-language situation but they do provide the opportunity for the learner in the classroom to explore L2-L2 interpersonal language use. The classroom should be a site for experimenting with and gaining insights and experience into target-language use and trying out new ways of establishing, developing and maintaining social relations. The classroom can provide a safe haven and context for such experimentation – not the rough-and-tumble world of L2-L2 settings.

### **7.8. Pedagogical Mode: *Induction***

At the *interaction* stage, the learner focuses on interpersonal language use – openly sharing opinions and observations, talking about interpersonal data, examining and discussing choices and their implications and engaging in deconstruction and construction activities. I



now want to complete the *Illustration-Interaction-Induction* mode by examining *induction* which encourages the learner to build up a greater awareness of how she and other L2 language learners can interact in the second language. She needs to be aware of which ways are more useful and successful for her in attempting to achieve successful social relations. In other words, the L2 learner needs to become her own ethnographer in both the classroom and the target-language context (as discussed in 7.4.1.).

*Induction* goes beyond *illustration* and *interaction* and provides opportunities for the learner to develop her own ways of noticing and drawing conclusions about interpersonal language use. During the *illustration* and *interaction* phases, the learner was guided by the teacher and classroom activities when engaging in discussion, observation and analysis. In the *induction* phase learners are encouraged to reach their own conclusions. Carter and McCarthy say that *induction*

stands for making one's own, or the learning group's, rule for a particular feature, a rule which will be refined and honed as more and more data is encountered.

(1995: 155)

With interpersonal language use, I would argue that the learner needs to identify practices and discover patterns (rather than fixed rules) and map out different ways to achieve successful L2-L2 social relations. In developing her own patterns and ways of interacting, the L2 user in a given context can therefore have the choice of conforming to L2 practices or participating through creative language use.

In chapter five, I described L2-L2 interpersonal talk as supportive, non-*face*-threatening and often featuring troubles talk and self-disclosure (see 5.7.). I identified varying degrees of involvement and closeness as participants expressed supportiveness and solidarity. I also argued that L2-L2 interpersonal language use was characterised by participants taking pleasure at just being able to talk to each other and celebrating understandings. Furthermore, I argued that L2-L2 talk was marked by a high level of tolerance of grammatical inaccuracy and talk about language itself. In chapter six, I argued that L2 users jointly engaged in creative language use by playing with language and extending meanings.

The *induction* stage provides L2 learners with the opportunity to identify such practices, discover patterns and outline different ways in which successful L2-L2 social relations are achieved in the classroom context (i.e. to become their own ethnographers). To carry out this exercise they need to reflect on classroom activities and assess the level of success (or lack of success) in interpersonal terms and attempt to identify the features of successful L2-L2 interpersonal language use. Through reflecting on classroom behaviour, learners can be encouraged to reach their own conclusions regarding L2-L2 interpersonal language use rather than over-relying on the classroom teacher and ELT textbooks – sources which may not fully respond to the learner's individual needs and even may, at times, not be fully reliable.

Becoming an ethnographer means that the L2 learner needs to ask her own questions about interpersonal language use, collect her own examples and identify how interpersonal language is used by other L2 users and develop her own way of interacting interpersonally. While the concept of the L2 learner as ethnographer is not new (see, for instance, Bailey & Nunan 1996; Byram & Fleming 1998; McCarthy 1998), the learning focus has often been more on identifying target-language cultural aspects (e.g. Barro, Jordan & Roberts 1998; Sercu 1998) rather than on such pragmatic and discoursal aspects as L2-L2 interpersonal language use.

