

**‘You see, it’s sort of tricky for the L2-user’  
the puzzle of idiomaticity in  
English as a Lingua Franca.**

**Author: Luke Prodromou**

**Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Submitted to the University of Nottingham, September, 2005.**



## Abstract

Much has been claimed recently for the role of idiomaticity in L1 acquisition and fluency and many of these insights have been applied, in my view, uncritically in many cases, to the context of L2 use. Until recently, very little attempt was made to test out the applicability of these insights to English as a Lingua Franca by examining naturally-occurring L2 discourse.

This thesis sets out to explore the reasons why even successful L2-users may find the phenomenon of idiomaticity difficult. It investigates the apparent paradox between idiomaticity in L1 use and L2 use, whereby for the L1-user, idiomaticity, in all its guises, makes for ease of processing and the promotion of fluency while in L2 use it seems, in some of its manifestations at least, to be error-prone and elusive.

Drawing on an original corpus of spoken English as a Lingua Franca, I apply a combination of corpus techniques and techniques of discourse analysis within a socio-cultural framework in order to identify the underlying factors that differentiate L1 and L2 idiomaticity. I illustrate the argument by looking at two different manifestations of idiomaticity: ‘minimal’ units of idiomaticity (two word phrases) and more traditional ‘colourful’ idioms.

The results suggest that L2-users avoid or have difficulty with ‘native-like’ idiomaticity because L1 idiomaticity involves more than formulaic sequences of greater or lesser semantic opacity; it is a more extended and diffuse phenomenon that generates subtle webs of semantic, pragmatic and discourse prosodies. It is through these situated webs of signification that L1-users achieve fluency and the promotion of self rather than in the manipulation of isolated idiomatic units *in vacuo*.

Note: When I use the terms ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ I put them in inverted commas to indicate to the reader that I do not subscribe to the deficit view of L2 use that these terms are often associated with. My preferred terms are ‘L1-user’ and ‘L2-user’ (Cook, 2002).



## Acknowledgements

My heartfelt thanks to Kiveli for her infinite and selfless support though this long and seemingly endless journey. This Ithaca, poor though it is, I dedicate to her, with love.

My gratitude and love to Michael, Antony and Rosa for putting up with my physical and emotional absences for so long. To Antony a special thanks for his prompt and effective help with the computer.

My appreciation to Michael McCarthy, supervisor and friend; and Ron Carter for his support and inspiration in so many ways over the years. Thanks to Jeanne McCarten for the hospitality at the University of Toft.

Many thanks to Penelope Prodromou for reading the thesis and giving me feedback and to Jay Schwartz for so generously lending me his computer skills and for his valuable feedback on the text.

How to thank the 42 SUEs who must remain anonymous, and without whom there would be no thesis? And all the interlocutors who contributed to the 200,000 corpus and without whom there would be no SUEs.

A special thanks to the 100 ELT professionals and ordinary L1 and L2-users who patiently ploughed through the lengthy SUE Test and gave me their comments beyond the call of duty. My gratitude also goes to the 400 teachers, applied linguists and common or garden L1 and L2-users who responded to the *bump into* test; my apologies for deceiving them as to the mother-tongue of the speaker of the *bump into* utterance.

Many colleagues gave me additional support by providing me with feedback, articles and references, in spite of their busy schedules. Thanks go to:

Svenja Adolphs, Dave Allan, Alicia Artusi, Gulfem Aslan, Jim Arnold, Mike Burghall, Martin Bygate, Alicia Cabrero, Bob Chatel, Bessie Dendrinou, Gwyneth Fox, Kathleen Hart, Janet Holmes, Sue Jones, Ágnes Lesznyák, Peter Medgyes, Myriam Monterrubio, Christiane Meierkord, Gerhard Finster, Sara Hannam, Alexander Nikolaou, Anne O’Keeffe, Elissavet Koutoupi, John Lontas, Dionisia Pappatheodorou, Graeme Porte, Enric Llorca, Odysseus Prodromou, Alan Pulverness, Mario Rinvulcri, Paula Jullian Romani, Deirdre Ryan, Michael Rundell, Mario Saraceni, Norbert Schmitt, Barbara Seidlhofer, Nikos Sifakis, John Sinclair, Emanuel Schegloff, Piotr Steinbrich, Yiannis Stergis, Jorge Suarez, Grzegorz Spiewak, Steve Taylore-Knowles, Scott Thornbury, Ivor Timmis, George Vassilakis, Ken Wilson, Robert Woodford, Jean Wong, Jock Oon Wong,

Last but not least, my sincere thanks to Tatiana Dobrosklonskaya for her beautiful poem, ‘Mr. English’, and Antoinette Moses for her beautifully witty ‘Gap Poem’.

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>9</b>
1.0 Introduction: the origins of this study.....	10
1.1 What is a corpus?.....	13
1.2 What have corpora uncovered and what are the implications?.....	14
1.2.1 'Real' language.....	14
1.2.2 The importance of context.....	16
1.2.3 The importance of collocation.....	16
1.2.4 The importance of semantic prosody.....	17
1.2.5 The importance of culture.....	19
1.2.6 The difference between ENL and ELF.....	24
1.3 The research questions of this study.....	27
<b>2. The idiomatic puzzle: a review.....</b>	<b>30</b>
2.0 Introduction: the idiomatic puzzle.....	31
2.1 The importance of idiomaticity.....	33
2.2 The idiomatic deficit.....	35
2.2.1 Research evidence.....	36
2.2.2 The pedagogic deficit.....	39
2.3 Approaches to idiomaticity.....	40
2.3.1 Terminology.....	40
2.3.2 Which idiomaticity?.....	40
2.3.3 Creative idiomaticity.....	47
2.3.4 Formal approaches: big words.....	49
2.3.5 Cognitive approaches.....	51
2.3.6 Discourse and pragmatic approaches.....	52
2.3.7 Phonological factors.....	53
2.3.8 Formulaic language and the presentation of self.....	55
2.4 The empirical gap in research.....	57
2.5 Idiomaticity and fluency.....	60
2.5.1 Two puzzles.....	61
2.5.2 The puzzle of 'native-like selection'.....	61
2.5.3 The puzzle of 'native-like fluency'.....	63
2.5.4 Towards a socio-cultural view of fluency.....	66
2.6 The idiomatic puzzle: conclusion.....	73
<b>3. From speech to conversation.....</b>	<b>74</b>
3.0 Introduction.....	75
3.1 'Non-native' speech.....	75
3.1.1 Mainstream SLA.....	75
3.1.2 Cross-cultural pragmatics.....	76
3.1.3 Deficit in cross-cultural pragmatics.....	77
3.2 L2-user conversation.....	80
3.2.1 Towards ELF conversation as the accomplishment of normality.....	80
3.2.2 L2-user conversation and phraseology.....	84
3.3 Conclusion.....	86



<b>4. Socio-cultural approaches and dialogism.....</b>	<b>87</b>
4.0 Introduction.....	88
4.1 Vygotsky.....	88
4.2 Goffman's 'dialogic' approach.....	90
4.3 Bakhtin's dialogic approach.....	93
4.4. Dialogism, idiomaticity and L2 conversation.....	97
4.5 Shared knowledge.....	100
4.6 Deep and shallow commonality.....	102
4.7 From speech to dialogism: conclusion.....	105
<b>5. Data and Methodology.....</b>	<b>107</b>
5.0 Introduction.....	108
5.1 The data.....	109
5.1.1 Previous L2-user corpora.....	109
5.1.2 The present corpus.....	110
5.1.2.1 The size of the corpus.....	111
5.1.2.2 The researcher as participant.....	112
5.1.2.3 Collecting the samples.....	113
5.1.2.4 The types of genres included in the corpus.....	114
5.1.2.5 The length of individual texts in the corpus.....	115
5.1.2.6 Determining the range of speakers.....	116
5.1.2.7 Rationale for inclusion.....	117
5.1.2.8 In search of SUEs.....	120
5.1.2.9 The notion of 'expertise'.....	122
5.1.2.10 SUEs are not 'near-native speakers'.....	123
5.1.2.11 Transcription.....	125
5.1.3 Other corpus data.....	126
5.2 Methodology.....	126
5.2.1 Building an analytical model for L2-user data.....	126
5.2.2 A corpus-based approach.....	128
5.2.3 The discourse context.....	129
<b>6. Two-word lexical phrases: frequency.....</b>	<b>131</b>
6.0 Introduction.....	132
6.1 Defining clusters.....	133
6.2 Two-word phrases: TWPs.....	137
6.2.1 Quantitative analysis.....	137
6.2.2 Pragmatic markers.....	141
6.2.3 Divergence.....	144
6.2.4 Two-word lexical phrases: conclusion.....	145
<b>7. A <i>sort of</i> puzzle for the L1-user.....</b>	<b>147</b>
7.0 Introduction.....	148
7.1 The frequency of <i>sort of</i> .....	148
7.2 Explaining the frequency of <i>sort of</i> .....	151
7.2.1. <i>Kind of</i> .....	151
7.2.2 <i>Sort of</i> and informality.....	153
7.3 <i>Sort of</i> : meaning and use.....	154
7.3.1 <i>Sort of</i> as a classifier.....	154
7.3.2 The pragmatic uses of <i>sort of</i> : .....	155
7.3.3 <i>Sort of thing</i> .....	156



7.4 <i>Sort of</i> : colligation and collocation.....	157
7.4.1 Colligation and co-operation.....	157
7.4.2 Colligation: concluding remarks.....	160
7.5 Collocation.....	160
7.5.1 Vagueness attracts vagueness.....	160
7.5.1.1 <i>Thing</i> and <i>stuff</i> .....	162
7.5.1.2 <i>Like</i> .....	163
7.5.1.3 <i>You know</i> .....	163
7.5.1.4 <i>Just</i> .....	165
7.5.1.5 <i>I think</i> .....	165
7.5.1.6 <i>Really</i> .....	166
7.5.1.7 <i>I mean</i> .....	167
7.6. Collocates of <i>sort of</i> : summary.....	167
7.7 Repetition of collocates.....	168
7.7.1 Collocational compounds.....	168
7.7.2 Collocational complexes.....	169
7.7.3 Collocational cascades.....	169
7.8 Discourse rhapsody: the function of collocate repetition.....	170
7.9 Semantic prosody of <i>sort of</i> .....	172
7.9.1 Idiomatic prosody.....	174
7.9.2 Vagueness.....	175
7.9.3 Idiosyncratic prosody.....	176
7.9.4 Figurative prosody.....	177
7.9.5 Negative prosody.....	178
7.9.6 Vulgar/.Taboo prosody.....	179
7.9.7 Formal/Technical prosody.....	180
7.10 General prosodies.....	181
7.11 <i>Sort of</i> in L1-user conversation: conclusion.....	183
7.11.1 The ‘difficulty’ of <i>sort of</i> .....	184
7.11.2 Fluency: convergent and co-constructed.....	185
7.11.3 Idiomaticity in ELF.....	186
 8. A <i>sort of</i> puzzle for the L2-user.....	 187
8.0 Introduction.....	188
8.1 The SK factor: density of <i>sort of</i> / <i>kind of</i> in L2 corpus.....	188
8.2 <i>Sort of</i> : position.....	191
8.2.1 <i>Sort of</i> in medial position.....	191
8.2.2 <i>Sort of</i> in final position.....	193
8.3 Colligation of <i>sort of</i> in SUEC.....	195
8.4 Collocates of <i>sort of</i> in SUEC.....	196
8.4.1 <i>Sort of</i> + <i>you know</i> in SUEC.....	197
8.4.2 <i>Sort of</i> + <i>thing</i> in SUEC.....	199
8.5 Semantic and pragmatic prosodies of <i>sort of</i> in SUEC.....	203
8.5.1 Idiomatic prosody.....	205
8.5.2 Cultural allusions.....	208
8.5.3 <i>Sort of</i> and vagueness in SUEC.....	210
8.5.4 <i>Sort of</i> and negativity in SUEC.....	212
8.6 Clusters of semantic prosodies in L2.....	215
8.7 Pragmatic prosody and the construction of commonality.....	217
8.8. Semantic prosodies: L1 and L2 commonalities.....	221
8.9 General pragmatic prosodies in L1 and L2 .....	223
8.10 Macro prosodies: Convergence and divergence.....	225
8.11 <i>Sort of</i> in L1 and L2: conclusion.....	229



<b>9. <i>You see</i>, it's easy for the L1-user.....</b>	<b>232</b>
9.0 Introduction.....	233
9.1 Frequency of <i>you see</i> .....	233
9.2 The importance of <i>you see</i> .....	234
9.3 <i>You see</i> : form.....	234
9.4 <i>You see</i> : meaning.....	235
9.5 <i>You see</i> : pragmatic use.....	236
9.6 <i>You see</i> : a dialogic view.....	237
9.7 <i>You see</i> : phonology.....	238
9.8 <i>You see</i> : position in the utterance.....	238
9.9 <i>You see</i> : Colligation.....	240
9.10 <i>You see</i> : Collocation.....	241
9.11 Analysis of collocates of <i>you see</i> .....	242
9.11.1 Small words.....	242
9.12 Repetition of collocates.....	244
9.12.1 Collocational compounds.....	245
9.12.2 Collocational complexes.....	246
9.12.3 Collocational cascades.....	246
9.12.4 Collocational constellations.....	249
9.13 The importance of collective clusters.....	250
9.14 Semantic, discourse and pragmatic prosody.....	252
9.14.1 <i>You see</i> : pragmatic prosody.....	254
9.15 Conclusion: <i>you see</i> and the power of small words.....	255
9.15.1 The 'difficulty' of <i>you see</i> .....	257
9.15.2 <i>You see</i> and fluency.....	258
 <b>10. <i>You see</i>, it's not easy for the L2-user.....</b>	 <b>260</b>
10.0 Introduction.....	261
10.1 Position of <i>you see</i> in SUEC.....	262
10.2 <i>You see</i> : collocations in SUEC.....	262
10.3 <i>You see</i> as a pragmatic marker in SUEC.....	263
10.4 Collocational clusters in SUEC.....	265
10.4.1 Collocational compounds with <i>you see</i> .....	265
10.4.2 Collocational complexes with <i>you see</i> .....	266
10.4.3 Collocational cascades with <i>you see</i> .....	266
10.4.4 Constellations of <i>you see</i> and <i>sort of</i> .....	266
10.4.5 Collocational clusters in SUEC: conclusion.....	267
10.5 <i>You see</i> as 'understand'.....	268
10.5.1 <i>You see</i> and the difficulty of achieving understanding.....	269
10.5.2 <i>You see</i> and the sense of divergence.....	270
10.5.3 <i>You see</i> , creativity and the self.....	272
10.6 <i>You see</i> and ellipsis.....	275
10.6.1 Ellipsis and commonality in L2-L12 discourse.....	275
10.6.2 Ellipsis and deep commonality in L2-L2 discourse.....	279
10.6.3 <i>Bla-bla-bla, etcetera</i> and deep commonality.....	283
10.6.4 Deep commonality and frequency counts.....	285
10.7 The literal use of <i>you see</i> .....	287
10.7.1 Greek and Turks: the context.....	287
10.7.2 <i>You see</i> between Greeks and Turks.....	288
10.8 <i>You see</i> : the prosody of convergence and divergence.....	293
10.9 <i>You see</i> in SUEC: Conclusion.....	294
10.9.1 The 'difficulty' of idiomaticity.....	295
10.9.2 Is L2 fluency different from L1 fluency?.....	295

10.9.3 The role of idiomaticity in an emerging ELF.....	296
<b>11. Creative Idiomaticity.....</b>	<b>298</b>
11.0 Introduction.....	299
11.1 The idiomatic puzzle.....	299
11.2 Definitions.....	301
11.3 Creativity and in-group membership.....	305
11.4.Re-enter the L2-user.....	309
11.5.The idiomatic deficit again.....	311
11.6 Sauce for the goose.....	315
11.7 Does the ‘native-speaker’ exist?.....	316
11.8 Conclusion.....	319
11.8.1 The ‘difficulty’ of idiomaticity.....	319
11.8.2 Is L2 fluency different from L1 fluency?.....	321
11.8.3 The role of idiomaticity in an emerging ELF.....	322
<b>12 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>324</b>
12.1 Introduction.....	325
12.1.1 Why do even advanced users of ELF avoid or have difficulty with idiomaticity? .....	325
12.1.2 Which kinds of idiomaticity do advanced L2-users have difficulty with?.....	327
12.1.3 Is L2 fluency different from L1 fluency? .....	329
12.1.4 What is the role of idiomaticity in an emerging ELF?.....	332
12.2 Wider implications of this research.....	336
12.2.1 Language description.....	336
12.2.2 SLA .....	337
12.2.3 Pedagogic implications.....	339
12.3 Future research.....	341
12.4 Conclusion.....	343
<b>References.....</b>	<b>346</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>380</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Opinion of SUEs by people who know them.....</b>	<b>381</b>
<b>Appendix 2.....</b>	<b>384</b>
(a) Bio-data questionnaire completed by SUEs .....	384
(b) Extended comments made by SUEs in answer to bio-data questionnaire.....	384
<b>Appendix 3: SUE TEST.....</b>	<b>393</b>
<b>Appendix 4: Sort of: Concordance (200 random) from CANCODE .....</b>	<b>401</b>
<b>Appendix 5: Sort of: Concordance (complete) from SUE corpus.....</b>	<b>405</b>
<b>Appendix 6: You see: Concordance (250 random) from BNC, spoken.....</b>	<b>407</b>
<b>Appendix 7: You see: Concordance (complete) from SUE corpus.....</b>	<b>410</b>



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*The years passed. I've learned it.  
I've made the English language my profession.  
It gave new beauty to my world.  
It changed me into a different person-  
More confident, better, stronger.  
Yet, why do I feel so estranged sometimes,  
Particularly when travelling to England?  
As if I am looking for the mysterious something  
That I shall never find?  
'Tatiana, do you follow me?' - a pleasant voice  
Of Mr English interferes with my thoughts  
'Yes, Mr English, I do follow you,  
I'll get all necessary papers ready by the next week'.  
'Fine, thanks'.  
Bye, Mr English. Merry Christmas.  
I put down the receiver. Vain search.  
I know it is there in England,  
But it shall never be mine.*

Tatiana Dobroslonskaya.

## 1.0 Introduction: the origins of this study

This study was sparked off by a plenary presentation in March 1995 given by a British corpus linguist at a TESOL Conference in Athens, Greece. It was probably the first time the largely Greek audience had heard anything about corpus linguistics. The speaker referred to the interesting insights that corpus linguistics had uncovered about ‘spoken grammar’ and how different this grammar was from traditional grammars, for example: back-channelling; the use of a limited range of simple conjunctions: *and*, *but*, *so*, *'cos*; discourse markers (expressions which help us manage the structure of conversation and the kind of meanings we are drawing on: *so*, *the thing is*, *well*, *anyway*, *right*, *mind you*, *I see*, *you see*); situational ellipsis (words ‘left out’ largely because of the informality of the context and the shared knowledge of the speakers; hedging and vague language: *sort of*, *kind of*, *like*, *just*, *you know*, *I mean* etc; repetition and the use of fixed expressions and idioms (Carter and McCarthy, 1995; 1997; McCarthy and Carter, 2001).

The conference speaker argued that the main difference between corpus-informed teaching and traditional teaching is that in the past we have relied on the relative certainty of grammatical rules, based on writing, whereas spoken corpora have uncovered lexico-grammatical patterns characterised more by probabilities rather than certainties. In ‘spoken grammar’, rules are rarely black-and-white, in contrast to the prescriptive assertions of traditional grammars. The speaker ended his talk by suggesting that the teaching of English as a foreign language should reflect more of the ‘real’ English corpora had uncovered.