## **7.9. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have tried to answer my research question regarding how second-language users can be given opportunities to develop interpersonal language ability within the L2 learning context. In outlining activities aimed at practising Aston's concepts of solidarity and supportiveness (1988b, 1988c, 1989, 1993) in L2-L2 interpersonal language use, I also tried to exploit the social context of the classroom. I examined textbook exercises that could be modified to offer the learner opportunities for developing interpersonal language use e.g. encouraging learners to discuss problems such as trying to lose weight, do exercise

or give up smoking (see 7.7.3.1.) or overcoming a serious health problem (see 7.7.3.2.). Besides practising using interpersonal language use, such activities also provide opportunities for the L2 user to go beyond the role of being a language learner and develop and explore successful interpersonal language use between herself and her classmates. Such activities may allow the L2 user to participate in creative ways and perhaps to interact as a *somebody* in the classroom rather than as an anonymous language learner.

The *Illustration-Interaction-Induction* mode offers one way to develop L2-L2 interpersonal language knowledge. By proposing this mode, I am not trying to compete with existing approaches to second-language teaching. Rather, I am trying to broaden existing activities so that the second-language learner has increased opportunities to notice and practise the use of interpersonal language. *Illustration* provides real-life bases on which to construct interpersonal knowledge. *Interaction* provides opportunities to talk about and 'do' interpersonal language in the second-language classroom. *Induction* helps the learner develop her own ways of interacting interpersonally by inducing or generalising a practice or pattern.

Pedagogical activities cannot replicate the second-language situation but they can provide opportunities and resources for the language learner to notice and practise L2-L2 interpersonal language use. Furthermore, pedagogical activities may represent a more effective and efficient use of learning time than time spent on learning within the L2 context. In this chapter I have tried to make a contribution to current teaching practice by giving students the opportunity to examine the potential tension between conformity and creative language in L2-L2 interpersonal language use. I also proposed using existing classroom and textbook activities as a way of providing opportunities for developing interpersonal language ability rather than calling on busy teachers or material designers to come up with a whole new set of activities.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusions: Tensions & Challenges

#### 8.1. Introduction

In this thesis, I have examined L2-L2 interpersonal language use in terms of Halliday's *interactional* and *personal* language functions. I have examined the *interactional* dimension by identifying second-language patterns and practices which marked L2-L2 discourse as partially distinctive from L1-L1 or L1-L2 talk. With interactional talk, I have argued that participants show concern for and engagement with other L2 users by expressing supportiveness and solidarity (Aston 1988b, 1988c, 1989, 1993). In order to achieve successful interpersonal language use, participants employ pragmatic resources. I have examined the *personal* dimension by looking at creative language use which allows the second-language users to choose between interacting as a *somebody* or as an *anybody*. Through using the *Illustration-Interaction-Induction* mode, I have outlined activities that can provide opportunities for noticing and practising L2-L2 interpersonal language in the classroom.

In this final chapter, I want to bring fundamental points together regarding L2-L2 interpersonal language use and examine key unanswered questions and areas of potential difficulty. I then examine the potential limitations and weaknesses of the thesis. I want also to make some claims about this thesis contributing to increasing current understandings and make some tentative suggestions for further areas of research into L2-L2 interpersonal language use.

## 8.2. Answering the Research Questions

I have answered the overarching question in this thesis regarding how L2 users achieve successful social relations with other L2 users by addressing the specific research questions that I outlined in chapter one (see 2.7.) which were:

1. What are the interactional practices that characterise L2-L2 interpersonal language use?
2. How do L2 interactants express concern for and engagement with other L2 users?
3. What resources does the L2 user employ in order to achieve successful interpersonal language use in the second language?
4. How do L2 interactants engage in creative language use with other L2 users?
5. How can second-language users be given opportunities to develop interpersonal language ability within the L2 learning context?

I have described the interactional practices that characterise L2-L2 interpersonal language use by identifying patterns in social talk such as *facework*, *supportive interchanges* and working consensus which reflect mutual concern and co-operation. L2-L2 practices that express mutual concern and co-operation are reflected through orderliness and sequence in talk as participants build on each others' contributions (turn taking), organise the structure of contributions (conditional relevance) and interrelate utterances (adjacency pairs).

I have argued that L2 interactants express concern for and engagement with other L2 users through the use of supportiveness and solidarity (Aston 1988b, 1988c, 1989, 1993).<sup>4</sup>In L2-L2 social talk, supportiveness and solidarity are often expressed in a nonthreatening environment (e.g. tolerating grammatical error and talking about language itself) and that certain features such as self-disclosure, restricted attitudes, *face* enhancement and celebrating understandings seem to be more salient in L2-L2 talk than in L1-L1 and L1-L2 patterns of use.

I have described the resources that L2 users employ in order to achieve successful interpersonal language use in terms of pragmatic resources. Pragmatic resources offer linguistic options in conveying the force of an utterance which I have described in terms of linguistic patterns and routines (e.g. use of directness and indirectness) and socially-sensitive language choices which I have described in terms of managing distance / closeness, *face*-threatening acts and levels of imposition.

I have argued that language users engage in creative language use through employing repetition, language play and extending meaning. I claim that creative language use allows the L2 user to participate as an L2 *somebody* who is knowledgeable, skilful, assertive and creative about managing interpersonal relations as opposed to an L2 *anybody* who wants to interact as a cordial competent language user but who is not particularly interested in developing close social relations.

I have described how opportunities can be provided for L2 learners to develop interpersonal language ability within the classroom by adopting McCarthy and Carter's *Illustration-Interaction-Induction* mode. Such a mode offers the L2 learner a way to notice and practise the use of interpersonal language: *illustration* provides real-life bases on which to construct interpersonal knowledge; *interaction* provides opportunities to 'do' interpersonal language in the second-language classroom; *induction* helps the learner develop her own ways of interacting interpersonally by inducing or generalising a practice or pattern.

### 8.3. Remaining Problem Areas & Tensions

However, there are also unresolved problems and tensions, particularly with regard to a potential dilemma as L2 users choose between expressing solidarity / supportiveness through conventional or creative language use and also regarding the ability for second-language users to interact as L2 *somebodies*.

### 8.3.1. Solidarity / Supportiveness & Creative Language Use

In L2-L2 interpersonal language use there is a potential dilemma for the L2 user in deciding whether to solely express solidarity / supportiveness or also to engage in creative language use. I have not attempted to resolve this predicament. This is because the L2 user has choices in how she wishes to participate in any given interaction and demonstrate concern for and engagement with other L2 users. Solidarity and supportiveness allow the L2 user to express concern, sympathy and appreciation or share common experiences and feelings (as described in chapter three). Creative language use reflects participant innovation and originality. Creative language use is achieved through repetition, language play and extending meaning (as described in chapter three). Within the context of solidarity and supportiveness reflecting involvement and concern with others, creative language use reflects a more individual style of bonding (e.g. through humour and linguistic play). At the same time, the L2 user needs to be aware that making choices brings consequences. If the L2 user constantly demonstrates supportiveness or solidarity in conventional ways, there is a danger that social relations will become too predictable and stale as participant contributions are constantly met with matching comments. On other hand, the overuse of creative language use may reflect a lack of identification with the interpersonal situation of other language users. This tension presents choices for the language user – choices in how she wants to interact with other language users in a given context.

### 8.3.2. *Somebody* & *Anybody* Distinction

The *somebody* and *anybody* distinction also represents choices for the L2 user in how she wants to participate in a given interaction. I have defined an L2 *somebody* as a language user who is knowledgeable, skilful, assertive and creative about managing interpersonal relations. She has different means at her disposal to achieve successful interpersonal relations: she uses supportiveness and solidarity to express agreement with target-language

users; she uses creative language use to interact in her own way in a given situation. I have described an L2 *anybody* as a cordial competent language user who is not interested in developing close social relations. However, I have not examined the case of the individual L2 user who may not be particularly good at engaging in interpersonal language use.

In attempting to provide opportunities for developing, establishing and maintaining interpersonal relations in the second language, both teachers and learners need to be aware of what can and what cannot be achieved with L2-L2 interaction. I already mentioned in 7.2. that it is impossible for the L2 user to have good social relations with everyone or even for the L2 user to know with which second-language interactant she is going to achieve successful relations. At the same time, all language users are different. Learners may express supportiveness and solidarity in their own very individual ways. Furthermore, learners themselves may feel that there are limits in terms of achieving supportiveness and solidarity in the target language.