After the applause, one member of the audience asked what the relevance of these insights from ‘native-speaker’ corpora was to the ‘non-native speaker’ teacher and

learner of English as an international language. This Ph.D is, in part, an attempt to answer that question.

A few months after this plenary presentation, which for me had been a kind of pedagogic epiphany, two articles appeared which argued forcefully for the importance of spoken grammar in our understanding of the nature of language (Carter and McCarthy, 1995) and in the development of appropriate materials and methods for teaching (McCarthy and Carter, 1995). My interest in the issues raised by these articles and the original conference presentation grew and took shape in a series of articles in the ELT press which came to be known as the ‘Octopus-Hydra debate’ (Prodromou, 1996a, 1996b, 1997a, 1997b; and McCarthy and Carter, 1997, Carter and McCarthy, 1997; Alexander, 1997). In my contribution to this debate, I argued that there were many reasons why spoken grammar may not always be an appropriate option in the context of teaching English as a Foreign or International Language. The main reasons and those that are most relevant to the present thesis were that:

- spoken grammar, including idiomaticity, is embedded in the here-and-now nature of the discourse and when it is transferred to the ‘there-and-then’ of the EFL classroom it loses its pragmatic relevance.

- when the ‘authentic’ English captured in the data is stripped of the cultural context that shaped it, it ceases to be ‘authentic’.

- spoken grammar is more difficult for the teacher than analytic generative grammar.

- The learner’s autonomy is circumscribed by having to learn a variety of English which is culturally alien (Widdowson, 1996).

The debate went on to include the question of what is ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ in the use of English as a native and international language (Cook, 1998 and Carter, 1998). The heart of the matter was that what is ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ is not an intrinsic quality residing in



texts (spoken or written) but is a quality of the uses to which texts are put (Widdowson, 1996, 1998). How ‘real’ a corpus-derived utterance such as *put hairs on your chest that one* was for a ‘non-native speaker’? My own response focused on pragmatic competence (House, 2002) and features in the ‘context of situation’ (Firth, 1968):

- The degree of familiarity between the speakers.
- The shared assumptions the speakers can draw on.
- The rules of turn-taking in informal spoken English.
- The link between an utterance and the time and place of the encounter.
- The link between the utterance and the objects referred to.
- The link between an utterance and the roles of the speakers.
- the phonological features of the utterance.
- the degree and kind of ellipsis which is permissible.
- the degree to which the utterance is fixed or variable.

(Prodromou, 1997a, b and c).

I came to feel that the feature that characterized spoken English in English as a Native Language (ENL) was phraseology or lexico-grammar (Sinclair, 1991, Lewis, 1993, Pawley and Syder, 1983). Thus, for me, the key issue in the debate was the nature of ‘idiomaticity’.

This thesis grew out of the conviction that a corpus-based investigation of idiomaticity in L1 and L2 use of English was necessary if we were to understand more precisely the implications of what corpora had uncovered, in sociolinguistic and cultural terms and how appropriate these discoveries were to the development of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF).

It became apparent that the debate over corpora, ‘real’ English and the ‘non-native speaker’ was also part of a wider debate over the politics of English as an International

Language (EIL; Pennycook, 1994; Jenkins, 2000) and World Englishes (Smith, 1983; Kachru, 1985; Kachru, 1992) and how they relate to ENL. In this thesis, I will use the term ‘ELF’ to refer to the use of English in an international context as a lingua franca between people with a different L1, including L1 speakers of English when they are using English with L2 users.

I felt the answer to the question asked by the teacher at that conference in Athens about the relevance of corpus insights into ENL for ELF had something to do with the nature of idiomaticity. The wish to explore this intuition empirically and theoretically was the underlying motive that led me to embark on this thesis and to collect my own corpus of L2-users of English, which provides the data for the analysis of L2 conversation in this research.

### **1.1 What is a corpus?**

A ‘corpus’ is a collection of texts, written or spoken, which has, typically, been collected from natural sources and not made up or elicited through the use of questionnaires. Manual corpora have always existed and indeed classical lexicographers like Samuel Johnson and the editors of the great Oxford English Dictionary, used real examples in arriving at the definition and illustration of their lexical items. Johnson had to accumulate and process a vast amount of material by hand – a slow and laborious process which throws light on his definition of ‘lexicographer’: ‘a harmless drudge’. Johnson would no doubt have been delighted to have access to computerized corpora, which are now so widespread in language study.

Well-known corpora of the present day include: The Bank of English, The British National Corpus, (BNC), The American National Corpus (ANC) and The Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE).



These computerized corpora have made it possible to analyze vast amounts of language very quickly. They provide detailed and accurate information about mainly two things: the most frequent words and their collocational patterns. Corpus-based analyses show that earlier approaches based on intuition were unreliable and led to misleading generalisations about written and spoken varieties (Biber et al, 1994; Carter and McCarthy, 1995). It uses quantitative evidence which can be checked by other researchers (Stubbs, 1994: 218).

In partnership with qualitative approaches to data analysis, corpora can also provide powerful insights into the socio-cultural and ideological nature of language (Stubbs, 1994, 1996, 2001; Partington, 2003; Partington, and Morley, 2004). These writers use corpus data to make ideological structures tangible and to explore the relation between the micro-structure of texts and the macro-structure of social institutions. The link between the detail of corpus data and its social implications will be of direct relevance to my own approach to ENL and ELF.

## **1.2 What have corpora uncovered and what are the implications?**

### **1.2.1 Corpora have uncovered 'Real' language**

One of the major arguments put forward in favour of corpora, spoken or written is that the language description which they produce is based on 'real' or 'authentic' English (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001; Hunston, 2002). However, the use of 'real' and 'authentic' in a pedagogic context begs a lot of questions (Breen, 1985; van Lier, 1996; Kerr, 1997; Chavez, 1998; Widdowson, 1998; Marks, 2002; Davies, 2003).

Although all dictionary writers agree that typicality is important  
they do not all agree that absolute authenticity is desirable.  
(Hunston, 2002: 107)

Cowie (1978, 1989), for example, defends the advantages of invented illustrative material in dictionaries, essentially as vehicles of clear contextualised examples which



can help the learner generalize the structure and collocations and thus produce new examples. Cook (1998, 2000, 2001) puts forward similar arguments:

Nor does the fact that something is 'attested' imply that it is typical.  
(Cook, 2001: 377).

Richness of vocabulary, idioms, cultural allusions, metaphorical turns of phrase, variety of style, matching the word to the context, etc are all features that give authentic English its vitality. Although the factors that make the decoding of an utterance 'difficult' for the 'non-native' speaker are not the exclusive preserve of authentic data, the lack of context does seem to make 'real' examples more elusive than the often self-contained made-up sentences (Cowie, 1989; Prodromou, 2001). The discourse context which would help the 'non-native' student and teacher decode authentic utterances is often missing (Hughes and McCarthy, 1998). However, without the pragmatic context, authenticity suffers more than artifice. If the linguistic features of the utterances captured by a corpus reflect the 'here-and-now' of the written or spoken context, the question is what happens to these utterances when they are transferred to the 'there and then' of an ELT classroom - in another time, in another place? Thus, while proponents of corpora in the classroom have argued that there is not enough 'reality' in language the problem that sparked off this thesis is whether corpora may be offering the learner too much reality (Widdowson, 1998, 2000). Starfield (2004) echoes these views and broadens the critique of corpus-based pedagogy by insisting on the importance of socio-cultural contextualisation of concordance sentences and the exploration of interpersonal meaning, a view shared by a number of corpus linguists (Hughes and McCarthy, 1998; McCarthy and Carter, 2001; Aston, 1995; Stubbs, 1996).

What then should the relationship of ENL and ELF be? Taking my cue from Kachru's suggestion that the question of 'native' and 'non-native' varieties of English might profitably be examined within the sociolinguistic framework presented by Firth,

Halliday and Hymes (Kachru, 1990: 17), in the next section I outline those aspects of contextual and socio-cultural approaches to language use which are most relevant to this thesis.

### **1.2.2 The importance of context**

Corpora have captured many of those features of spoken performance which Chomsky deemed unworthy of attention: slips of the tongue, false starts, hesitations, repetitions and so on. In other words, corpora of spoken English have given us access to the linguistic configurations of what Firth (1957) called ‘the context of situation’ (a concept borrowed from Malinowski, 1935). Following Firth, linguists such as Mitchell (1957) Hymes (1964, 1972) Halliday (1978) and Sinclair (1991) have explored what people actually do with language (performance).

Mitchell (1957), for example, applied the concept of context of situation to a natural setting: the routines and rituals of buying and selling in the shops and markets of Cyrenaica in Libya. Mitchell shows how the main features of the context (participants, setting, purpose, effect) shape the choice of language. At the same time, Mitchell showed how the rough and tumble of everyday conversation is not random but is patterned.

Like Mitchell, Hymes (1972) breaks down the speech event into its constituent features: setting, participants, goals, form of message, tone and channel; it is within these parameters that ‘norms of interaction and interpretation’ are established; these norms develop within the cultural belief systems of the participants, a principle which will be fundamental to the argument put forward in this thesis.

### **1.2.3 The importance of collocation**

Another key concept in Firth’s approach has also been foregrounded by corpus data, that of collocation (the words a word typically occurs with). If one had to sum up the



corpus revolution in a nutshell one might say it has made us realize just how important collocation really is in ‘native speaker’ varieties of English; it has demonstrated, contrary to classical views of language, that lexis and grammatical patterns form an integrated, indivisible system (Sinclair, 2004). In short, corpus linguists have uncovered the largely phraseological nature of English: words hunt in packs and they keep company with particular grammatical patterns (colligation). ‘Collocation’ has, since Firth, gone forth and multiplied – it has become a well-established principle of lexical description, lexicography, corpus linguistics and language pedagogy. In the next section, I focus attention on the less familiar but equally significant concept of ‘semantic prosody’.

#### **1.2.4 The importance of semantic prosody**

In 1904, Otto Jespersen argued that meaning does not reside in a word’s decontextualised dictionary definition but in the kinds of words with which it is frequently associated:

Even when the literal meaning may be said to be the same, the suggestions associated with the words vary in the different languages, suggestions arising from related words, from words that are similar in sound or similar in some other way, from frequent combinations in which words occur.

(Jespersen, 1904: 54).

The ‘frequent combinations’ in which words occur form what Jespersen calls ‘suggestions associated with the words’. Although Jespersen’s terminology differs from post-Firthian work on language in context, the concepts he was outlining later developed into ‘collocation’ and ‘semantic prosody’.

The dictionary definition of a word acts as a background or system of norms against which particular use is perceived; but the meaning of a word is also the effect of the

words with which it habitually collocates; these collocates, in turn, may form typical patterns of meaning, which Sinclair (1996, 1998, 2004) refers to as their ‘semantic preference’ (on a conceptual level) or ‘semantic prosody’ (on a pragmatic level). The terms ‘semantic preference’ or ‘semantic prosody’ are used to describe the meaning of a word in relation to the meaning of its collocates and the patterns these form (Sinclair, 2004: 34). These meanings will give the node word particular connotations, positive or negative. For example, Sinclair points out that the verb ‘happen’ and the phrasal verb ‘set in’ tend to be associated with unpleasant events. Later research has built on Sinclair’s concepts of ‘semantic preference’ and ‘semantic prosody’.

Louw (1993), for example, analyzes the tendency of *utterly* to collocate with words having negative connotations and applies his findings to an interpretation of a poem by Larkin. Hunston (2002: 141) looks at the ‘semantic prosody’ of the phrasal verb *sit through*, and discovers that it tends to collocate with items that suggest tedium; it thus has connotations of boredom.

Stubbs (1996, 2001) refers to the ‘semantic preference’, ‘discourse prosody’ and ‘pragmatic prosody’ of words. ‘Semantic preference’, as in Sinclair, refers to the cognitive meaning of the collocates of a particular word-form or lemma. Stubbs uses ‘pragmatic prosody’ for the speaker attitudes revealed by the semantic prosodies of a particular lemma or node word (Stubbs, 2001: 65). ‘Discourse prosody’ is a textual concept and for Stubbs it ‘extends over more than one unit in a linear string’.

Hoey (2005) has synthesised a lot of the thinking on semantic prosody in his theory of ‘lexical priming’. Hoey argues that every time we encounter a word we encounter its context, too: its grammar, collocations, its social and semantic context. Repeated encounters gradually contribute to our ‘knowledge’ of the word: its referential meaning, syntax, connotations and prosodies or ‘associations’, as Hoey calls them.



This repeated exposure ‘primes’ us to expect the word to behave in particular ways- and each individual use either confirms or deviates from our expectations (Hoey, 2005: 16-17).

As different writers use terms related to ‘prosody’ in different ways, in this thesis, I will use the terms in the following ways:

1. collocation: the co-occurrence of a word or phrase with another within a span of five words to the left or right of the node word.
2. semantic prosody: semantically related collocates occurring within a span of five words to the left or right of the node word.
3. discourse prosody: semantically related collocates extending over longer stretches of text and which contribute to the cohesion and coherence of the text.
4. pragmatic prosody: the way particular speech acts tend to occur around a node word or expression.

Collocational patterns and patterns of semantic and pragmatic prosodies are external realizations of contextual constraints but they also reflect the cultural norms of a particular speech community or context of communication. The starting point for this approach to ‘prosody’ has been the cultural implications of corpus work and it is to culture that we now turn.

### **1.2.5 The importance of culture**

A corpus of informal spoken English captures the ephemera of everyday performance and makes them available for analysis. It ‘freezes’ the fleeting moment of ongoing discourse and allows us to examine the linguistic means employed by the participants to establish and maintain understanding. Its unit of analysis is the utterance rather than the sentence; it is language in use rather than language as an abstract formal system

and is thus rooted in the context and culture of the speech community to which the participants belong. A traditional definition of culture is the following:

The distinctive customs, achievements, products, outlook etc of a society or group; the way of life of a society or group.

(The New Shorter OED, 1993)

Even before embarking on this thesis, I had carried out research into the question: whose culture gets taught in the ELT classroom? (Prodromou, 1992): the culture of the ‘target’ language or the learners’ culture or a third culture? A traditional response to this question is that culture in language teaching means teaching about ‘native-speaker’ culture. In 1904, Jespersen wrote:

Our ideal must be the nearest possible approach to the native’s command of language, so that the words and sentences may awaken the same ideas in us as in the native.

(Jespersen, 1904: 54).

A similar view of the privileged status of ‘native-speaker’ norms has been put forward more recently by Svartvik (1985):

(Swedish) speakers’ norm is the ‘native-speaker’ norm.

(Svartvik, 1985: 33)

This view of cultural norms, which is closely linked with concepts of linguistic relativity (language=culture: ‘you cannot teach a language without teaching its culture’), authenticity and international intelligibility, prevailed throughout the audio-lingual period and well into the era of communicative language teaching (e.g. Barrow, 1990; Valdes, 1990; Musman, 1973). The concept of culture in this tradition often meant teaching ‘the cultural background’, in other words aspects of Anglo-American culture with a capital ‘C’: customs, traditions, institutions, beliefs and so on. The cultural background approach to the ‘target culture’, it was argued, tended to push the learners’ own culture to the sidelines (Alptekin and Alptekin, 1984; Prodromou, 1988, 1992; Adaskou et al, 1990; see Byram and Feng, 2004, for a review of these issues).



Apart from attempts to foreground the learners' culture, some writers on ELT promoted a more cross-cultural view of English as a lingua franca, stressing the need to bring the learners' culture and the 'target' culture into creative contact; others extended this principle to other cultures, in the name of international understanding and rapport (Valdes, 1986; Prodromou, 1990; Robinson, 1995; De Jong, 1996; Tomalin, 1993).

A stronger reaction to the prevalence of the Anglo-American cultural background (or foreground) approach was articulated within the framework of theories of imperialism (Holly, 1990; Phillipson, 1992; Holborow, 1999) or postcolonialism (Pierce, 1989; Pennycook, 1994, 1998, 2001; Norton, 1997; Canagarajah, 1999b).

My own response to the pedagogic implications of corpus linguistics has been influenced by the debate outlined above and particularly by the suggestion that spoken corpora collected in ENL contexts will reflect the cultural patterns and world-view of the 'native-speaker' centre. To promote language models based on ENL will thus handicap the effort to teach English in culturally and educationally appropriate ways (Holliday, 1994). One response has been to argue the need for collecting L2 corpora and draw linguistic and cultural models from what is contained in such corpora (Seidlhofer, 2001a, 2001b; McCarthy and Carter, 2001).

In examining my data, I have come to feel that looking for stable ELF models, whether linguistic or cultural, with which to replace the traditional 'native' model is a red herring, which does not reflect the multi-coloured nature of ELF in a diverse, globalised international community. Identities seem to be increasingly multiple (Maalouf, 2000; Kroskrity, 2001) and communicative needs increasingly multi-lingual and intercultural (Guilherme, 2002). Individuals cross ethnic and linguistic boundaries, borrowing stylistic and cultural resources, according to context and

interactional needs (Rampton, 1995; 2001). Increased social and economic mobility and the fluid nature of identity are undermining the exclusive claim on ‘authenticity’ in language and culture of the ‘native-speaker’ and replacing it with the possibility of L2 appropriation (Kramsch, 1993; Canagarajah, 1999b; Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Singh et al, 2002; Macedo et al, 2003).

The data I have been looking at suggests the need not for a new *model* of culture but a *process* flexible enough to allow L2-users to accommodate, express and extend their multiple identities and membership of multiple discourse communities. An approach which will enable them to put their sense of identity into words but at the same time to enable them to respond with flexibility to specific and unique cultural encounters.

The definition of culture that matches the approach taken in this thesis is that put forward by Kramsch (1998):

culture can be defined as membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings...We are, then, not prisoners of the cultural meanings offered to us by our language but can enrich them in our pragmatic interactions with other language users.

(Kramsch, 1998: 10).

This definition captures the tension between constraint and creativity in cultural identity and avoids the reduction of culture to customs, artefacts and beliefs suggested in traditional definitions such as that of the OED. Kramsch’s definition allows for the shifting sense of cultural selves resulting from the dynamic nature of interaction.

The relationship between language and culture in this framework is, in Bourdieu’s sense ‘corporeal’: language is ingrained into the individual in concrete experience of social contexts till it becomes unconscious, articulated intuitively in our voice, accent, body posture, gesture and, even our way of walking (Bourdieu, 1991: 13). Socialisation into a given speech community involves making its linguistic (and other



signifying codes) seem natural: for 'native-speakers', words 'are part of the natural, physical fabric of their lives' (Kramsch, 1998: 21) accumulated since early childhood 'moulding the body till they become second nature' (Bourdieu, 1991: 13).

An example of this process of 'naturalizing' aspects of the language code is the use of what Gumperz calls 'contextualisation cues' (1992). These cues, which may be lexical items, deictic items or discourse markers, evoke the cultural background and social expectations necessary to interpret an utterance as the interaction unfolds in real time. When correctly or appropriately interpreted, contextualisation cues contribute to the construction of pragmatic coherence (Gumperz, 1992: 232-233). This pragmatic coherence does not always have the same depth. Even within the same speech community there will be varying depths of cultural commonality between speakers; individuals will have a varying command of a repertoire of registers or genres (social, professional, academic). This differential competence will make the speaker more or less responsive to 'contextualisation cues', depending on the degree of familiarity with the context, the topic or the other participants and whether a speaker perceives themselves to be, or is perceived by others to be, a cultural 'insider'.

Though there are constraints on the degree to which those who are 'outsiders' can become 'insiders' this does not exclude the creation of a synthesis of 'outsider' and 'insider' experience. Kramsch has developed an approach which is based on the concept of 'looking for a third place' in culture (Bhabha, 1994: 53), which is a kind of critical cross-cultural literacy (Kramsch, 1993; 1998). In this approach, the learner is encouraged to find a position between and within cultures which involves the development of linguistic and communicative competence enriched by the interplay of cultures..

In short, corpus insights and the phraseology they have helped to uncover are the tip of a cultural iceberg, something which becomes apparent when these insights are transferred to the teaching of ELF, with its diverse cultural patterns.

### **1.2.6 The differences between ENL and ELF**

The teacher who asked the question about the relevance of corpus linguistics to the teaching of ELF at the first conference presentation of the subject I attended back in 1995 was doing so against the background of a burgeoning debate about the ‘break-up’ of English or the emergence of ‘world Englishes’ (Kachru, 1985, 1990, 1991, 1992; Quirk, 1981, 1985, 1990; Mair, 2003). For Quirk, standard English is ‘the best candidate’ for an international language, while for Kachru, Quirk is subscribing to a ‘deficit’ view of the new Englishes (Kachru, 1991: 5-6). Thus, one area of possible controversy surrounding corpus linguistics is the degree to which its findings can or should be applied to ELF. Is the full canon of modern English as revealed in spoken corpora (grammar, vocabulary, lexico-grammar, idiomaticity, phonology) an appropriate model for ELF?

In contrast to the lexico-grammatical features of spoken English listed at the opening of this chapter, Seidlhofer (2001a and 2001b) wonders whether there shouldn’t be a grammatical common core for ELF, similar to Jenkins’ phonological core (Jenkins, 2000). Seidlhofer presents a preliminary list of grammatical items which are ‘deviant’, compared to ‘native-speaker’ models, but which she suggests are ‘usually unproblematic’, for example: simple present 3<sup>rd</sup> person –s omitted; omission of the article; treating ‘who’ and ‘which’ as interchangeable; substituting bare infinitive for –ing, and using ‘isn’t it’ ? as a universal tag.

Although the criterion of international intelligibility may be met by accepting sentences like ‘they have three children, isn’t it?’ there seems to be a fallacious comparison



between the difficulty learners have in acquiring the phonological features of ‘native-like’ speech (Jenkins, 1998, 2000) and their ability to acquire canonical grammar patterns. Few teachers can point to students who have become indistinguishable from ‘native speakers’ on the phonological level but we have numerous anecdotal and research-based examples of learners who have reached a high level of proficiency both in grammar and vocabulary (e.g. Coppieters, 1987; Birdsong, 1992; Ioup et al, 1994; White and Genesee, 1996; Valdes, 1998; Braine et al, 1999; Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000). If there is one strength ‘non-native’ teachers are acknowledged to possess, often in greater abundance than their ‘native-speaker’ counterparts, it is command and knowledge of the grammatical system of English as it is codified in the traditional grammar books.

The speech community of ELF, if there is such a thing, is, by definition, diverse and heterogeneous: ELF is not ‘a stable community of language users but rather one which is in constant flux’ (Meierkord, 2005: 93): where is the linguistic common ground to come from? ELF needs to set its nets wide, to capture the maximum range of intercultural encounters involved in the use of English worldwide. Cellphones, email, websites, chatrooms and global mobility mean diversity is ever-present and inescapable. One strand in that diversity will be speakers of ENL as participants in ELF encounters (Meierkord, 2005: 93). This complicates questions of ‘ownership’:

(native speakers) have no say in the matter...they are irrelevant.

The very fact that English is an international language means that no nation can have custody over it.

(Widdowson, 1994: 385).

While one agrees that ‘native speakers’ have no right to dictate rules to ‘non-native speakers’ of English, what is odd about Widdowson’s argument here is that it implies that ‘native speakers’ are not a part of the rich tapestry that is English as an international lingua franca – clearly, they are, both as users of ELF - and therefore

potential interlocutors of ‘non-native speakers’ - and as speakers of the most codified and widely accepted variety of English we have, especially its written forms. ‘native-speakers’ from the BANA countries (Holliday, 1994: Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Canada and the United States – plus Ireland, South Africa et al) are also players in the game of ELF – in terms of numbers, they may be a minority but they are a significant minority (Crystal, 1997; Lesznyák, 2002). ELF users will be meeting and interacting with ‘native speakers’ as well as ‘non-native speakers’. Thus, ELF is informed and shaped by ‘non-native’ varieties but is not defined exclusively by them.

Two areas in which the new Englishes and ENL, however, diverge quite palpably is phonology and idiomaticity. Jenkins has developed a Lingua Franca Common Core for phonology (Jenkins, 2000, 2005) but little attention has been paid to the role of idiomaticity in ELF. Seidlhofer (2001a) identifies idiomaticity as one of the areas in which English as a ‘native’ language and English as a Lingua Franca part ways:

(ENL) is full of conventions and markers of in-group membership such as characteristic pronunciations, specialized vocabulary and idiomatic phraseology.

(Seidlhofer, 2001a: 136).

Seidlhofer coins the term ‘unilateral idiomaticity’ for those situations in ELF when one of the interlocutors uses an idiomatic expression which the other participant does not understand (Seidlhofer, 2001a; see also Seidlhofer and Jenkins, 2003:149). Close (1981) gives an example of this long before Seidlhofer gave the phenomenon a name:

a...failure to communicate can occur when native-English speakers let slip colloquialisms or neologisms which their audience may not have met before. I noticed the look of mystification on the faces of Russian experts on English when a well-known British linguist lecturing to them kept using the phrasal verb ‘home in on’ – an expression no doubt fashionable at the time in his own university common room.

(Close, 1981: 7)



It is noteworthy that in this case of ‘idiomatic failure’ the recipients were ‘experts on English’. Finally, Jenkins (2000) considers the knowledge of ‘idiomatic usage, slang, phrasal verbs, puns, proverbs, cultural allusions and the like’, as ‘irrelevant’ if ELF is to succeed as a worldwide lingua franca (Jenkins, 2000: 220).

The difficulty that even very advanced learners and users of English have with idiomaticity is the main puzzle this thesis attempts to address.

### **1.3 The research questions of this study**

At a general level, this research attempts to examine a corpus of ‘non-native’ speaker conversation in order to throw light on the puzzle of idiomaticity in ELF. In order to do this, I will examine the role of idiomaticity in ENL and compare it to its role in ELF. The motives behind some of the questions I was asking of corpus linguistics arose from my experience as a teacher of English as a foreign language, as a textbook writer and as a trainer of ‘non-native teachers’ of English. My corpus will reflect pedagogic concerns and the exploration of idiomaticity, though largely descriptive, will have in mind the possible implications for teaching and using ELF. Much has been said about ELF and its implications for teaching but little empirical analysis has actually been conducted of naturally occurring samples of ELF. I hope this research will be innovative both in terms of the data-base I draw on and the theoretical and methodological framework in which the investigation is conducted. I bring together both corpus analytical techniques and techniques of discourse analysis within a broad socio-cultural framework. I use quantitative techniques and concordance data as the starting point for semantic, pragmatic and socio-cultural analysis.

The core research questions are as follows:

Main research question

Why do even advanced users of English as a Lingua Franca avoid or have difficulty with idiomaticity?

Sub-questions

1 Which kinds of idiomaticity do advanced L2-users have difficulty with?

2 Is L2 fluency different from L1 fluency?

3 What is the role of idiomaticity in an emerging ELF?

### **Overview of the chapters**

Chapter 1. In this chapter, we have described the origins of this study in the emergence of corpus linguistics and its implications for language description and English as an international lingua franca.

Chapter 2. This chapter reviews the literature relating to idiomaticity and its importance for concepts of fluency in L1 and L2 use of English. I define the concept of idiomaticity to include ‘minimal idiomatic units’ and ‘extended idiomatic units’. I establish a socio-cultural framework for re-examining the concept of ‘idiomatic fluency’.

Chapter 3. This chapter examines mainstream and ELF-oriented approaches to spoken language.

Chapter 4. I develop a dialogic framework for the analysis of the conversational data which forms the basis of this thesis.

Chapter 5. In this chapter, the methodology for creating a corpus of Successful Users of English and a methodology for analysing the data are outlined.

Chapter 6. In this chapter, I present the frequency results of a concordance analysis of two-word clusters in L1 and L2 spoken corpora: the predominance of pragmatic markers is identified.



Chapter 7. The occurrence of the pragmatic marker *sort of* in L1 corpora is examined in terms of collocation, colligation and semantic prosody.

Chapter 8. The occurrence of the pragmatic phrase *sort of* in the SUE corpus is examined in terms of collocation, colligation and semantic prosody. The similarities and differences in the behaviour of *sort of* in the two corpora are identified.

Chapter 9. The analytical model used in Chapters 6-8 is re-applied to another ‘minimal idiomatic unit’, *you see*, in L1 corpus data.

Chapter 10. The occurrences of *you see* in its literal, metaphorical and pragmatic sense are examined in the SUE corpus.

Chapter 11. This chapter applies the theoretical framework of the previous chapters to more extended idiomatic units, including ‘creative idiomaticity’, in order to identify commonalities and contrasts in L1 and L2.

Chapter 12. I re-examine the research questions in the light of the preceding chapters and look at the implications for language description, SLA and language pedagogy.

## Chapter 2

### The idiomatic puzzle

*Lexical chunks: a gap poem*

*What I'd like to demonstrate today.*

*Here and 1 \_\_\_\_\_, all things being 2 \_\_\_\_\_,*

*And time waiting for no 3 \_\_\_\_\_,*

*Is to explain, and, at this point in 4 \_\_\_\_\_,*

*Without further 5 \_\_\_\_\_, it might be appropriate*

*To reflect on the matter in 6 \_\_\_\_\_,*

*In other words, so to 7 \_\_\_\_\_, what*

*I mean by this, without*

*Jumping on any specific 8 \_\_\_\_\_,*

*And please feel 9 \_\_\_\_\_ to*

*Contradict me, as I've often said,*

*And I think this is particularly*

*Relevant, indeed I could*

*Go on about it at some 10 \_\_\_\_\_,*

*At the end of the 11 \_\_\_\_\_, despite*

*All appearances to the 12 \_\_\_\_\_*

*Life is not always a bowl of 13 \_\_\_\_\_.*

Antoinette Pulverness Moses.



## 2. Idiomaticity: a review

### 2.0 Introduction: The idiomatic puzzle

My experience of English from childhood has left a trail of broken idioms leading to an idiomatic puzzle: why do certain aspects of phraseology seem to be the Achilles' heel even of highly successful L2-users of English?

-As I was acquiring English from the age of 3 as the child of immigrants to the UK, I heard countless idiomatic expressions: many became part of my active linguistic repertoire, some I understand but would never use, and some are still a mystery to me.

-As a teacher, I have seen at first hand the invisible idiomatic barrier that seems to erect itself before even the most advanced students.

-Outside the classroom, I noticed the slips that even competent users made tended to be in the area of collocation.

-I remember my highly advanced post-Proficiency student who asked me to focus on 'idioms' and I remember the moment of revelation when she produced 'Luke, your bottom is up' from my carefully explained model of 'bottom's up!'.

-I recall countless movie subtitles in Greek where the only errors in an otherwise perfect translation of the English screenplay were in the area of everyday idiomatic expressions.

-I have read Ph.D theses by expert L2-users where in 100,000 words of 'native-like' English the only difference from the 'native' variety of English was the use of non-canonical collocations.

-I was intrigued by the curious review of the novel *When We Were Orphans*, which claimed to detect a problem of idiomaticity in the writer's style:

'Ishiguro's avoidance of phrasal verbs is a major problem...' (Hensher, 2000).

The author of the novel, Kazuo Ishiguro, a Booker Prize winner, was, like myself, the child of immigrant parents and had settled in the UK at the age of five.

-I recalled the way the ‘non-native speaker’ is often presented in literature for humorous effect as someone who gets English idioms wrong:

“‘Top of the delightful morning, esteemed sahib,’ murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh’ (Richards, 1948: 194).

“‘Aha!’ said Poirot. ‘Aha! Mon Dieu! Japp that gives one to think, does it not?’ I saw that it has certainly not given Japp to think.’ (Christie, 1974: 7).

-After living abroad for thirty years, I still feel, even today, that the aspect of my own English which has suffered attrition most is how idiomatic chunks are used (on the symptoms of attrition of long-term residence in another country, see Porte, 1999, 2003).

-In an article I submitted to *Applied Linguistics* the only linguistic error identified by the reviewers was idiomatic.

-When I came to learn Spanish, I found that even at an advanced level my nightmare was not the grammar (apart from the subjunctive) but the Spanish idioms my teacher was so keen to teach us; and as for Greek, after 30 years of immersion, Greek idioms and collocations are still Greek to me.

My reading in applied linguistics has confirmed the contradictory status of idiomaticity in language learning: on the one hand, idiomaticity is identified as the key to ‘native-like fluency’ (Pawley and Syder, 1983; Yorio, 1989) and, on the other, we are told, it is the ‘last and most challenging hurdle in attaining near-native like fluency’ (Spöttl and McCarthy, 2004: 191) and ‘may floor even the proficient non-native’ (Wray, 2000: 463; see also Alexander, 1983 and Howarth, 1998: 30, for similar views). Sinclair’s suggestion that idiomaticity would allow learners, like ‘native-speakers’, to produce English more confidently and ‘with less effort’ (Sinclair, 1987: 159) did not always



seem to be borne out by experience and the available research data. Biskup (1992), for example, claims that ‘only the experience of a ‘native-speaker’ of a language allows him or her to produce collocations characteristic of that language’ (Biskup, 1992: 87).

It seemed clear to me that idiomaticity was an important area of language learning, given its unassailable position in ‘native-like fluency’, but I wasn’t sure in what way it was important for the ‘non-native speaker’. It was these conflicting signals about idiomaticity that I was curious to explore in embarking on this thesis.

## **2.1 The importance of idiomaticity**

As long ago as 1904, Jespersen described phraseology as an ‘indispensable’ dimension of language competence:

The most indispensable expressions often are those irrational groups which cannot be constructed merely of words and grammatical rules, expressions like ‘What’s the matter?’ ‘I couldn’t help laughing’ ‘Serve you right’.

(Jespersen, 1904: 16-17)

But the Chomskyan revolution in the 50s and 60s banished idiomaticity to the fringes of linguistics and gave pride of place to syntactic structure (Chomsky, 1965). Time, nevertheless, has vindicated Jespersen’s prioritising of formulaic language. In recent years, the area of phraseology has evolved from its peripheral status in Chomskyan linguistics to having a fundamental role in language description and acquisition. Idiomaticity is now seen as: ‘pervasive’ (Bolinger, 1961: 366; 1976: 3; Sinclair, 1991: 111; Skehan, 1998: 30); ‘far from marginal’ (Weinert, 1995: 184); ‘central’ (McCarthy, 1998, 122; Stubbs, 2001: 73) and ‘ubiquitous’ (Gibbs, 1995: 87; Carter, 2004: 3). Nattinger and DeCarrico go so far as to describe ‘lexical phrases’ as ‘the very centre of language acquisition’ (Nattinger and DeCarrico, 1992: xv); finally, for Hopper, formulaic language is so integral a feature of language that it is ‘difficult or

impossible to draw a line between a formulaic and a non-formulaic expression' (Hopper, 1998: 168). In short, the experts agree that idiomaticity is important.

The importance of phraseology in language use has been highlighted by recent work in corpus linguistics; indeed, one of the major insights of the corpus analysis of English has been the profoundly phraseological nature of much of what we say and write:

This (i.e. phraseology) is the foundation of fluency, naturalness, idiomaticity, appropriateness etc.

(Sinclair, 1991: 496)

Erman and Warren (2000), in their empirical study of the idiom principle, found that as much as 50% of the language may be explicable in idiomatic terms.

Ironically, it is often those same linguists who insist on the *sine qua non* of phraseology in the achievement of fluency that have also identified the mysterious elusiveness of idiomaticity for the 'non-native speaker'. The territory of idiomaticity is described through metaphors such as 'capricious', 'tyrannical' (Jespersen, 1894: 22) 'a jungle' (Bolinger, 1976: 9; Sinclair, 1985: 254); 'a nuisance' (Coulmas, 1981b: 149); 'Janus-faced', 'Protean' (Fernando and Flavell, 1981: 3); 'skating on thin ice' (Gibbs, 1986: 17); 'elusive' (Yorio, 1989: 66); 'pitfalls' (Alexander, 1989: 17); 'dangers and traps' (Jaworski, 1990: 400); 'dangerous minefield' (McCarthy and Carter, 1994: 109); 'treacherous' (Altenberg and Granger, 2001: 174); 'stumbling block' (Wray, 2002: ix) 'slippery' (Wray, 2002: 143) 'a scourge' (Sinclair, 2004: 26) and 'anarchic' (Sinclair, 2004: 27).

The conceptualisation of idiomaticity as a difficult, even dangerous, area reflects the widespread view of this central feature of English as a particular challenge in L2 acquisition; the metaphors we use to describe idiomaticity in the learning context reflect the frequently observed phenomenon of learners and L2-users attempting to



deploy idiomaticity in spoken language and ending up sounding dysfluent and unnatural:

colorful idioms, even when correctly produced, often sound strange and unnatural when spoken by ‘non-native speakers’ of English.

(Irujo, 1986b: 299).

Irujo is here referring to the traditional ‘big words’ of idiomaticity, for example, *kick the bucket*, *spill the beans* (Ellis, 1996: 111) but the strangeness of idiomaticity in ‘non-native speech’ applies to the more frequent collocations and formulaic phrases:

When even very good learners of the language speak or write English, the effect is slightly odd. There is nothing that is obviously wrong, but somehow native-speakers know that they would not express themselves in quite that way. The problem is often one of collocation.

(Fox, 1998: 33; see also: Alexander, 1999: 28 on the ‘not-quite-sounding-right-feeling’ of ‘non-native’ collocations).

Idiomaticity, then, ‘sounds’ different and comes with great effort in ‘non-native’ speech and it is where even highly competent users of English as an L2 ‘are bound to make mistakes, even if (they have) mastered the grammar’ (Coulmas, 1981b: 150). Why should this be so? Sinclair describes the relationship of idiomaticity to word meaning as ‘mysterious’ (Sinclair, 2004: 27) and, likewise, Wray (2002: ix) describes this apparent conflict in the behaviour of idiomaticity in ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ speech as a ‘mystery’. This mystery is the starting point for my own exploration of the ‘puzzle’ of idiomaticity in ‘non-native-like’ fluency.

## **2.2 The idiomatic deficit**

*That is an ill phrase, a vile phrase; beautified is a vile phrase.*

*Hamlet*, Act II, sc.ii.

The mysterious difficulty learners have with idiomaticity was identified early on by Jespersen (1904):

Sentences constructed by non-natives are apt to be of the kind that would never occur to a native, even if it may be difficult enough to find positive mistakes in them.

(Jespersen, 1904: 18)

Eighty years later, Alexander (1985: 613) refers to ‘phraseological deficits’ in advanced learners but offers no research evidence for the existence of such ‘deficits’. For Sinclair (1992: 496) the mastery of phraseology ‘looks to be formidable in the extreme, and the competent foreign speaker seems to be a person of immense talent and dedication’ (Sinclair, 1992: 496).

In the next section, then, I review research which has provided empirical evidence for an ‘idiomatic deficit’ in L2 learners.