If language learners are to be considered as individuals, they cannot be expected to express supportiveness or solidarity in uniform ways. Pragmatic resources are means for achieving successful interpersonal language use. They are not part of a formula which guarantees successful social relations. Individuals have their own ways of doing personal relations and will pick and choose which pragmatic resources to employ in order to achieve personal objectives.

### **8.3.3. Successful Interpersonal Language Use**

I have defined successful L2-L2 interpersonal language use as the joint achievement of a desired degree of involvement, concern and engagement between second-language users. I have described some of the resources the L2 user employs in order to achieve successful interpersonal language use in the second language in terms of pragmatic resources. However, it is difficult to externally evaluate the realization of interpersonal language use



and the L2 teacher may find it extremely difficult to judge whether learners are successful in engaging in L2-L2 social talk. However, she can evaluate how learners engage with each other interpersonally and whether they are adhering to recognised patterns and practices of interpersonal language use (as outlined in chapter three).

#### **8.3.4. Interpersonal Language Communities**

My research data which examined opportunistic and unplanned interpersonal language use in a university hall of residence would appear to be a far cry from the scheduled and purposeful classroom setting where students are obliged to interact with other another. While I have tried to make a case that the L2 classroom does reflect a real-life setting for students, I would also argue that the classroom situation places learners within a community of language users who have both transactional and interpersonal objectives. Learners identify and interact interpersonally with other language users within the classroom community in terms of sharing experiences, expressing solidarity and supportiveness and engaging in creative language use. The L2 classroom is a potential site for engaging in meaningful interpersonal language use and provides opportunities for learners to examine how they participate in L2-L2 social talk (and even perhaps experiment in how they would like to interact).

#### **8.4. Contribution to Increasing Current Understanding**

In this study, I have attempted to add to current understandings of second-language interpersonal language use in five principal ways.

First of all, I have examined interpersonal language use between non-native speakers in the target-language context. The study of such patterns is important because i) L2 - L2

interaction increasingly reflects the reality of second-language interaction: ii) L2 interactants often do not draw on target-language norms when interacting with other L2 users. They draw on pragmatic resources according to the developing context.

Secondly, as the second-language user interacts with other second-language users in achieving a working consensus, pragmatic knowledge become key resources as the L2 user tries to achieve successful interpersonal language use in the target-language context. These resources represent choices for the second-language user as she attempts to achieve what Aston (1988c, 1989) has identified as supportiveness and solidarity. I have examined how second-language users make interpersonal choices in a target-language context – small talk at a university hall of residence in London.

Thirdly, the second-language user has personal choices with regard to how she wants to present her ‘self’ in the target language and how she wants to interact. I have argued that pragmatic resources allow the L2 user to engage in creative language use and that this can be achieved within the context of supportiveness and solidarity. This gives the L2 user the choice of interacting as a distinctive and vibrant *somebody* in the target language or, if she chooses, as a more anonymous and nondescript *anybody*. The creative use of language allows L2 interactants to come across in unexpected and individualistic ways.

Fourthly, I suggest that transactional language use reflects a static and goal-oriented view of language use. L2-L2 interpersonal language reflects the constantly changing nature of relationships during L2 spoken discourse. Language learners constantly make choices as they develop, maintain, celebrate and enhance second-language use.

Finally, I have tried to demonstrate how pedagogical activities can provide opportunities for learners to develop and practise supportiveness and solidarity. In order not to increase the pedagogical load on teachers, I have demonstrated how such activities can be incorporated into existing L2 classroom activities. Following Aston (1988c, 1989), I have argued that adding a biographical dimension to existing classroom activities can provide opportunities for learners to practise interpersonal language use. I have suggested how

existing textbook activities can be adapted to encourage the classroom practice of interpersonal language use. Pedagogical activities can respond to the learner's interactional and transactional needs in the target language, especially since interactional language is present in transactional language use.