### **2.2.1 Research evidence**

Early studies of the use of multi-word units by advanced learners include Marton (1977) who considered idioms the most significant obstacle to comprehension that learners face and collocation one of the most frequent sources of errors of production. Scarcella (1979) found advanced ESL learners’ ability to produce simple formulae in a written elicitation test ‘disappointingly low’ (Scarcella, 1979: 81); Bensoussan and Laufer (1984) came to similar conclusions regarding the problems idioms present in reading comprehension.

On the production side, it has been argued that differences between L1 and L2 can cause avoidance strategies (Kleinmann, 1977). Dagut and Laufer (1985) for example, found that learners avoided phrasal verbs because of contrasts between L1 and L2 and tended to select one-word equivalents instead.

Other researchers have argued, on the contrary, that similarity between L1 and L2 idioms, may, paradoxically, be perceived as ‘tricky’ by L2-users and also lead to



avoidance (Kellerman, 1986; Hulstijn and Marchena, 1989). Laufer (2000), however, found that ‘avoidance of idioms was not a uniform phenomenon’ and that there were some kind of idioms that were produced with little difficulty, at least in controlled test-conditions:

Some types of idioms were avoided, some not.

(Laufer, 2000: 193).

Bahns et al (1986) set out to identify the uses of idiomaticity in learner speech but failed to find any instances of ‘commonplaces, proverbs and idioms’ in their data and, as a result, focussed their discussion on the notion of routine formulae and their function in discourse and the development of pragmatic competence (Bahns et al, 1986 : 696). What Bahns et al do find evidence for in the early acquisition of routine formulae are items such as *stop it, wait a minute, sit down*. In a later paper, Bahns and Eldaw (1993) found that collocations were a persistent problem even with advanced students and accounted for a larger proportion of errors than single lexical items (Bahns and Eldaw, 1993: 101). Biskup’s (1992) research into ‘lexical collocations’ (e.g. *reach a verdict, lift a blockade*) confirms their difficulty for learners, but only in production, not recognition (Biskup, 1992: 86).

Granger (1998b) found an ‘underuse’ of collocations in advanced learners’ writing and concludes that ‘learners use far fewer prefabs than ‘native-speaker’ counterparts’ (Granger, 1998b: 151). Like Granger, Arnaud and Savignon (1997), investigated advanced French learners’ knowledge of formulae, focusing, however, on rare words and idiomatic expressions (‘complex lexical units’ as they call them, such as *a red herring* and *kick the bucket*) and concluded by questioning the degree to which advanced EFL learners could acquire idiomaticity:

Can non-natives reach native-like proficiency with respect to rare words and complex lexical units? The answer would seem to be yes in the first case and no in the second.

(Arnaud and Savignon, 1997: 167).

Howarth (1998) carried out research into the use of ‘restricted lexical collocations’ (such as *pay attention to*, *make a decision*) in the writing of advanced students as a measure of proficiency and discovered that advanced students of English, when compared to ‘native’ writers, ‘produced a much lower density of conventional combinations’ (Howarth, 1998: 36). This is a more optimistic conclusion than that of Bahns et al or Arnaud and Savignon but the overall pattern of research findings does, however, raise questions about phraseology in general. Altenberg and Granger (2001) looked at the difficulties posed by high frequency verbs like *make*, including their collocational and idiomatic patterning, and concluded that even advanced learners find such language ‘treacherous’ (Altenberg and Granger, 2001: 174). Yorio (1989) investigated idiomaticity as an indicator of second language proficiency and discovered that ‘studies do not appear to find extensive use of pre-fabricated language in untutored adult learners’ (Yorio, 1989: 57); Dechert and Lennon’s (1989) investigation of advanced learners’ use of collocational blends led them to wonder:

why, in spite of their many years of learning, plus, in some cases, months of exposure to native speakers in England, had their apprehension of collocational affinities between lexical items not reached a state of proceduralized automaticity?

(Dechert and Lennon, 1989: 165).

Many experiments have been carried out to demonstrate the degree to which exposure to idiomatic language would make a difference to acquisition of this fundamental area of ‘native-speaker’ competence. De Cock et al (1998), though they report the frequent or even ‘over-use’ of ‘recurrent combinations’, it turns out that the figures for these ‘combinations’ result from the inclusion of random grammatical fragments, which De Cock et al later filter out of their frequency lists, in order to focus on pragmatically meaningful formulae (De Cock et al: 1998: 75). De Cock’s ‘non-native speaker’ corpus



was based on interviews with advanced learners of English and she draws an explicit link between the use of ‘formulae’ and the achievement of fluency:

the possible underuse of formulae by learners...may be a sign of  
higher dysfluency in learner speech  
(De Cock et al, 1998: 75)

In other papers on the same topic (De Cock, 1998, De Cock, 2000), De Cock found that learners of English used a smaller range of lexical phrases such as *you know*, *sort of* and *I mean* and, in particular, used far fewer expressions of vagueness (*sort of thing*, *like that*, and *everything*).

Granger (1998b) also discovers ‘non-native speakers’ ‘over-using’ certain formulaic expressions of the type she refers to as ‘sentence builders’: *I maintain/claim that...we can see that...* where ‘native-speakers’ tend to choose the passive form: *it is claimed that...* (Granger, 1998b: 154).

### **2.2.2 The pedagogic deficit**

The answer most of these writers give to the ‘idiomatic deficit’ is to posit the existence of a ‘pedagogic deficit’, i.e. lack of exposure to idiomaticity on the part of the learner in the classroom, especially in interactive contexts or ‘noticing’ activities (Rudzka et al, 1981; Irujo, 1986a; Sinclair, 1991; Bahns and Eldaw, 1993; Carter and McCarthy, 1995a; House, 1996; Lennon, 1996; Lewis, 2000; Willis, 2003).

Arnaud and Savignon (1997), ascribe the difficulty . Leaving aside for the moment what these ‘other factors’ blocking the road to idiomaticity might be, we must recognize that the kind of idiomatic work done in many classrooms is of the most limited kind, whereby idioms and phraseology in general are relegated to a ‘twilight zone’ at the end of the week or tacked on to a course as a colourful respite from the main business of teaching grammar and long lists of single-word items (McCarthy and Carter, 1994: 109), which, understandably, do not lead to fluency in the learner. Schmitt et al (2004b)

observed how, after a period of instruction and ‘enhanced’ exposure to the target language, L2 users studying at a British University, improved their ‘mastery’ of formulaic sequences. Similarly, Wood (2004) found that adult beginners in Canada improved their command of ‘automatized lexical phrases’ and their fluency, as measured by temporal variables, after a period of exposure to English in natural contexts. of acquiring idiomatic competence to lack of appropriate exposure and ‘other factors’ I will take up the issue of formulaicity and fluency later in this chapter.

## **2.3 Approaches to Idiomaticity.**

### **2.3.1 Terminology**

In this thesis, I will use ‘phraseology’, ‘phraseological’, ‘idiomaticity’ and ‘idiomatic’ as super-ordinate terms for the kinds of phenomena illustrated in Table 2.1. We will need a count-noun to discuss different types of chunk and for this purpose I will use ‘multi-word units’ (MWUs). Other terms in the literature on phraseology are, for example, ‘formulaic language’ (Wray, 2002), ‘multi-word expressions’ (Schmitt, 2000a), ‘fixed expressions and idioms’ (FEIs) (Moon, 1998a), ‘conventionalised language’ (Yorio, 1989) and ‘routine formulae’ (Coulmas, 1979). There is a great deal of overlap in what each writer includes in the category of ‘phraseological’ but there are also differences; in this thesis, I will be taking a very broad approach to phraseological phenomena in order to include the widest possible range of ‘MWUs’ (Table 2.1).

### **2.3.2 Which idiomaticity?**

For the purposes of this thesis, I will adopt and adapt Alexander (1978; 1983, 1984), Cowie et al (1983), Gramley and Pätzold (1992), Carter (1998) and McCarthy’s (1998) classifications of different kinds of multi-word units. In Table 2.1, I have given an indication of the range of patterns which illustrate the umbrella concept of phraseology or idiomaticity. This classification arranges the diverse forms of phraseology in terms



of a broad distinction between ‘formulaic language’ and ‘idiomatic language’ and those types, whether formal or semantic, that do, or do not, lend themselves to creative innovation.

Type A	Formulae	Examples
1	Clusters and bundles	A lot of; a bit of a; I don't know if; If you look at
2	Pragmatic formulae, connectives	You know; I mean; sort of; you see
3	Discourse markers/connectors	First of all, what's more, on the one hand
4	Conversational gambits	Pleased to meet you; How do you do; how's it going
5	Prepositional phrases	At the end; in the long term; in sight; at home
6	Transparent Binomials	Bed and breakfast; knife and fork, salt and pepper
7	Transparent trinomials	Tall, dark and handsome
8	Lexical sentence stems	It is interesting/likely/true that...
9	Compounds	Dry cleaner; phonecard; card phone
10	One-offs	Arms akimbo; by dint of; kith and kin
11	Grammatical frameworks	e.g. NP X of NP Y: A distribution of labour
12	Repeats	Again and again; try, try and try again
13	Colligation	Set about + ing
Type B	Collocations	
1	Restricted Collocations	jog+ sn's memory
2	Open collocations	River+rise; make+application
Type C	Phrasal verbs	
1	Verb + particle	Pop music turns them on
2	Verb + preposition	The machine turns on a pivot
3	Complex phrasal verbs	Lose track of; turn one's back on
Type D	Cultural Idioms	
1	Colourful Binomials	Spick and span; footloose and fancy free
2	Colourful Trinomials	Hook, line and sinker; lock, stock and barrel
3	Tournures	Kick the bucket; pull your socks up
4	Metaphors, figurative	Sail close to the wind
5	Similes	As cool as a cucumber
6	Proverbs and sayings	Kill two birds with one stone
7	Quotations	To be or not to be; the best laid schemes
8	Cultural allusions	Marks and Sparks; Basil Fawlty
9	Catchphrases, slogans	Drinka Pinta Milka Day; Arsenal rules OK
10	Slang phrases	Ghetto blaster; a whiz-kid; trouble and strife
11	Taboo expressions	Get pissed, fuck off
12	Mottoes	Aim high; he who dares, wins
13	Understatement	That was a showstopper, wasn't it; a bit of a twit
14	Hyperbole	There's millions of them
15	Lexicalised clauses	A don't-call-us-we'll call-you-situation
16	Nursery rhymes	Little Jack Horner; Mary had a little lamb
17	Limericks	There was a young lady named Bright...
18	Pop-song lyrics	She loves you, yeah, yea, yeah
19	Dyadic Discourse routines	See you later alligator; not if I see you first
20	Creative idiomaticity, puns	Last tangle in Westminster. It's raining kittens'n'puppies

**Table 2.1: Varieties of idiomaticity**



The range of phraseology in the chart, which represents a cline rather than compartmentalized categories, begins at one end of the spectrum with the most formulaic and most transparent types (bundles) i.e. the smallest units of idiomaticity, two-word pragmatic markers, such as *you know*, *you see*, *sort of* and *I mean*, and ends with the traditional clause-length ‘idiom’ of the *kick the bucket* variety and even more extended units (nursery rhymes, pop-song lyrics). Two-word pragmatic markers, such as *you know* and *I mean* are examples of ‘clusters’ and have a very high frequency of occurrence; as a result, they have become ‘standardized to the degree of idiomaticity’ (Coulmas, 1979: 239). Fromkin (1973: 42) refers to phrases like these as ‘automatic utterances’ which are stored ‘as whole units, like idioms’. Similarly, Gramley and Pätzold (1992) describe items such as *you know* and *I see* as ‘non-situational pragmatic idioms’ (Gramley and Pätzold, 1992: 54; see also Van Lancker, 1987: 56, who includes ‘pause fillers’ in her continuum of ‘nonpropositional speech’ and Powell, 1992:28, who includes *sort of* in her category of ‘idioms’).

Schoroup points out that the more an item is used routinely ‘the more it is apt to lose contact with its literal meaning’ (Schourup, 1985: 13), which is the case with *you know*, *you see* and *sort of*. Alexander (1985: 616) refers to items such as these as ‘discourse structuring gambits’ and Altenberg (1991) describes them as ‘recurrent strings’ and identifies them as among the most frequent combinations in the London-Lund corpus. Moon includes two-word pragmatic formulae such as *sort of* and *you know* in her ‘fixed expressions and idioms’ in the subcategory of ‘fillers and particles’ (Moon, 1998: 94). Finally, McCarthy and Carter approach these pragmatic clusters as ‘units’ which support Sinclair’s notion of the idiom principle at work, with the clusters best viewed as ‘evidence of single linguistic choices’ (McCarthy and Carter, 2002: 50).



At the other end of the spectrum, I have placed ‘colourful’ idioms and catchphrases, which are rare and highly opaque in terms of their semantic structure; they are also deeply embedded in the socio-cultural norms of a particular speech community (Alexander, 1983).

It is true to say, as many idiomatologists have pointed out, that all manifestations of phraseology are, in various degrees, culturally shaped or loaded (Alexander, 1985), including ‘community formulas’ such as many of the items in my groups A-C; it is useful, nevertheless, to adopt Makkai’s (1972) classification of Type D expressions as specifically ‘cultural idioms’, which are not only less frequent and ‘culture and education-specific’ (Makkai, 1972: 134) but lend themselves to creative wordplay and modification.

Moon (1998a, 1998b) points out the frequency of formulae (my Types A-C) and the rarity of colourful idioms and proverbs (my Type D; Moon, 1998a: 66-67; 1998b: 81-82). My division into Types A-C on the one hand and Type D on the other, attempts to capture the following crucial distinction between the two broad types (Table 2.2): .

	<b>Types A-C</b>	<b>Type D</b>
	<b>Formulaic</b>	<b>Idiomatic</b>
1	Frequent	Infrequent
2	Less opaque	Opaque
3	Compositional	Noncompositional
4	Functional	Pragmatic-Cultural
5	Fixed	Creative

**Table 2.2: differences between phraseological units**

It is important to show, on the one hand, that all manifestations of phraseology have something in common, while noting significant differences between formulaic language and idiomatic language. A common feature of all the varieties of idiomaticity illustrated in the chart above is captured in the following definition from the Oxford English Dictionary:

A peculiarity of phraseology approved by usage and often having a signification other than its grammatical or logical one.

From a formal-semantic perspective, ‘the essence of idiomaticity is an asymmetry between syntax and sense’ (Fernando and Flavell, 1981: 37). This approach to the description of idiomaticity is the one taken by Makkai (1972):

A linguistic form whose meaning is unclear in spite of the familiar elements it contains.

(Makkai, 1972: 44).

This definition and, on a processing level, Wray’s psycholinguistic definition of ‘formulaic language’ can be seen to include all four types of phraseology in the chart:

A sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other meaning elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated; that is stored and retrieved whole from the memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar.

(Wray, 2000: 465).

Wray here seems to be referring to phraseology in general, including high frequency formulae of Types A-C as well as the low frequency ‘colorful’ idiom of Type D. The contents of Wray’s 2002 book on ‘formulaic language’ confirm that this is indeed the case. For the purposes of this thesis, all types of phraseology, although characterized by differences in terms of frequency or degrees of syntactic flexibility, collocational fixedness, semantic opacity or pragmatic usefulness, share an irreducible quality of ‘idiomaticity’. Thus, an expression like *sort of* or *you see* is a holistic phrase where the individual words that make up the chunk cannot be analyzed in propositional terms and they cannot be transformed (*sorts of\* you have seen\**); their ‘meaning’, will only be recoverable from the pragmatic contexts in which they occur. These qualities, which can be summed up as a mismatch between form and meaning, syntax and use, are identifiable, of course, in the more traditional ‘idiom’ at one end of the phraseological spectrum. Even in the case of the four-word ‘bundles’ analyzed by Biber et al (2004)



many of which are not usually considered 'idiomatic in meaning' (Biber et al, 2004: 376) there are some which have a hard core of idiomaticity. For example, the bundles quoted in Biber et al (2004) *to come up with*, *and stuff like that* and *I mean you know* are routine formulae and the lexical items that constitute them cannot be interpreted as discrete items from their dictionary meanings, but must be recovered as a unit in context. These formulae are more 'idiomatic' than, for example, the completely transparent bundles *I don't know why* or *it is important to*. Schmitt et al (2004a) explore the extent to which 'recurrent clusters' are actually stored in the mind as wholes and warn against assuming that because clusters recur frequently in a corpus that they are necessarily stored as holistic sequences in the mind. This possible ambivalence in the behaviour of formulae has a direct bearing on the issues taken up in this thesis.

One must also bear in mind the importance of the differences between the two extremes of the idiomaticity cline. The relative transparency of 'formulaic sequences' compared to the relative opacity of 'cultural idioms' may make them easier to acquire than the more obscure varieties (Schmitt and Carter, 2004: 6). In psycholinguistic terms, it is usually assumed that all of these idiomatic items are recovered whole in real-time speech production (but see Schmitt et al, 2004a) and that they serve specific discourse or pragmatic functions.

This approach to 'idiomaticity' is consistent with Sinclair's 'idiom principle', which is that 'a language user has available to him or her a large number of semi-pre-constructed phrases that constitute single choices even though they might appear to be analyzable into segments' (Sinclair, 1991: 110). In Sinclair's scheme, the 'idiom principle' contrasts with the 'open choice' principle, which is equivalent to Wray's 'language grammar'. It is important in terms of this thesis to note that Sinclair includes both formulaic sequences and 'colorful idioms' in his concept of the 'idiom principle'. At its

simplest, the idiom principle includes two word phrases like *of course* and extends to idioms and proverbs (Sinclair, 1991: 110-111).

No distinction, however, is made between these two broad categories. Sinclair in fact stresses that the 'idiom principle' is much more than formulaic language and colorful idioms. The idiom principle describes the attraction between lexis and grammar and the way the interaction of the two levels creates predictable patterns of association. Thus, the 'pervasive' phenomenon of idiomaticity would, for Sinclair, include not only everything in my chart but the principle of 'the extended unit of meaning' which is a word or phrase and its associated collocations, colligations, 'semantic preferences' and 'semantic prosodies' (Sinclair, 1991: 112).

While Schmitt and Carter (2004) adopt Wray's definition of formulaic language, Read and Nation (2004), writing in the same volume as Carter and Schmitt, take issue with the definition in its apparent underestimation of the variability which characterizes so many 'fixed' phrases; Read and Nation suggest that 'the norm seems to be that there is considerable variation' in the form taken by idioms. The observations made by Read and Nation refer to 'non-compositional' opaque idioms, rather than collocations and formulaic sequences (Read and Nation, 2004: 25).

Moon (1998a) points out that 'variation is much commoner than some models suggest' (Moon, 1998a: 7): the task that faces the L2-user as well as the researcher is captured in Moon's observation that 'many fixed expressions and idioms are not predictable, not common, not fixed formally and not fixed temporally' (Moon, 1998a: 51; see also Moon, 1994: 117). Moon concludes: 'This has serious implications for teaching' (Moon, 1998b: 92).

In 'native speaker' terms and in terms of second language learning, being 'primed' in all kinds of idiomaticity is part of what it means to be a competent user of the language



(Hoey, 2005: 184); all kinds of idiomaticity, whether frequent formulae or less frequent colorful idioms, are easily understood and incorporated into colloquial fluency (with the exception of regionally or professionally specific idioms, which may be obscure for an outsider). For the L2-user this seems to be true of some kinds of idiomaticity, but not others. This is part of the puzzle I have chosen to investigate.

### **2.3.3 Creative idiomaticity**

*He doesn't know his Acas from his Nalgo.*

*Yes, Minister.* BBC comedy series.

My classification can also be seen in terms of the principle of creative manipulation. Roberts (1944) was one of the first scholars to focus on the way an idiomatic expression begins life as a personal innovation at a particular point in time and is then taken up by the speech community as a whole, where it will be subject to creative manipulation. This dual tendency of idiomaticity to embody both communal routines and individual creativity will reappear in most of the attempts to define and systematize idiomaticity to the present day. It is one of the conflicting tendencies in idiomaticity which may provide a clue to its complexity for L2-users. My research has led me to believe that, beyond idiomaticity itself, creative idiomaticity is the 'ultimate frontier' of 'near-native speaker' fluency and the most significant difference between 'native' and 'non-native' Successful Users of English (SUEs). This is a view frequently echoed in the work of other idiomatologists (e.g. Alexander, 1978: 7; Coulmas, 1981: 150; Kjellmer, 1991: 123; Davies, 2003:90).

I will refer to idiomatic types A, B and C as broadly belonging to the type of idiomaticity known as 'formulaic' and which, as a rule, are not available for creative manipulation; type D contains multi-word expressions which are closely tied to the socio-cultural context and include the 'big word' variety of idioms (colourful idioms,

sayings, proverbs) which are, typically, syntactically irregular and semantically opaque (Ellis, 1996: 111) and which lend themselves to creative play.

In general, types A-C are either fixed expressions or, when they vary, they do so in ways which are regular or predictable: e.g. *pleased to meet you/nice to meet you; it is possible/probably that* and so on. This type of variation is ‘systematic and widespread’ (Sinclair, 2004: 30). A computerized concordance would uncover any variations in the collocations that make up Types A-C. Hoey’s work on the collocations and colligations of *consequence* is a good example of the extent and systematicity of regular variation (Hoey, 2005: chapter 3).

In contrast, a concordance could not identify the potential for original combinations and variations that Type D idiomaticity lends itself to. Indeed, pure idioms, proverbs and sayings are more likely to be found in a non-canonical form than in their full traditional entirety - their ‘fixedness’ is more honoured in the breach than the observance (Moon, 1998). But not all idiomatic phrases are equally manipulable:

Speakers will tend to be significantly more creative in their use of semantically analyzable idioms both in terms of their syntactic productivity and their lexical flexibility.

(Gibbs, 1990: 426).

Type D variation is strongly tied to its contexts of use and thus poses a particular challenge to acquisition in a non-L1 environment.

Many researchers have pointed out what Table 2.1 suggests: that it is the heterogeneous nature of idiomaticity that makes for difficulty; it is the unpredictable mixture of arbitrariness and regularity that confounds the learners’ attempt to acquire this aspect of ‘native-speaker’ competence (Laufer, 1997: 146; Howarth, 1998: 36). How does one classify the creative modification of ‘he doesn’t know his arse from his elbow’, with its



transparent binomial formula, to the densely opaque and deeply socio-cultural ‘he doesn’t know his Acas from his Nalgo?’ (Lynn and Jay, 1991).

The difficulty of cultural idioms and many formulae is not only linguistic or ‘intralexical’ (Laufer, 1997) but discoursal and pragmatic (Alexander, 1978; Coulmas, 1979, Strässler, 1982; Weinert, 1995; McCarthy, 1998); in the case of creative idiomaticity, the difficulty may be intensified by the fusion of transparent formulae with obscure idioms. The learner will not only need situational/conversational context in order to acquire idiomaticity (Weinert, 1995: 195) but different layers of socio-cultural context.

It is thus not only the formal and semantic features of idiomaticity that pose a challenge to L2-users but their close link to pragmatic, socio-cultural contexts of use. It is to these multiple levels of description of idiomaticity that we now turn.

#### **2.3.4 Formal approaches: big words**

In this brief survey, I will limit myself to those aspects of idiomatic research that foreground the peculiar difficulty idiomaticity represents to the analyst and, by implication, the learner.

In 1904, Jespersen described the area of idiomaticity as ‘irrational’ because idiomatic groups of phrases cannot be constructed using ‘words and grammatical rules’ (Jespersen, 1904: 16). The formal and/or semantic illogicality of most types of idiomaticity have occupied linguists ever since.

Smith (1925) refers to the mismatch between form and meaning that characterises idiomaticity as ‘idiosyncrasies’ and ‘anomalies’ (Smith, 1925: 167). Roberts (1944) also refers to the ‘idiosyncrasy’ of idioms and, like Smith, the way they reflect particular cultural features in the history of the language.

Following the Chomskyan revolution in the 1950s, linguists have focussed on the ‘anomalous’ nature of idioms and how they fit uncomfortably within the generative paradigm (Chafe, 1968; Makkai, 1983; Bolinger, 1976; Fillmore, et al, 1988). Weinreich (1969) attempts to place idiomaticity within the framework of transformational-generative grammar but is left with ‘ill-formed’ phrases which do not fit within the paradigm (Weinreich, 1969: 68).

The solution has generally been to approach idiomatic phrases as ‘long words’ or ‘big words’ (Ellis, 1996: 111; Cowie, 1998: 6) – i.e. single units that have been fused over a period of time from individual constituents of grammar (Wray, 2000: 464-465). From this concept, analysts have frequently defined the nature of idiomaticity not only in terms of the restrictions on syntactic transformations of idiomatic expressions but also the discrepancy between the literal meaning of the lexical components and their communicative or figurative meaning (Makkai, 1972).

Both Makkai (1972) and Weinreich (1969) point to the potential ambiguity of idioms, arising from the existence of literal counterparts. Fraser (1970), similarly, focuses on the semantic, non-compositional definition of idiomaticity and also explores the ‘recalcitrance’ of idioms when undergoing certain syntactic transformations (Fraser, 1970: 23) and finds that they range from ‘frozen’ to ‘amenable to transformational operations’ (Fraser, 1970: 23). Bolinger (1976) rejects the componential analysis of individual lexical items and argues instead for looking at unanalysable semantic ‘prefabs’ which form wholes in ‘magical’ ways (Bolinger, 1976: 1). Idioms and collocations, argues Bolinger, do not fit within the generative paradigm because the combinations into which they enter are ‘unpredictable’ and ‘improbable’ (Bolinger, 1976: 6). The transformational potential of idiomatic phrases is not only ‘puzzling’ it is ‘a jungle’ (Bolinger, 1976: 9). Recent work on the formal properties of idiomatic



language has synthesised the approaches outlined but has drawn on corpus data in an extensive way (Moon, 1998). Moon's analysis of naturally-occurring data has confirmed the paradoxical flexibility of 'fixed' expressions.

In sum, the attempt to define and classify idioms formally and semantically confirms that they are a category of language characterized by 'imprecision': they 'will not stay in place/Will not stay still' (Eliot, 1969: 175).

### **2.3.5 Cognitive approaches**

Roberts (1944) reflects an early attempt to link idiomaticity with the cognitive structure of a language. Fernando and Flavell (1981) argue from the results of a questionnaire survey that 'native-speakers' draw on both the figurative and literal meanings of idioms by drawing on their prior knowledge and experience, a resource which is usually not available to the 'non-native speaker' (Fernando and Flavell, 1981: 30).

The more recent work of Gibbs (1995, 1990) and Kövecses and Szabo (1996) has shown that L1-users process idioms within conceptual frameworks characterized by figurative categories of thought that make up 'a significant part of our ordinary conceptual structures' (Gibbs, 1995: 113; see also Lakoff and Johnson, 1978). This processing of idioms, at literal and figurative levels, is 'a fast, unconscious process' (Gibbs, 1995: 112) and idiomatic fluency is linked to the way the mind works; idiomatic competence stems from the way people conceptualize their experiences of the world - idioms are 'cognitively and ultimately perceptually/experientially based' (Gibbs, 1990: 447).

Gibbs (1990), in contrast to many traditional approaches to idioms, proceeds on the assumption that idioms are not semantically frozen or syntactically fixed, but are partially analyzable. The aspect of this controversy that bears directly on this thesis

centres on the mystery of how L1-users come to acquire the rules for knowing which transformations apply to which idioms (Gibbs, 1990: 420).

Speakers are never taught which idioms are syntactically productive and which are not. Yet, people somehow learn about the syntactic behaviour of most idioms, even relatively rare and novel phrases.

(Gibbs, 1990: 420).

If, as Gibbs says, people are not ‘taught’ idiomatic variation, the implication is that it results from lived experience in a particular speech community.

In SLA studies, the role of formulaic language as a preliminary stage towards the acquisition of the grammatical system has been keenly debated. One view suggests that formulaic language in the early stages of learning may facilitate the acquisition of grammar later. It is claimed that formulas are ‘slowly unpackaged’ (Ellis, 1994: 87) to ‘release knowledge about the analytic grammatical system’ (see also: Hakuta, 1976; Wong-Fillmore, 1979; Peters, 1983). Krashen and Scarcella (1978) and Bohn (1986), however, are dissenting voices in the ‘formulae-lead-to-grammar’ hypothesis, suggesting only a limited role for formulaic speech in later grammatical production.

### **2.3.6 Discourse and pragmatic approaches**

The studies referred to above have tended to look at the formal and semantic features of formulae and idioms in isolation as mental processes, though Smith (1925) was one of the first scholars to link idioms to ‘vivid expressive uses’. While, Coulmas (1979, 1981a, 1981b), argues for a more systematic link between formulaic routines and pragmatics, it is only recently that scholars have begun to look at the pragmatic functions of idioms within naturally-occurring conversational data. Schiffrin (1987) focusses on the pragmatic role of discourse markers in conversational contexts, while Strässler (1982), Powell (1992) and Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) take a pragmatic approach to idioms and lexical phrases. Their findings provide insights into the social



function of idiomatic language, but they also show how idiomatic phrases achieve pragmatic effects which are not obvious from their propositional semantic content; this will be a strong theme in my own research.

Other analysts have looked at naturally-occurring data to identify the place of idiomatic language within the larger discourse structure. Drew and Holt (1998, 1995, 1988) examine the role of idiomatic expressions in the realisation of pragmatic functions such as making complaints and in the management of topic transition in conversation. The work of Drew and Holt on actual conversational data, like that of McCarthy (1998) and Powell (1985, 1992), uncovers the way idioms are often used at closings of stretches of discourse, to sum up what has been said, to facilitate topic transition, to evaluate topics and to create convergence amongst speakers.

Recent work on idiomaticity has synthesised the approaches outlined above and has focussed particularly on the discoursal and pragmatic dimension of idiomaticity (Fernando, 1996; Schmitt and Carter, 2004).

Finally, for Hopper (1998), language itself is inherently ‘formulaic’, and his concept of ‘emergent grammar’ is defined as a ‘set of sedimented conventions that have been routinized’ under the pressure of communicative needs: ‘idioms, proverbs, clichés, formulas, specialist phrases, transitions, openings, closures, greetings, farewells, favoured clause types’ (Hopper, 1998: 164-166).

### **2.3.7 Phonological factors**

Although it is frequently pointed out that the relationship between idiomaticity and phonological features is a close one (Jespersen, 1904; Brown, 1977; Van Lancker et al, 1981; Moon, 1998; Wray, 2002) the implications of this for the ‘non-native speaker’ have hardly been raised. Parallel with the restrictions on lexical and syntactic transformations on idiomatic sequences, there are also phonological restrictions which,

if not observed, will tend to literalise the idiom and lead to pragma-linguistic (or more precisely ‘pragma-phonological’) failure and perhaps socio-pragmatic failure, too (Thomas, 1983). In the mouth of the ‘non-native speaker’, idiomaticity is pronunciation-sensitive and accident-prone.

For multi-word items ‘processing clearly cannot be based primarily on phonological cues at word level; if phonology is important it is likely to include suprasegmental features and possibly interword associations of sound and pattern’ (McCarthy and Spöttl, 2003: 135). This may be one reason why learners avoid idioms; if it is true that they avoid words they can’t pronounce (McCarthy and Spöttl, 2003: 135) they may equally avoid idiomatic expressions of whose phonological and suprasegmental features they are unsure.

To what extent is idiomatic fluency compatible with ‘non-native’ phonology? Medgyes (1994) refers to ‘pronunciation’ as a level at which ‘non-native speakers’, however ‘expert’, can be differentiated from ‘native-speakers’. But this is not merely a question of accent but of a ‘subliminal mastery’ of phonology to match the ‘subliminal mastery’ of phraseology referred to by Sinclair (1992). The successful production and reception of idiomatic expressions (often ellipted) depends on phonological competence as much as on lexico-semantic knowledge. To achieve pragmatic success with expressions such as *good job you ... looks like someone may have had too much to drink...* one needs the appropriate stress, intonation and tone of voice: it is a highly subtle sub-conscious process, probably beyond the reach of explicit knowledge or conscious control. Relatively small phonological changes may have profound consequences for meaning or the expression of attitudes such as irony or sarcasm:

to reverse the pragmatic intention requires only an overall  
change of pitch on the tonic syllable...  
(Clennell, 1997: 120)



The 'native-speaker' possesses this skill after years of immersion, from childhood to adulthood, in the cultural context in which the language is embedded. Expressions of irony, sarcasm or humour, packaged in their appropriate phonology and repeated countless times, become routinized conventions in everyday discourse (Carter, 1997: 163; Hopper, 1998: 163). If lexical chunks are phonologically 'primed' (Hoey, 2005: 188) acquisition of lexico-phonological units will depend on repeated exposure to such units in socio-pragmatic contexts; in the absence of such 'quality' exposure, successful L2-users will intuitively feel idiomaticity is an area where they have to tread carefully. Hopper (1998: 163) notes that speakers 'differ in their ability to control phrasing...and phonology, including intonation' and if it is true that the phonological level is the area where 'non-native speakers' evidence their 'non-native' status most obviously and if, due to neuro-maturational factors after childhood, the adult 'non-native speaker' will rarely achieve 'native-like' competence, this will have an impact on the potential for successful production of idiomatic language. In sum, apart from difficulties at the semantic, syntactic and socio-pragmatic levels, we can say that idiomaticity is prone to avoidance and pragmalinguistic 'failure' also because of its close identity with phonological patterning.

### **2.3.8 Formulaic language, culture and the presentation of self**

What has been said so far about the socio-pragmatic potential of idiomaticity is founded on the cultural factors which give rise to the forms and uses of formulaic language. Early researchers into idiomaticity such as Smith (1925) and Roberts (1944) approached idioms as an idiosyncratic manifestation of the spirit of a language and the cognitive and cultural patterns of the community at large. Roberts also highlighted the way creative modifications of semi-fixed phrases are manipulated by individuals.

The work of Alexander (1978, 1983, 1987, 1992, 1998) has explored in detail the interplay between idioms and the socio-cultural contexts in which they are embedded. The acquisition of recurrent wordings of all kinds, Alexander argues, takes place in the process of negotiating meaning within discourse contexts and contexts of use. Alexander stresses the scale of the task confronting the learner: idiomaticity is anchored in the everyday culture of the speech community (Alexander, 1998: 159) and Alexander quotes Lakoff and Johnson on the close link between unconscious thought processes and the socio-cultural component of second language learning:

How can someone communicate to you a sense of a reality  
which is structured by metaphors you do *not* live by?  
(Lakoff and Johnson, 1982: 4).

Alexander accurately describes the implications for individual identity of acquiring the ‘meaning potential’ contained in the meshing of idiomaticity and culture: ‘Becoming ‘multilingual is more than just ‘adding on’ a new set of behaviours’ (Alexander, 1998: 163).

Wray (2002) goes further than all previous approaches in locating ‘formulaic language’ within a theory of language acquisition which stresses the ‘promotion of self’ as an essential function of formulaic language. The work of Wray represents the most comprehensive synthesis of formal, cognitive and functional approaches to idiomaticity.

Wray develops her approach within a multi-level framework and sees ‘formulaic language’ not only as a processing tool, but as a tool which shapes cognitive development, interpersonal relations and personal identity. A dynamic, multi-level approach may point the way forward to elucidating the mystery of L2-user idiomaticity in that the root of the difficulty for the L2 learner is that (a) the meaning of formulaic phrases is not in the words themselves but in the dynamics of their



relationship with the situation in which they are used and (b) idiomatic competence develops after extensive exposure to the pragmatics of idiomaticity in the socio-cultural contexts of particular speech communities (Wray, 2002: 267-268).

Thus, Wray explains the paradox of 'flexible-fixedness' of idioms in terms of the pragmatic needs of the user in specific situations (Wray, 2002: 33). The continuum from fixed to flexible allows speakers to move from one to the other depending on their personal needs or the face they wish to present to their interlocutor; this fluidity allows them to be componential on one occasion and holistic on the other - or to be both at the same time, as formulaic strings are when speakers are being witty or when they are forging closer relationships (Carter, 2004). Fixed phrases signal group commonality, but what I shall refer to as 'deep commonality' is achieved through repeated semantic prosodies, not just the repetition of isolated phrases.

The multi-dimensional approach adopted by Wray moves away from the attempt to establish a one-to-one relationship between 'idioms' and formal and semantic parameters; it allows for the expression of diverse personal voices by the speaker and opens the way for a redefinition of the relationship between idiomaticity and different speech and discourse communities. These are issues we shall return to when we look more closely at a dialogic approach to idiomaticity (see later in this Chapter and Chapter 4).

## **2.4 The empirical gap in research**

Before the emergence of corpus linguistics, there had been few analyses of 'non-native' use of idiomatic language in speech and those that have been conducted were based on different kinds of elicited data: computer-based tests (Liontas, 2002a, 2002b); interviews (de Cock, 2000; Adolphs and Durrow, 2004); thinking aloud (Cooper, 1999; Spöttle and McCarthy, 2004); blank-filling (Scarcella, 1979; Bahns and Eldaw, 1993;

Kovacs and Szabo, 1996; Schmitt et al, 2004b); memory tests (Hulstijn and Marchena, 1989) written composition (Yorio, 1989; Dechert and Lennon, 1989; Howarth, 1998, Granger, 1998b); questionnaires (Farghal and Obiedat, 1995); translation (Biskup, 1992; Irujo, 1993; Bahns and Eldaw, 1993; Laufer, 2000); picture story narrations (Lennon, 1991a); written multiple choice tests (Irujo, 1986b; Schmitt et al, 2004b).

Useful though all of these studies have been, they provide insights into *learning* rather than *acquisition* (Krashen, 1981; Nattinger, 1980). They are studies of what the learner *knows about* formulaic language and not the use of formulaic language in *spontaneous performance*. This is the case with Laufer (2000) who, on the basis of a translation test of idioms from Hebrew into English concludes, surprisingly, that ‘as a category, idioms were not avoided’ and that ‘idioms may not present a problem to advanced L2 learners’ (Laufer, 2000: 194).

Schmitt et al (2004b), who conducted research into the acquisition of formulaic phrases by foreign students in the UK, acknowledge that ‘the ability to complete a cloze test successfully does not demonstrate the ability to use the formulaic sequence at will in discourse’ (Schmitt et al, 2004b: 67).

We should add that ‘productive knowledge’ as measured in cloze or translation tests and even in written discourse within or outside a test format (Howarth, 1998) cannot be generalized to apply to competence in spontaneous spoken performance. Spöttl and McCarthy (2004) found ‘a pattern of perceived receptive knowledge that is not matched with productive performance’ (Spöttl and McCarthy, 2004: 216). This is illustrated even in the restricted sense of ‘production’ to mean the ability to come up with a written translation in test conditions:

comprehension tests produced 100% correct answers. The case of production was different, and students required to produce



translation equivalents of L1 collocations were faced with a real problem.

(Biskup, 1992: 86).