## **8.5. Strengths & Weaknesses of the Study**

While this study hopefully has its strengths, I recognise that it has its weaknesses as well.

### **8.5.1. Strengths**

In this thesis I set out to identify how second-language users establish and maintain social relations with other L2 users through the medium of the second language. I have met this challenge by describing L2-L2 interpersonal language use in a naturally-occurring context and have also described it systematically. Within this context, the thesis has certain strengths in terms of authenticity, relevance, usefulness and increasing the state of current knowledge.

With regard to authenticity, the examination of L2-L2 interpersonal language use in a naturally-occurring target-language context is fairly unique with few existing complementary studies of L2-L2 social talk. I have described and analysed how the L2 user establishes, develops, maintains, enhances and even celebrates L2 interpersonal language use with other non-native speakers. I have examined interpersonal language practices and patterns of use within a specific interactional context (a university hall of residence). By examining non-native – non-native interpersonal language use, I have studied English as an international language which reflects more and more the use of the English language in the world today.

The thesis is relevant to ELT teaching and learning because I have described in a way that is understandable and accessible to the EFL teacher how L2 users actually engage in interpersonal language use in a target-language context. Given that I have argued that interpersonal language use is not a strong feature of current ELT teaching practice, this thesis offers insights into L2-L2 patterns and practices and proposes pedagogic intervention that can help the L2 user to interact supportively and creatively in the target language. I have looked at how the L2 user tries to achieve successful social relations in the second-language rather than examine causes of potential failure in interpersonal communication. I have outlined how pragmatic resources can help learners express supportiveness and solidarity. By focusing on positive, proactive and contextually sensitive interactional language use, I believe that I can complement studies that examine L2 interpersonal miscommunication and misunderstanding (e.g. Coupland, Giles & Wiemann 1991; Kasper & Blum-Kulka 1993).

Through building on existing research into L1-L1 and L1-L2 interactional language, especially that of Aston (1988a, 1988b, 1988c, 1989, 1993, 1995), the study is useful in academic terms because I highlight the importance of supportiveness and solidarity in L2-L2 social talk whilst also underlining creative language use and I have identified a range of different ways in which they are achieved. At the same time, I have also examined the interplay between supportiveness / solidarity and creative language use which leaves the L2 user with proactive choices to be made.

Throughout the thesis I have looked at the L2 learner as an individual and as a creative language user. I have argued that the second-language learner often seeks out opportunities for creative language use because she wants to interact with other L2 users as an individual (i.e. as *somebody* rather than as *anybody*) and, to do so, she needs to use the target language in unexpected, spontaneous and unconventional ways. I have tried to underline the importance of choice regarding how the L2 user wants to engage in interpersonal relations.

The second-language learner needs to be given the means to make pragmatic choices in how she expresses successful interpersonal language use (which I have described in terms

of solidarity and supportiveness). Moreover, the learner needs to be given the choice of expressing her individuality in the target-language i.e. of interacting as a distinctive *somebody* rather than as an anonymous language user.

### 8.5.2. Weaknesses

I recognise potential weaknesses in my work which would have to be taken into consideration in any further development of this study. First of all, while I have argued that L2 interpersonal language use can be built from the second-language learner's existing L1 knowledge and experience, I have not examined how the L2 user employs pragmatic resources in her first-language. Such a study may give me insights into pragmatic transfer. For example, I have specifically focused on the Mexican EFL user but I have not described how she employs pragmatic resources in Spanish or how she achieves successful interpersonal language use. Such insights may contribute to understanding L2 patterns and practices of the Mexican EFL user.

Furthermore, such terms as pragmatic resources and supportiveness / solidarity may be more of an analyst's distinction than a user's distinction. Second-language users may not categorise or identify with interpersonal language use in such ways.