Even Foster (2001), though based on spoken language rather than written experimental data, relies on a preplanned task in a classroom context; what we do not find in any of these studies is a corpus of spontaneous ‘non-native’ spoken English in non-classroom contexts of use.

Moreover, many of the studies into L2 formulaic acquisition are based on *young* learners in natural learning environments, usually L2 environments. Studies of young learners, usually in natural learning environments, will produce qualitatively different results from studies of adults learning in a classroom in an EFL context; similarly, the way *students* behave in the controlled conditions of experimental work or the classroom is not necessarily a reflection of what they will do in the real world.

The artificial nature of data on which the research above is based has tended to generate an inadequate picture of the L2-user of English who is invariably found to be wanting when compared to ‘native speakers’, the description of whose discourse is based on huge corpora and naturally occurring data. Nattinger (1980) warns against the danger of conflating the ability to ‘learn’ about idiomaticity and the ability to use it in pragmatically appropriate ways:

We need to know more about patterned speech in two separate areas which are often lumped together – in language learning and in language use: that is, in what ways it is used while learning a second language, and in what ways it is used after that second language is learned. These are two quite different aspects of language behaviour and it is likely that the role of patterned speech in each will also be different.

(Nattinger, 1980: 342).

Much of the recent, corpus-based. work on ‘native-speaker’ idiomaticity has made it easier to scrutinise language use in specific contexts. Corpora have made available to

the researcher vast quantities of naturally-occurring texts, written and spoken, formal and informal on which to base judgments on the role of the ‘idiom principle’ (Sinclair, 1991; Hunston and Francis, 2000; Altenberg, 1998; Moon, 1998; McCarthy, 1998). Indeed, the computer analysis of spoken corpora has highlighted the sheer quantity of lexical chunks in everyday speech and conversation (Altenberg, 1998; Erman and Warren, 2000); discourse analysis of real conversations has reinforced the significant pragmatic and interpersonal functions of idiomaticity (Carter and McCarthy, 1995a; McCarthy, 1998; Moon, 1998a; Strässler, 1982; Drew and Holt, 1988, 1995). Finally, it has been argued that scrutiny of actual spoken data confirms the central role of idiomaticity in the development of fluent, natural speech (Nattinger and Decarrico, 1992; Pawley and Syder, 1983).

## **2.5 Idiomaticity and fluency**

*Talk for a minute without hesitation, without repetition and without deviation.*

*Just a Minute*, BBC radio programme.

*Pauses, like hesitations, can be cut down considerably by a skilful speaker, and avoidance of filled pauses...is another way of impressing a hearer with the speaker’s competence.*

(O’Donnell and Todd, 1980: 67).

There are two reasons for examining fluency in this thesis: first, fluency is often equated with competence in a language (Kaponen and Riggensbach, 2000: 5; Fillmore, 1979: 49) and thus it relates to my concept of the ‘Successful User of English’; secondly, recent work on phraseology has made a strong link between fluency and idiomaticity.

There is a widespread belief in the popular imagination that a good speaker is someone who can talk non-stop, without notes, with a minimum of repetition and pauses in a solo performance of artful articulacy. In such a view, a premium is placed on



propositional content and ‘sloppy’ markers of informal conversation such as *you know* and *I mean* are frowned upon.

Theories of fluency have, however, done much to foreground the contextualised and communicative nature of ‘fluency’ and to distinguish it from formal accuracy (e.g. Brumfit, 1984; Fiksdal, 2000; Doutrich, 2000). At the same time, there has emerged a view of fluency that links it closely with the abundant and spontaneous use of phraseological units of all kinds: connectives such as *you know*, *you see*, *I mean*, *sort of* (Crystal and Davy, 1975); lexical sentence stems (Pawley and Syder, 1983) recurrent word combinations (De Cock, 1998a); lexical chunks and collocations (Lewis, 1993, 2000); lexical phrases (Nattinger and DeCarrico, 1992; Wood, 2004) and formulaic sequences (Wood, 2002).

Prefabricated expressions are widely considered as ‘a kind of ‘autopilot’ which the speaker can switch on to gain time for the creative and social aspects of the speech process (Altenberg and Eeg-Olofson. 1990: 2). The question is: does this hypothesis apply equally to L1 and L2 speakers? Raupach (1984) and Bolander (1989), writing of adult learners of French and Swedish respectively, suggest that it does. To begin to explore this question further we need to review the different perspectives on fluency that have emerged in recent years.

In the next section, I will focus on the approach developed by Pawley and Syder as one of the most representative and influential in this tradition.

### **2.5.1 Two puzzles**

Pawley and Syder (1983) have developed an approach to language acquisition and production which has had enormous influence on the way we view the relationship between grammar, phraseology and fluency. The core of Pawley and Syder’s hypothesis is that fluency is facilitated by the ability of the ‘native-speaker’ to select

correct combinations of words and, secondly, the way idiomatic strings of words facilitate on-line processing of language and allow the speaker to pay more attention to the construction of grammatically ‘creative’ structures. This theory is developed through the description of two ‘puzzles’: the puzzle of ‘native-like’ selection and ‘native-like’ fluency.

### **2.5.2 The puzzle of ‘native-like’ selection**

The first puzzle for Pawley and Syder is the ‘native-speaker’s’ routine ability to convey meaning through well-formed and ‘native-like’ grammatical sentences and to avoid those sentences which, though grammatical, are not ‘native-like’. Pawley and Syder accept that a Chomskyan generative grammar is part of what a ‘native-speaker’ must know to be a competent user of the language but that the Chomskyan paradigm does not explain how the ‘native’ user knows which well-formed sentences are ‘native-like’ and idiomatic and which are not. The ‘non-native speaker’, in contrast to the ‘native speaker’, often produces sentences which are well-formed but unidiomatic. Thus, idiomaticity is the defining feature of ‘native-like’ selection, not the ability to generate an infinite number of well-formed sentences.

Another important point made by Pawley and Syder is that the distinction between ‘native-like’ and ‘non-native-like’ sentences is not an absolute one: ‘there is no sharp boundary between the classes of ‘native-like’ and ‘non-native-like sentences’ (Pawley and Syder, 1983: 195). The ‘native-speaker’ knows intuitively where these boundaries fall and stops short of crossing them, sensing the limits of syntactic and semantic flexibility (the boundaries may be crossed when the ‘native-speaker’ decides to break the conventional rules for innovative purposes (see Chapter 11).

Pawley and Syder put forward the possible explanation that ‘native-like’ selection is the result of familiarity on the part of the ‘native’-user with the discourse context in which



well-formed and idiomatic sentences tend to be used. But the problem of selection remains: Pawley and Syder are puzzled by the fact that ‘native-sentences are not confined to those which the language user has heard before’ (Pawley and Syder, 1983: 199).

Part of the solution to the puzzle of ‘native-like’ selection is the availability of thousands of ‘lexicalised sentence stems’ and other formulaic strings which ‘native-speakers’ have stored in their memory. These stems and formulae are not completely fixed and the ability to produce variations on them depends in part on grammatical knowledge (Pawley and Syder, 1983: 214) and in part on a knowledge of variations which are institutionalized, that is, sanctioned by socio-cultural use in a particular speech community over a period of time (Pawley and Syder, 1983: 211- 214).

In modifying the Chomskyan paradigm, Pawley and Syder suggest that the ‘native-speaker’ knows linguistic forms such as ‘lexicalised sentence stems’ in two ways: ‘both as lexical units and as products of syntactic rules’ (Pawley and Syder, 1983: 217). The knowledge of the grammatical system is supplemented, in performance, by ready-made phrases and stems, which deal with the real-world problems of memory limitation. These phrases, argue Pawley and Syder, are not only readily available but they are ‘familiar to the hearer as well as the speaker’ and they have a further advantage in the use of language as a cultural instrument:

they provide convenient ways of referring to those concepts that  
happen to be salient in a particular culture.

(Pawley and Syder, 1983: 218).

These lexicalised stems and phrases, moreover, are not marginal cases but make up ‘the largest part of the English speaker’s lexicon’ (Pawley and Syder, 1983: 215).

### 2.5.3 The puzzle of ‘native-like fluency’

The second puzzle Pawley and Syder articulate is the ‘native-speaker’s’ ability to produce ‘fluent stretches of spontaneous connected discourse’. Pawley and Syder suggest that ‘native-speakers’ in spontaneous spoken discourse have a ‘one-clause at a time facility’ whereby clausal chunks are chained together holistically. This chaining style is generally preferred in spontaneous speech to a more analytic style where grammatical structures are planned across clause boundaries:

Part of the puzzle of native-like fluency is how the language learner achieves the one clause at a time facility.

(Pawley and Syder, 1983: 204).

There are ‘many thousands’ of these clause-level chunks or memorized phrases available to the ‘native-speaker’, say Pawley and Syder, but there are even more phraseological units which are usually less than clause-length, and which they refer to as ‘lexicalised sentence stems’. These are like syntactic frames which are partially lexicalised but also have a margin for variation.

Why this fluency should be a puzzle, say Pawley and Syder, has to do with the limited capacity of the brain to encode novel speech in advance, a limitation which is exceeded by ‘native speakers’ who regularly produce fluent, multi-clause utterances (Pawley and Syder, 1983: 191). The explanation for this mystery of ‘native-like fluency’ is, as we have seen, the user’s access to a ‘body of sentence stems’ which are ‘institutionalised or ‘lexicalised’. The concept of ‘insitutionalised’ language locates phraseology within a social and cultural context; the spontaneous production of lexical sentence stems and idiomatic phrases, argue Pawley and Syder, presupposes ‘the authority of regular and accepted use by members of the speech community’ (Pawley and Syder, 1983: 209). Fixed phrases are the tip of a cultural iceberg. Thus a simple lexical restriction such as that on the lexical pattern \_\_\_\_ache, which permits *headache*, *toothache*, *backache*,



*stomach-ache, earache* but not *\*legache* or *\*fingerache*, is explicable in terms of culturally recognized types of disability (Pawley and Syder, 1983: 209).

There is a paradoxical element in the semantico-grammatical behaviour of these stems and idiomatic phrases in that they can be both fixed and flexible in varying degrees. The ‘native-speaker’ moves up and down this fixed-variable continuum with ease (Pawley and Syder: 218; compare: Wray, 2002: 57; Moon, 1998: 51).

The facility with which ready-made strings can be recalled and applied in discourse, leaves the brain free to manage the more generative grammatical structure of the discourse, the larger discourse structure as well as to produce novel variations on the fixed elements of language (Pawley and Syder, 1983: 208).

This phraseological competence is not innate but is acquired through repeated exposure in socio-cultural contexts from an early age; there is evidence that the process of acquisition of phraseological competence begins in early childhood:

That children do store and use complex strings before mastering their internal make-up is generally agreed.  
(Wray, 2002: 105).

The child learns thousands of phrases as unanalyzed chunks and learns to use the grammatical system to perform those variations which are permitted by custom and culture and no others. Thus, by adulthood, the ‘native-speaker’ has achieved formal, semantic and pragmatic fluency which Sinclair equates with a ‘subliminal mastery of phraseology’ (Sinclair, 1992: 496).

On the other hand, in L2 contexts the anticipated value of lexical sentence stems in promoting fluency runs up against the apparent resistance of the whole area of idiomaticity to acquisition by the ‘non-native speaker’. On a cognitive level, this may be the result of the greater reliance on explicit, declarative knowledge in the L2-user compared to the L1-user, whose ‘implicit competence encompasses ...automatic

syntactic building procedures' (Dewaele, 2002: 240), or as Wray puts it: 'there is little evidence in adult naturalistic learners, of a progression of the kind identified for first language acquisition, from using formulaic sequences as an aid to initial communication, through a process of segmentation, to native-like abilities' (Wray, 2002: 176). The lack of interaction with 'native speakers' is one reason given by Wray for the relative failure of formulaicity to emerge in the adult learner in an English-speaking environment (Wray, 2002: 175), a failure which is even more acute in the context of learning EFL in the classroom (Wray, 2002: 176). In both cases, exposure and the opportunity to use formulae in interaction are key components in the acquisition: 'collocations can only be learnt if they are encountered' (Wray, 2002: 183; see Adolphs and Durrow, 2004 and Dörnyei et al, 2004, for research that lends weight to Wray's views). This raises the question of the social context in which language is learnt, to which we now turn our attention.

#### **2.5.4 Towards a socio-cultural view of fluency**

Although Pawley and Syder approach fluency from a largely psycholinguistic perspective, there are hints in their 1983 paper that societal and cultural factors play a role in the creation of an individual's phraseological competence. In this section, I foreground socio-cultural factors to explore the possibility that 'native' and 'non-native' fluency may diverge in significant ways.

It is generally assumed that 'native-like' and 'non-native-like' fluency are comparable phenomena. Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992), like Pawley and Syder, make a strong link between 'lexical phrases' and the ability of both 'native' and 'non-native speakers' to be fluent (Nattinger and DeCarrico, 1992: 114, 116). Nattinger and DeCarrico take a more functional-pragmatic approach to phraseological fluency than Pawley and Syder but they do not distinguish 'native' from 'non-native' socio-cultural contexts.



Similarly, Willis (2003: 4) writes as if the achievement of ‘non-native’ fluency were inseparable from the use of lexical phrases in a ‘native-like’ manner:

The only way we can produce language rapidly and fluently is by building up routines and relying on ready-made elements and chunks.

(Willis, 2003: 4).

It is important to distinguish what it means to sound fluent and what it means to sound ‘native-like’. They are not necessarily the same thing; the ‘non-native speaker’ may be fluent without being ‘native-like’. This is acknowledged by those who work within a native-centric model as well as those who question the advisability of transferring ‘native’ language acquisition and use to ‘non-native’ contexts. Skehan (1998) points out that successful ‘native’ speaker uses of English ‘still sound foreign’ and ‘are still not taken for ‘native speakers’ although they ‘produce grammatical and fluent utterances’:

such learners are making choices which are effective in many ways but these choices are recognized as not being the choices that a native speaker would make.

(Skehan, 1998: 39).

Cook (1998), on the other hand, suggests that the nature of ‘non-native’ fluency may – legitimately - differ from ‘native-like fluency’, precisely in the area of phraseology:

native-speakers acquire, represent and process language in lexicalised chunks as well as grammar rules and single words. Yet it by no means follows that foreign learners must do the same. They may not want to study language in this way... this may not lead to native-like English, but it may lead to communicative and expressive English.

(Cook, 1998: 60).

This somewhat de-idiomatized view of ‘non-native’ fluency is echoed by Quirk (1981) Preston (1981) Johnson (1990) Jenkins (2000) Seidlhofer (2001a, b) and Wray (2002: 212). In order to establish a possible difference in the way ‘non-native speakers’

achieve fluency compared to their ‘native-speaker’ counterparts, it is important to define what we mean by fluency, as it is by no means certain that even ‘native-speakers’ are fluent in one and the same way.

Fillmore (1979: 51) describes five possible dimensions of fluency:

1. the ability to talk at length, at speed, with few pauses.
2. the ability to talk in coherent, semantically dense sentences.
3. the ability to have appropriate things to say in a wide range of conversational contexts.
4. the ability to be creative and imaginative in language use (to express ideas in novel ways, make jokes, vary styles, build on metaphors and so on).
5. the ability to use a wide range of formulaic expressions appropriately.

Fillmore considers that ultimate achievement in language use is a combination of all of these factors.

The ‘smooth talker’ view of fluency is probably the most current in the popular imagination and is reflected in the rules of the radio game ‘Just a Minute’: to speak a lot and speak quickly and accurately, without stopping for breath or using pause fillers such as *erm...mm* and without shifting topic, would seem be the ideal in this view of fluency (Lennon, 1990; Wood, 2004). Lennon describes an attempt to quantify this view of fluency in an empirical study of advanced learners producing monologues rather than engaging in dialogue (Lennon, 1990). The criteria for fluency are ‘speed of delivery’ and avoidance of repetition, self-corrections, and filled pauses (Lennon: 1990: 403). Oral proficiency in examinations such as the ESOL or Michigan exams is often measured in terms of the ‘Just a Minute’ principle: the rapid flow of continuous, monologic speech produced in a short space of time.



This view of fluency, as Riggensbach points out (2000: 10) brings together a diverse range of concepts such as cohesion, coherence, completeness, utterance length, speed and hesitancy. The concept of smoothness is thus linked to the ability to manipulate connected speech and achieve a high level of automaticity (Schmidt, 1993; Bialystock, 1994; Segalowitz, 2000; Wood, 2001). But this view of fluency is far from universally accepted insofar as it presents, at best, a partial picture of L1 and L2 'fluencies'.

Fillmore, for example, dwells on the importance of a knowledge of idioms and fixed phrases (Fillmore, 1979: 52), thus anticipating the work done in this area by Pawley and Syder, Nattinger and DeCarrico, and others influenced by their work (e.g. Wood, 2002; 2004). In his category of formulaic expressions, Fillmore includes idioms, clichés, proverbs, greetings, leave-taking and other politeness formulae. Formulae perform a psycholinguistic function in speech production: they provide 'islands of reliability' that allow speakers to concentrate on the more effortful task of planning and executing grammatically more 'creative' utterances (Dechert, 1983). The question asked in this thesis is whether formulaic language is as much an 'island of reliability' for 'non-native speakers' as it is for 'native-speakers'. Fillmore stresses the fact that formulaic expressions can only be learnt 'in close association with the situations in which their use is appropriate'. Thus a pragmatic view of fluency based on the manipulation of formulae is added to Fillmore's multi-level view of fluency.

'Pragmatic fluency' has been explored in greater detail by other scholars (e.g. Bolinger, 1976; Coulmas, 1979; Bahns et al, 1986; Drew and Holt, 1995; Oppenheim, 2000). Pragmatic competence is rooted in cultural competence and here Fillmore identifies one source of difficulty in acquiring formulaic fluency:

cultures differ a great deal in the life situations for which  
formulaic expressions are provided.

(Fillmore, 1979: 53)

House (1993; 1999; 2002) also identifies the underuse of formulaic routines and gambits as one source of lack of pragmatic fluency, especially for purposes of turn-taking and topic changing. She explores the concept of 'pragmatic fluency' within the framework of 'conversational routines' (cf Aijmer, 1996) which in turn entail 'societal knowledge that members of a given speech community share' (House, 1996: 226-227). For a 'native speaker', much of this conversational routine proceeds 'on automatic', the speaker drawing on accumulated memories which also enable the prediction of upcoming moves. Like Fillmore (1979), House links fluency to routine usage, knowledge of discourse and interactional schemata (House, 1996: 227; Fillmore, 1979: 97). This view of fluency is already moving beyond the 'smooth talker' concept of automatic production to a more complex socio-cultural view.

Doutrich (2000) stresses the importance of 'cultural fluency' and the 'ability to move back and forth between cultures' in the effort to express the 'sense of self' (Doutrich, 2000: 142). This locates fluency within an interactional, dialogic frame whereby 'we are situated in webs of social relations and meanings' (Doutrich, 2000: 143). In this movement between cultures, 'smooth talking' may not always be valued as highly as it is in western views of fluency; instead, silence, rapport and sensitivity to the needs of the other may be prioritized (Doutrich, 2000: 148-151).

Using English as an international lingua franca almost by definition requires this cultural flexibility: moving between cultures, or merely living on the edge of more than one culture, will require skill in establishing rapport with interlocutors from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It is within this framework of culturally diverse views of rapport that Fiksdal (2000) examines fluency. She builds on the work of Brown and Levinson (1987) on positive and negative face to define fluency as the ability to handle the 'preferred cultural face system' in order to avoid disruption or



‘uncomfortable moments’ in intercultural communication (Fiksdal, 2000: 129). Unlike the virtuoso performance of a set piece by a solo speaker implied in a ‘Just a Minute’ view of fluency, Fiksdal argues that fluency is ‘jointly constructed, moment by moment’ as speakers seek common ground or display deference to the other’s sense of self (Fiksdal, 2000: 132-136).

Lemke (2002), also approaching the question of fluency from a socio-cultural perspective, finds that approaches based on speed and smoothness of production reflect an ‘impoverished view of what people use language to do’ (Lemke, 2002: 82). Lemke goes on to explain that this view of fluency is ‘merely instrumental’ and assumes the ideal model is the fast-talking monolingual ‘native-speaker’ (cf. Cook, 1997, 1999, 2002). An ‘instrumental’ approach to fluency considers automatic speech as a good thing in itself and that language is a semiotic system isolated from the interactive and social uses to which it is put: Lemke, in contrast, argues that fluency involves:

our manipulations of social situations in culturally acceptable and favored ways: humour and wit, sincerity and authenticity of emotion, the power to mesmerize our interlocutors and bring them to laughter or tears. It is, in short, the affective sensibility of language use.

(Lemke, 2002: 83).

The fact that L2-users take longer to formulate their utterances does not necessarily have interactional consequences (Kurhila, 2002: 71). Indeed, Stenström and Svartvik (1994: 252) recommend that ‘non-native speakers’ acquire a ‘native-like use’ of ‘nonfluencies’ such as ‘pauses, fillers and repeats’ as ‘a quick way’ of improving their English language proficiency. In the context of multilingual contexts of language use, which characterize ELF as opposed to ENL, it is supportive, social-collaborative uses of language that matter most, rather than speed and automaticity (Lemke, 2002: 83).

Lemke's association of fluency with 'humor and wit' had already been made by Fillmore in his seminal paper on fluency (1979). According to Fillmore, in addition to being able to use ready-made responses in a wide range of situations, pragmatic fluency also involves the ability to create new expressions:

the ability to be creative and imaginative in language use (to express ideas in novel ways, make jokes, vary styles, build on metaphors and so on).

(Fillmore, 1979: 53).

Fillmore does not elaborate on this intriguing comment, but we will return to it in Chapter 11 of this thesis when we look at creative idiomaticity. His reference to the ability to 'vary styles' as one dimension of fluency links his view of fluency with Bakhtin's view of genre and heteroglossia and thus opens the way to a more fully 'dialogic' view of language competence. Bakhtin (1986) sees fluency in terms of the command of a repertoire of speech genres; informal social conversation is not only a matter of vocabulary and grammar but 'the ability to command a repertoire of genres of social conversation' (Bakhtin, 1986: 80). Dysfluency is the lack of a sufficient supply of utterances that help to cast one's speech 'quickly and naturally' into the appropriate genre; in discourse terms, it is 'the ability to begin and end promptly'. Like Fillmore, Bakhtin links fluency with creativity: 'the free creative reformulation' of genres (Bakhtin, 1986: 80). But Bakhtin makes the point that the speaker cannot be 'creative' with genres without a command of the underlying system: 'genres must be fully mastered in order to be manipulated freely' (Bakhtin, 1986: 80). Bakhtin, moreover, like Doutrich (2000), Fisksdal (2000) and Lemke, (2002) sees fluency as a means for the expression of the sense of self:

The better our command of genres the more freely we employ them, the more fully and clearly we reveal our own individuality in them.

(Bakhtin, 1986: 80).



To sum up, the arguments put forward so far suggest that ‘non-native’ fluency, like ‘native-like’ fluency, will be an integrated ability to maintain smooth continuity in ongoing talk with pragmatic appropriateness of utterances. Formulaic competence may be a part of fluency, conceived as smooth and rapid flow of speech, but a fuller description will include:

- the ability to establish rapport and affective convergence.
- the ability to co-construct discourse with one’s interlocutor.
- command of a variety of formal and informal genres.
- socio-cultural knowledge.
- knowledge of discourse and interactional schemata.
- ability to initiate topics and topic changes using appropriate routines.
- ability to make substantive comments in a conversation.
- awareness of and participation in creative language use.

## **2.6 The idiomatic puzzle: conclusion**

In this chapter, we have reviewed the status of idiomaticity in language description and language competence, its importance and its paradoxes. We have identified its varied manifestations from minimal idiomatic units to more extensive idiomatic phenomena. We have focussed on the pivotal role of idiomaticity in the achievement of L1-fluency and we have queried its role in L2-fluency. We now need to look more closely at the description of actual speech and the presence of idiomaticity in L1 and L2 conversation. In the next chapter, we therefore turn to speech in the laboratory and speech in the real world.

## Chapter 3

### From speech to conversation

*Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts*

*Henry V* Act 1 sc.i, 23.



### **3. From speech to conversation**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, we reviewed approaches to idiomaticity which approached the ‘problem’ of idiomaticity and the ‘non-native speaker’ as a kind of failure to achieve ‘native-like’ command, not only of idiomatic language, but, by extension, ‘native-like’ fluency. This ‘deficit’ view of idiomaticity is part of wider view of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) which has frequently cast ‘non-native speakers’ in the role of failed ‘native-speakers’ rather than users of English in their own right. This chapter traces the evolution of studies of ‘non-native’ speech from an inadequate approximation to ‘native’ models to a more L2-user oriented analysis of actual second language conversations.

#### **3.1 ‘Non-native’ speech**

##### **3.1.1 Mainstream SLA**

The main goal of SLA has been to characterize learners’ underlying knowledge of the L2, i.e. to describe and explain their competence rather than performance (Ellis, 1994: 13). The theoretical framework in mainstream SLA has been based on a cognitive, information processing model (Lightbown and Spada, 1999) or has been broadly psycholinguistic in orientation (Kasper and Kellerman, 1997). In some cases, pragmatic knowledge of *learners* are investigated but there are few cases of the *communicative performance* of adult *users* (Wagner, 1996: 233). Extracts of elicited rather than naturally-occurring speech are the most common kind of data used in these studies of SLA (e.g. Long, 1983; Varonis and Gass, 1985a, 1985b; Gass and Varonis, 1994). In Gass and Varonis (1994), for example, the spoken data is elicited from a highly structured picture description.

I will refer to SLA data, collected within the framework of the traditional ‘native’/ ‘non-native’ speaker dichotomy, as ‘speech’. Data drawn from conversation and discourse analysis, I will refer to as ‘L2-user conversation’.

The specimens of ‘speech’ in mainstream SLA are often examined in isolation from the sociolinguistic context in which they occur and are looked at as examples of ‘speech acts’ which are inappropriately realised in comparison to a ‘native-speaker’ model. This spoken data is usually of the ‘NS’-‘NNS’ variety occurring in ESL contexts (e.g. Long, 1985) but Varonis and Gass (1985b) also look at ‘NNS-NNS’ learner speech within an interactional perspective.

These studies all share an assumption that spoken interaction involving ‘non-native speakers’ is ‘dangerous’ or ‘handicapped’ in some way (Varonis and Gass, 1985a: 340-341) or prone to breakdown resulting from ‘shared incompetence’ (Varonis and Gass, 1985b: 84). ‘Shared incompetence’, according to Varonis and Gass is often the result of a lack of shared knowledge, belief systems and conflicting cultural systems in the production of misunderstanding. The full implications of this hypothesis are, however, left unexplored in mainstream SLA studies.

Nevertheless, the area of cross-cultural misunderstanding has been an influence on another strand in mainstream SLA research, and in the next section I will look at some of its contributions to ‘non-native’ spoken language.

### **3.1.2 Cross-cultural pragmatics**

Many studies of ‘non-native’ speech have been conducted within the framework of cross-cultural differences in the production of individual speech acts. These studies draw on Selinker’s (1971) concept of ‘interlanguage’ (Kasper and Blum-Kulka, 1993; Faerch and Kasper, 1983), negative and positive transfer and ‘pragmatic failure’ (Blum-



Kulka et al, 1989; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain. 1986; Thomas, 1983), the underlying assumption being that ‘native’ models are the target to which learners aspire:

Relative to native-speakers linguistic competence learners’  
interlanguage is deficient by definition.  
(Kasper and Kellerman, 1997: 5).

Most of these studies are set in ESL contexts, rather than EFL or ELF and are often based on elicited responses (e.g. through questionnaires, especially Discourse Completion Tests); like other mainstream SLA studies, they take *learners* as their subjects rather than *adult users* of English. The interaction is mostly between ‘native speakers’ and ‘non-native speakers’ and rarely between one ‘non-native speaker’ and another. At all events, the main trend in these studies is to identify degrees and varieties of failure in the ‘non-native speaker’; a few examples follow.

### **3.1.3 Deficit in cross-cultural pragmatics**

Some studies into cross-cultural pragmatics focus on the phenomenon of ‘waffling’ among ‘non-native speakers’, e.g. Bergman and Kasper (1993) Edmundson and House (1991) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986). These studies again refer to learners ‘deviations’ from ‘native-speaker’ norms in their response to questionnaires or in role-play activities; they paint a picture of the ‘non-native speaker’ as seen through a ‘native-speaker’ lens.

Edmondson and House (1991), for instance, found that learners lack formulaic routines and, as a result, ‘talk too much’ to make up for it. Bergman and Kasper (1993) took intermediate Thai students as their subjects in a study of ‘native-speaker’ and ‘non-native speaker’ apologies, using questionnaires for data, and found that Thai students tend to ‘gush’ or ‘waffle’ when apologizing in English (Bergman and Kasper, 1993: 100). Cheng and Warren (1999a) though drawing on a corpus of naturally-occurring ‘non-native speaker’-‘native speaker’ interaction, evaluate their Chinese users of ESL in

terms of a native-centric deficit model: their L2 subjects are ‘overly’ and ‘inappropriately’ explicit, by comparison with ‘native-speakers’ who manipulate phenomena such as situational ellipsis ‘appropriately’ (Cheng and Warren, 1999a: 301). The other side of the ‘waffling’ coin is the tendency of ‘non-native speakers’, as seen in interlanguage-driven studies, to be too ‘direct’ (e.g. Weizman, 1993; Fukushima, 1990; Tanaka, 1988).

Thus, a strong theme that runs through studies of ‘NNS’ discourse in an interlanguage perspective is the ‘under-use’ or ‘over-use’ of particular linguistic or pragmatic features measured, as always, by the yardstick of ‘native speaker’ discourse.

Tokahashi and Beebe (1993), for example, found that Japanese ‘non-native speakers’ of English (i.e. learners) ‘over-use’ formulaic softeners such as *I’m afraid* (Tokahashi and Beebe, 1993: 147) or ‘underuse’ a typically American patterns such as *That was a great account* before saying *but* to introduce a criticism (Tokahashi and Beebe, 1993: 153).

While House (1993) also refers to ‘deviant learner responses’ and ‘failure’ she takes a discourse-pragmatic perspective to explaining why this happens. Drawing on ‘role-play-elicited discourse data’, House suggests that ‘indirectness lies at the heart of many if not most misresponses and misunderstandings’ (House, 1993: 164). The ‘failure’ of her respondents was found to be explicable on several levels: linguistic, conceptual, strategic and operational. Finally, De Cock’s interviews with advanced learners of English (De Cock, 2000) uncovered an ‘under-use’ of certain pragmatic phrases by ‘non-native speakers’, when compared to a ‘native-speaker’ norm.

The studies referred to above, though yielding useful insights into how different cultures realize speech acts, have serious limitations in terms of the aims of the present



study. We can identify the following tendencies on the part of researchers in the cross-cultural/interlanguage model:

1. they take the formal learning environment as the context of investigation rather than non-educational settings where adult ‘non-native speakers’ use the language as part of their everyday routine.
2. they take short extracts or isolated speech acts as ‘performance data’; these data are often elicited through questionnaires, role-plays and interviews, rather than longer stretches of naturally occurring language; in effect, this means the researchers are often looking at what the learner *knows* rather than what he or she can *do*; the research is in reality an examination of *competence* not *performance*: ‘learners’ intuitions about what they would say in a particular situation are not reliable, as the sociolinguistic knowledge they draw on lies below the surface of consciousness’ (Ellis, 1994: 164).
3. the uncritical adoption of the concept of interlanguage (Selinker, 1971) which tends to focus on learners’ failure to achieve pragmatic success in ‘native speaker’ terms, rather than on L2-user discourse as the achievement of communication on its own terms.
4. they tend to identify pragmalinguistic problems rather than the exploration of sociopragmatic complexities (Nelson et al, 2002). Consequently, the language used by many of the researchers cited is suggestive of a negative, deficit view of L2-user discourse: ‘shortcomings’ ‘errors’ ‘problems’ ‘difficulties’ ‘failed to replicate’ (Eisenstein and Bodman: 1993: 69-70).
5. they usually focus on English as a Second Language (ESL) rather than English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as an International Lingua Franca (ELF). Much of this research is based on the assumption that learners are working their way towards use of English in an ESL situation and, to that extent, it might well reflect felt needs of

people wishing to use English integratively in the United States or other ENL contexts. The relevance of such work to learners and users in EFL or ELF contexts requires further investigation.

6. They assume that ‘target-like’ norms are constant and homogeneous: which of the many and varied ‘native speakers’ that make up today’s Englishes does one take as a model?

The critique of mainstream SLA has evolved into practical research projects into ELF conversation which I will review below before describing the dialogic framework underlying my own research.

### **3.2 L2-user conversation**

#### **3.2.1 Towards ELF conversation as the accomplishment of normality**

The critique of mainstream SLA by Firth and Wagner (1997), Rampton (1997) Knapp and Meierkord (2002) and Block (2003), the cognitive descriptions of multi-competent L2-users by Cook (2002) and the emergence of ELF corpora are going some way to remedying the deficit view of ‘non-native speakers’, forever caught on the never-ending road to idealized ‘native-like’ fluency. The recent focus by researchers on naturally-occurring interactional materials produced by L2 speakers of English (rather than learners or children) was an important step in beginning to redefine ELF in terms of the needs of the users rather than an extrinsic ENL model (e.g. Firth, 1996; Wagner, 1996; Wong, 2000a, 2000b; Seidlhofer, 2001b; Pöltze 2003; Gardner and Wagner, 2004). More and more of this work is based on small spoken corpora of L2 use (e.g. Cheng and Warren, 1999a, 1999b, 2001; Meierkord, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2005; Mauranten, 2003, 2004; Lesznyák, 2004; James, 2005). Many of these writers criticize SLA studies for their predominantly mentalistic assumptions about learning, their neglect of the social context of interaction, their deficit view of the learner of English



and for their artificial research methods (see Kasper and Dahl, 1991, for a review these methods from within the cross-cultural/interlanguage tradition).

While there may be a case to be made for the modeling of the ‘non-native speaker’ on the ‘native-speaker’ in ENL contexts (but see Kramsch, 1993, 1998a, 1998b, 2002, for an alternative view), in EFL contexts, and in contexts where English is an international or intranational lingua franca, it is more difficult to sustain these native-centric approaches; indeed, they have been seen as reinforcing ‘native-speaker’ hegemony and cultural stereotypes:

The conventional needs and previous practices of the ‘non-native speaker’ are left out of the account; ...The NS holds all the cards. Cross-cultural pragmatics ignore the institutional framework, politics and economics.

(Chick, 1996: 342).

Writing from a conversation analytic perspective, Schegloff identifies the shortcomings of classroom based research as a basis for judgements on ‘non-native’ interactional practices:

The talk that learners are going to have to do when they’re not in the hothouse of the classroom is situated in the real world where they have real things to do, and that’s the talk that people ideally should be recording and studying if they want to understand what the real world problems are for those who are speaking a language that is not their native language.

(Schegloff, interview in Wong and Olsher, 2000: 122).

In recent years, more and more analysts have looked at naturally-occurring L2-user-L2-user conversation as the ‘accomplishment of normality’ (Firth, 1990, 1996) or communicative success rather than as a pale reflection of ‘native-speaker’ discourse. These studies have been conducted within a contextually-sensitive framework of some kind: conversation analysis, discourse analysis, interactional linguistics or a broadly socio-cultural approach to language use.

Firth (1990, 1996) takes an interactional, conversational analytic approach to naturally occurring business negotiations between L2-users; he conducts a fine-grained utterance-by-utterance analysis of turn-taking, and suggests that L2-users achieve communicative success through a collaborative construction of discourse:

lingua franca talk does succeed, despite potential linguistic idiosyncrasies, lack of shared sociolinguistic knowledge and more.

(Firth, 1990: 276)

The principles of reciprocity of shared background knowledge, argues Firth, are more relaxed in lingua franca settings and promote the adoption of a ‘let-it-pass’ principle whereby the participants ignore ‘unknown or unclear utterances’ (Firth, 1999: 213) and allow for ‘greater latitude in judgments of pragmatic appropriacy, directness etc’ (Firth, 1990: 277).

Aston (1993) puts forward a model based on naturally-occurring conversation and an interpersonal, relational view of language. In order to investigate L2-user interaction fully, in its transactional and relational richness, Aston explores the way L2-users try to manipulate the resources at their disposal to create convergence and comity: the establishment and maintenance of friendly relations (Aston, 1993: 226; see also Aston, 1988).

Aston, like Kasper (1989) suggests that ‘for NNSs contribution to be successful they may have to follow different conversational principles’ (Kasper, 1989: 54). It is this concept of L2-user discourse with its own norms, which are not always identical with those of L1-users, that Firth and Wagner focus on (Firth, 1990, 1996; Wagner, 1996; Firth and Wagner, 1998).

Wong (2000a) looks at the use of the discourse marker *yeah* in naturally-occurring L1-L2-user telephone conversations, within a conversation analytic framework. She discovers the greater frequency of particular, ‘non-native’ uses of *yeah*, especially those



that express the identities of the speakers as L2-users of English. *Yeah* is used by L2-users to present an image of the speaker as someone who can manage dysfluency successfully.

Meierkord (1998, 2000, 2005) examining her own corpus of ELF conversation produced by students in an international hall of residence, discovers that although lingua franca conversation entails a multitude of codes, participants co-operate to achieve successful communication and in so doing create a new interculture or 'third cultures' (Kramsch, 1993, 1998a, 1998b). The resulting interaction will be a hybrid, shaped by the participants' diverse cultures. For many L2-users, for instance, instrumental interaction for doing business in English may be more dominant than the need to express multiple identities. Meierkord's data provides evidence of a tendency on the part of ELF users to restrict themselves to here-and-now-topics: since participants are insecure as to the acceptability of individual topics (e.g. taboo topics, politics, religion) preference is given to 'safe' topics and the avoidance of conflict (Meierkord, 2002: 127). This suggests a de facto operation of 'shallow commonality', a concept which I will take up later in this thesis.

Lesznyák's (2002, 2004) case study of ELF encounters at an international youth conference arrives at conclusions consistent with those of Firth (1990, 1996) and Meierkord (1990, 1998) in that her subjects accomplish topic management successfully, in spite of linguistic uncertainty and the diverse socio-cultural backgrounds of the participants. Her subjects appear to construct cultural common ground which is neither Anglo-American nor explicitly the culture of the individual speaker (Lesznyák (2004: 238). There is a suggestion here of the 'third place' or 'third culture' referred to by Kramsch (1993) and Meierkord (2002).

Caroll (2004) drawing on a small corpus of low level Japanese students in quasi-natural conversation notes that delays, restarts and pauses by participants are not marks of dysfluency but on the contrary are ‘purposeful’ and ‘illustrate a high level of finesse’ (Caroll, 2004: 218). Caroll concludes by questioning the validity of quantitative approaches to fluency as applied to second language speakers.