I have offered examples of what I have considered to be successful social relations. It is my interpretation. I have ignored what I do not consider to be solidary, supportive or creative language use. In one sense, I can be accused of studying my own standard of successful interpersonal language use. This point of view may not be shared by either native or non-native speakers of English.

While I tried to see the interactants in the study as individuals I recognise that I have not taken into account variables such as gender, age and social class. I might argue in my defence that I am more interested in examining how individuals interact and attempt to

express themselves in a social setting rather than in trying to find an underlying common denominator that would allow me to neatly categorise the participants' behaviour.

I can be accused of presenting the concept of a *somebody* as a positive concept and an *anybody* as an undesirable state. A second-language learner may not want to be *somebody* in the target language but remain an anonymous language user content to play out a role in order to achieve transactional ends. I have already argued that, in this case, this is obviously a matter of individual choice but, also, that the second-language learner should be made aware of interpersonal options available to her before making that choice.

The participants in the study may be seen as cosmopolitan language users accustomed to dealing with (and living in) target-language contexts. Therefore, they might not be considered as representative of typical language learners. In response to this view, I would argue that there is no such thing as a typical second-language user. The participants are individuals and as such their way of expressing themselves as individuals deserves to be described.

Finally, I could have analysed prosodic aspects of interpersonal language use and paralinguistic factors such as facial expressions, gestures and physical distance. However these areas are problematic for two reasons. First of all, an examination of intonation patterns of second language speakers (since they frequently widely differ from those of L1 speakers) often does not provide effective paralinguistic clues to understanding how L2 users try to convey and understand supportiveness and solidarity in interpersonal language (personal communication Courtney Cazden). Secondly, an examination of sounds becomes problematic because of different interpretations given to sounds and paralinguistic factors.

## 8.6. Areas for Future Research

The potential weaknesses of the thesis suggest possible areas for further research. In this study I have focused principally on the Mexican EFL user in a specific context. Further research could be conducted to see whether the conclusions of this thesis are generalisable to language learners from other countries or backgrounds in similar interpersonal language contexts. Such research could examine how other second-language users employ pragmatic resources in the target language and how they express supportiveness, solidarity and creative language use.

Additionally, further research could examine the question of transfer between L1 and L2 with regard to pragmatic resources. I have ignored the L2 learner's use of pragmatic resources in her first language because I have focused on the features of L2-L2 interpersonal language use. However, interpersonal language use could therefore be examined from the point of interlanguage pragmatics and the influence of the first-language practices on the target language.

At the same time, further research needs to determine the possible effect of variables such as gender, age and social class on L2 interpersonal language use.

Finally, research could be carried out into the use of paralinguistic signalling in interpersonal language use. For instance, laughter was a key feature of interpersonal language use. In the university hall of residence data, laughter was often present when interactants expressed supportiveness and solidarity.

## 8.7. Final Remarks

In examining successful L2-L2 interpersonal communication, I wanted to examine a key and perhaps forgotten issue in second-language learning and make a contribution to teaching practices in the L2 classroom. In the Mexican context, second-language teaching and learning does not generally consider how L2 learners can develop, establish and maintain L2-L2 social relations in the second language despite the fact that Mexican students are often interested in developing and holding conversations with other English-language speakers outside of the classroom. I have argued that interpersonal language use needs to be given greater importance in the second-language classroom.

Furthermore, second-language teaching often does not consider the kinds of choices that can be offered to L2 learners and the potential tension between conformity and creative language use. I feel that this thesis can at least help in this direction. The L2 learner can be given choices in how she wants to present her 'self' or interact. Choice is important to the language user as it allows her to be creative in second-language use. To summarise, perhaps, the key word to encouraging L2-L2 interpersonal language use is choice: Choice in use of resources, choice in ways of expressing rapport, choice in whether the language user wants to conform to established practices and patterns or engage in creative language use and choice in whether the second-language user wants to interact as a *somebody* or as an *anybody*. Choice allows the second-language learner to achieve positive, proactive and contextually sensitive interactional language use as opposed to one that is merely reactive to the social context.



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