Haegeman’s (2002) study of ‘foreigner talk’ in lingua franca telephone conversations between L2-users of differing levels of competence illustrates how communication is achieved through a process of simplification and accommodation.

All of the researchers quoted so far have stressed the ‘normality’ of L2 discourse and its success in achieving interactional goals and convergence between speakers using the available resources. However, L2-user conversation is not all sweetness and light: comity and normality are not always fully accomplished. James (2005) notes that ‘lack of proficiency’ prevents his teenage users of ELF from making appropriate semantic and structural ‘adjustments’ (James, 2005: 139).

Although House (2000, 2002) like Firth (1990, 1996) found that ELF users engaged in verbal solidarity by providing scaffolding for each other to facilitate the co-construction of utterances, she also identifies lack of co-operation in ELF, which exacerbates misunderstanding. The self-centred, mutuality-negating nature of the interactants’ behaviour in House’s data undermines the prevailing assumptions of rapport, relevance and politeness behind much recent interactional analysis of ELF. For House, ELF interaction in ELF ‘cannot be described using the metaphor of a dance’ (House, 1999: 85).

### **3.2.2 L2-user conversation and phraseology**

Studies of ELF conversations suggest that formulaic language is used less than in ENL encounters or used differently. Meierkord (1998, 2000, 2005), for example, in her



corpus of ELF conversation by students in an international hall of residence, found that ‘non-native speakers’ tended to use a small range of formulaic sequences for openings and closings such as *How are you?* and *I’d better be off now* and very few phrasal verbs and idioms: in a corpus of 40,474 words of informal interactions, ELF/EFL users used a total of only 2 idioms, while ESL speakers used 5 idioms (Meierkord, 2005: 98).

House (2002: 254) notes the ‘dearth’ of gambits and discourse markers in ELF conversation, which contributes to the impression of abrupt monologic turn-taking procedures. Many of the linguistic difficulties identified in House (2002 and 1993) are located in the area of formulaic strings functioning as discourse markers: responses such as *yeah, that’s right* and *yes, you know*. Sometimes the responses lead to pragmatic failure as a result of interpreting an idiomatic expression literally (House, 1993: 173).

Park (2003), like House, uncovers differences in the way L2-users deploy discourse markers compared to L1-users: he explores ‘non-native speaker’ interview discourse within a conversation analytic framework, and concludes that his advanced learners use discourse markers to accomplish turn-taking strategies in ways that differ from those of L1-users. They avoid pragmatic markers like *I mean* and show a preference for discourse connectors such as *but*.

Wong (2004) identifies the importance of collocational awareness in L1-users in their ability to anticipate possible turn completion, whereas L2-users ‘produce sentences or utterances that are (overly) correct grammatically but anomalous precisely because they combine words that do not collocate according to native speaker norms’ (Wong, 2004: 125).

Lesznyák (2004), intriguingly, suggests that ‘non-native speakers’ used more ‘gambits and routine formulas’ when interacting with ‘native-speakers’ (in EFL contexts) than when they interacted with other ‘non-native speakers’ in ELF contexts.

Finally, Ryan (forthcoming) transcribed 5,000 words of ‘NNS’ spoken interaction and found the frequency counts for ‘larger lexical chunks very low’ but that ‘smaller idiomatic units’ such as *you know*, *sort of* etc were ‘much more frequent’ (Ryan, personal communication).

### **3.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have outlined the predominance of a deficit view of ‘non-native’ speech in SLA studies, which parallels the idiomatic deficit we identified in chapter 2. In reaction to this native-centric view of the L2-user, we have described the emergence of an approach to ELF conversation which analyses international uses of English on their own interactive terms, as attempts to accomplish communication among speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In this context, idiomaticity seems to be less salient than in L1-conversation, in quantitative terms, but when it does occur there are signs that it serves a different set of functions. ‘Colorful idioms’ are noticeable by their absence in L2 use but ‘pragmatic phrases’ also occur with less frequency than in L1 discourse. These ‘avoidance’ patterns emerge clearly from the descriptions of ELF but no explanation is offered for why this should be the case. In the next chapter, we outline a theoretical approach to difference and diversity in language use which may help throw light on this puzzle.



## Chapter 4

### Socio-cultural approaches and dialogism

*the isle is full of noises,  
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.  
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments  
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices...*

*The Tempest Act III sc.ii*

## **4. Socio-cultural approaches and dialogism**

### **4.0 Introduction**

The description of naturally-occurring ELF encounters outlined in the previous chapter is often carried out from a perspective on spoken discourse as negotiated interaction within a socio-cultural framework as developed by scholars such as Vygotsky, Bakhtin, and Goffman (Firth, 1990: 272-277; see also Kramsch, 1999 and Lantolf, 2000). In this chapter, I would like to sketch in those aspects of these scholars' work that have a bearing on the dialogic approach to conversation and idiomaticity that I will be adopting in this thesis. I will focus especially on how conversation in real time transforms single literal meanings to multiple pragmatic meanings; we look at the relationship between referential meaning and nonpropositional idiomatic meaning, and, finally, we will consider conversation as the co-construction of interpersonal meaning. I will also suggest how a socio-cultural approach can help throw light on the puzzle of idiomaticity.

### **4.1 Vygotsky**

For Vygotsky, the mind is defined and structured by the broader social and cultural system; higher mental functions (such as rational thought) originate in social activity and the interplay of meanings co-constructed by individuals through language.

Language is a means for organising mental activity; it begins in social contexts, in interpersonal interaction and evolves into intrapersonal inner speech. Meaning is not produced in a vacuum but is the outcome of social interaction in particular contexts.

Thus, the literal meaning of words or utterances is subject to modification in particular contexts of use, under the pressure of online construction of meaning by the participants and the forging of interpersonal relationships. Vygotsky distinguishes between the stable, or conventional meaning of a word, and its 'sense', which refers to



the personal, and contextualized meanings that emerge from particular ways people deploy words. In this view, the dictionary definitions of words acquire pragmatic force through increased contextualisation and re-contextualisation. Lexis and grammar are, thus, ‘emergent’ concepts, not fixed abstractions (Hopper, 1998); interpersonal discourse plays a crucial role in the shaping of lexical and grammatical meaning; in sum, grammatical and lexico-semantic meanings evolve hand-in-hand with discourse and pragmatics:

grammar would, on this view, be more like ‘frozen conversation’  
than ‘frozen semantics’.

(Hopper and Thompson, 1993: 358).

In this process of recontextualisation, the interpretation of utterances in conversation depends increasingly both on the linguistic information in the texts in which they are embedded and the interactional contexts in which they occur.

It is within this context that the inner speech of the individual evolves; inner speech grows out of the social context and shapes the individual’s psychological functioning. In inner speech the word ‘absorbs the sense of preceding and subsequent words, thereby extending almost without limit the boundaries of its meaning’ (Vygotsky, quoted by Wertsch, 1991: 43).

This approach to contextualised meaning can be applied to idiomatic competence as developed by Sinclair (2004) and other idiomatologists:

There is no discernible starting point for a word, there are no preconceptions, no prerequisites. Through the brutal clash of usage over the centuries, words have moved in meaning, and units of meaning have been forged consisting of more than one word.

(Sinclair, 2004: 160).

The transformation of literal meaning into pragmatic meaning is particularly evident in the institutional and non-compositional aspects of idiomaticity. Thus, collocational

fluency can be seen as the end product of a long process of exposure in specific contexts of interaction; it is the result of internalization of socially- mediated exposure to the pragmatic functions of idiomaticity from infancy to the emergence of inner speech at a later stage. The ‘appropriation’ of symbolic means by the individual, including idiomaticity is, as Johnson (2004) says, ‘the result of dialogic interaction between children and other members of their socio-cultural worlds’ (Johnson, 2004: 111) and is thus inseparable from ‘social memory’ (Wertsch, 1991: 27). The shifting and often multiple meanings of formulaic language only emerge in a socio-cultural-historical analysis of situated speech and cannot be found in the contextual vacuum of dictionary entries.

I will now go on to outline two approaches to ‘situated speech’ which stress the multivalent nature of utterances in their socio-cultural context, and I will again link the argument to the place of idiomaticity in conversation.

#### **4.2 Goffman’s ‘dialogic’ approach**

Goffman, like Vygotsky, questions the notion of unique, literal, meaning in language. For Goffman, literal meaning in conversation is transformed by the interaction and the ‘words we speak are often not our own’, but often ‘quoted directly or indirectly’ (Goffman, 1981: 3). Thus, the pragmatic force of an utterance does not lie in the semantic core of the words but in the relationship of the speakers to the context; in this sense, conversation is co-constructed by the participants (Goffman, 1981: 137).

As in Vygotsky’s theory, so too in Goffman, words ‘will not stay in place/will not stay still’. Vagueness, imprecision and ambiguity is the norm in Goffman’s conversational world. Ambiguity may take the form of irony, sarcasm, quotation, playfulness, mitigation (Goffman, 1981: 12). Disambiguating imprecision is achieved through



shared background knowledge and interpretation of indirectness is made possible by the participants' 'framing capabilities', which Goffman glosses as:

cues distinguishing special readings to apply across strips of bracketed communication, recasting otherwise conventional sense, as in making ironic asides, quoting another, joking and so forth.

(Goffman, 1981: 15).

Goffman's 'framing cues' recall Gumperz 'contextualisation cues', which refer to any verbal or nonverbal sign that helps speakers to facilitate the way in which utterances are meant to be interpreted. Contextualisation cues can be phonological, paralinguistic, code-switches, choice of lexical forms or formulaic expressions (Gumperz, 1992: 233). Cues for guiding interpretation are embedded in the physical and interpersonal setting and what Goffman (following Grice, 1975) refers to as 'conversational implicature'. These cues make up for the ellipsis and ambiguity inherent in spontaneous situated conversation. The appropriate interpretation and response to a statement or cue may only be recoverable from extended stretches of discourse, or what Goffman calls the 'backward reach of response' (Goffman, 1981: 42).

Goffman describes the 'framing cues' as 'stage directions' which facilitate the 'performance' of face-to-face talk, thus introducing one of the dominant metaphors in his work, that of the theatre. Each speaker plays many parts: 'code shifting is found to be present in almost every corner of conversational life' (Goffman, 1981: 127). In linguistic terms, these switches or changes of 'footing' are realised by, for example, the choice of direct or indirect speech, interjections, repetitions and choice of styles or discourse types (Goffman, 1981: 126). Through various forms of reported speech, quotation or discourse markers, we can embed an entirely different speaker or speakers into an utterance (Goffman, 1981: 149). Thus, the 'forms of talk' analyzed by Goffman (1981) involve the speakers in the performance of many roles (speaker, animator,

author, principal); they are in a very specific way ‘theatrical’: speakers employ ‘discourse theatrics, alludings, simulations’ and the audience ‘takes the part for the whole and co-operatively’ pieces out the imperfections of talk with their thoughts:

we can rely on our audience to take the part for the whole and  
co-operatively catch our meaning  
(Goffman, 1981: 2).

Goffman gives the example of ‘collusion’; this occurs when we play out a narrative with winks and nudges in the presence of the person ‘excolluded’ – this kind of role-play Goffman refers to as ‘playful transformation’ (Goffman, 1981: 153). We transform interaction when we mock an accent or dialect in the manner of stage actors; we transform our role in the interaction when we corroborate our own words with an adage or a saying (Goffman, 1981: 150). Idiomatic language, especially proverbs, is a playful or solemn invocation of an anonymous voice of authority.

In everyday conversation, the function of narrating and, for the addressee, ‘story listener’, are fundamental: narratives ‘provide a footing to which a very wide range of speakers and hearers can briefly shift’ (Goffman, 1981: 151). Conversation is shot through with different ‘voices’ (Goffman, 1974: 537); speakers, by echoing, ‘reporting’ or ‘quoting’ the words of others find refuge and protection from responsibility for their own words. These voices are often expressed in metaphoric and formulaic language, which distance the speaker from the directness of literal meaning (Goffman, 1974: 545). Formulaic expressions can thus signal changes of ‘footing’ and a switch to ‘echoic mention’ rather than ‘use’ of words or utterances (Sperber and Wilson, 1981, 1995).

In ‘Replies and Responses’ (1981), Goffman describes his approach to ‘talk’ as ‘dialogic’ (Goffman, 1981: 5) which is a term commonly associated with the work of Bakhtin (1981, 1986). Elsewhere, Goffman refers to the Russian dialogic tradition (Goffman, 1974: 529), and while there are differences in emphasis between the two



writers (sociological in Goffman's case, philosophical in Bakhtin's), Goffman and Bakhtin share a view of language as a tool in the shaping of interpersonal relations and of meaning as something which is not given but shaped by the pressure and flow of discourse which has a direct bearing on the issues explored in this thesis. The 'polyphony' in Goffman's work, expressed through the reporting or 'quotative' function of speech, also plays an important part in Bakhtin's approach to language. In the next section, we will note some interesting parallels between Goffman's concepts of 'footing' and 'multiple embeddings' and the multi-voiced nature of Bakhtin's dialogism.

### **4.3 Bakhtin's dialogic approach**

Like Vygotsky and Goffman, Bakhtin sees word meaning, or the utterance, as 'situated' in time and place and carrying the accumulated associations of use in particular speech communities. In this survey, I will focus on four concepts in Bakhtin's work which inform the analysis of conversation in this thesis: *dialogism*, *heteoglossia*, *genre* and *carnival*.

Bakhtin's *dialogism* stresses the social nature of language: the individual's use of language draws on multiple voices from the socio-cultural past and present. An utterance is not the product of a solo performance but the coming together of two or more voices. Speech is thus always addressed to someone and this *addressivity* plays a part in shaping the language produced (compare the 'recipient design' of conversational analysis: Sacks et al, 1974: 727). In Bakhtin's view of language, words as *utterances* (not as parts of sentences) reflect the presence, expectations and potential response of the addressee; but words also come trailing clouds of meaning from the past, meanings acquired from repeated use in specific socio-cultural contexts:

when we select words in the process of constructing an utterance, we by no means take them from the system of language in their neutral dictionary form. We usually take them from other utterances.

(Bakhtin, 1986: 87)

Thus, language is ‘double-voiced’: it carries the individual’s intended meanings plus meanings previously attached to the words in the utterance. An obvious example of ‘double-voicedness’ is reported speech; but language displays a more general ‘quotative’ function in which many voices may resonate at the same time (Bakhtin, 1981: 304).

Thus, there is, in Bakhtin’s work, a constant to-ing and fro-ing between language forms and the social relationships in which they are set; word meaning (and by extension, utterance meaning) derives from specific contexts of use, not from semantic reference in isolation:

the word exists in other people’s mouths, in other people’s concrete contexts, serving other people’s intentions.

(Bakhtin, 1981: 294).

In this sense, we share the meanings of words or utterances with all previous users; when we exchange words or utterances we exchange, too, the assumptions they carry, assumptions inscribed into their frequent and typical collocations: idiomaticity is an intensely dialogic phenomenon.

*Heteroglossia* can be glossed as ‘many-languagedness’ (Holquist, 2002: 1) but the Greek root of the word also suggests the simultaneous presence of ‘other’ languages within a particular language. Bakhtin opposes unified language or ‘monologism’ to heteroglossia as he opposes authority with linguistic diversity, ‘the flattening of vibrant heteroglossia by central institutions’ (Hirshkop, 1999: 257).



It will be seen that the concept of heteroglossia can usefully inform the debate on prescriptive language norms in ELF and the role of the ‘native-speaker’ in mediating those norms.

*Speech genres* are ‘relatively stable types of utterances in various areas of human activity’ (Bakhtin, 1986: 60). A genre ‘reflects the specific conditions and goals of each activity, not only through its content but its style, its lexical, grammatical and phraseological resources’ (Bakhtin, 1986: 60). On an interpersonal level, each speech genre ‘has its own typical conception of the addressee, and this defines it is a genre’ (Bakhtin, 1986: 95). Thus, the perception a speaker has of the degree of familiarity with the subject, the expectations of the addressee and the anticipated response over repeated encounters all contribute to the formation of speech genres (Bakhtin, 1986: 95).

Anticipating the concept of ‘semantic prosody’, Bakhtin refers to ‘the typical generic expression’ as ‘the word’s stylistic aura’; this aura belongs ‘not to the word itself but to the genre in which the word usually functions. It is an echo of the generic whole that resounds in the word’ (Bakhtin, 1986: 97).

The view of genre as defined by Bakhtin provides us with a framework within which to interpret the nature of L2 conversation and the relative degrees of competence in different generic types of L1 and L2-users alike:

The better our command of genres, the more freely we employ them...many people who have an excellent command of a language often feel quite helpless in certain spheres because they do not have a command of the generic forms  
(Bakhtin, 1986: 80).

Bakhtin gives the example of someone who has generic competence in academic spheres but remains silent or awkward in ‘social conversation’ (Bakhtin, 1986: 80). Thus the concept of speech genres can help throw light on the relative nature of competence and fluency.

*Carnival* is the potential in language for subversive transformation of ‘authoritative’ forms of cultural expression; it is ‘a boundless world of humorous forms ...a vast and manifold literature of parody’ (Bakhtin, 1968: 4). Carnival is the temporary liberation from the established order, ‘a second life outside officialdom’ (Bakhtin, 1968: 6, 10).

In language terms, carnival refashions and reinvents what is fixed and finished. It works through irony and the parodying of the rules, norms and prohibitions of society, with its hierarchies and stratifications (Bakhtin, 1968: 10-11). This subversive refashioning can take the form of a complete unit, ‘something like a proverb’, which is uttered in a way which is inappropriate to the context. Bakhtin also refers to ‘grammatical parody’ and ‘flippant grammar’ (Bakhtin, 1968: 20) whereby correct grammar is debunked by bringing it down to a ‘bodily level’. Carnival language is ‘non-canonical by its very nature’ (Bakhtin, 1968: 30).

In this thesis, I look at idiomaticity in ELF conversation not only as a manifestation of ‘heteroglossia’ but of Bakhtin’s carnivalesque. ELF can be seen as an example of what Bakhtin refers to as ‘a new type of communication’ which ‘always creates new forms of speech or a new meaning given to the old forms’ (Bakhtin, 1968: 16). Thus, rather than merely draw its norms from the authority of ENL, ELF may have the power to transgress those norms and transform them; indeed as Crystal points out some of the territories of the expanding circle (ELF, EFL) may be bending English to suit their purposes (Crystal, 1997: 138).

In this view of ‘carnival’, the interaction between official and unofficial forms of English is a process which creates a new synthesis, different from either ENL or regional forms of Englishes.

But the power of carnival to overturn fixed and authorised versions of language, as Holquist points out, is far from absolute; there are constraints on freedom, not only in



the existence of rules and norms as ‘extrapersonal social forces’ (Holquist, 2002: 37) but in the constant presence of ‘the other’, which, in the case of ELF, is the other speaker the other culture, be it L1 or L2:

Bakhtin’s clear-eyed insistence on the more disturbing implications of being fated to the condition of dialogue have frequently been ignored in the service of establishing a mindless pluralism or a toothless ‘carnivalism’.

(Holquist, 2002: 181)..

The L2-user is ‘condemned’ to dialogism, as this is an inherent quality of language, not an optional extra. The L2-user of English is a ‘situated subject’ whose specific place is defined precisely by ‘in-between-ness’. In sum, in ELF, the speaker does not create newly minted phrases from nothing: ELF is constrained, though not determined by, the norms of ENL; the L2-user is caught between ENL and ELF, between the forces of convention and creativity.

#### **4.4 Dialogism, idiomaticity and L2 conversation.**

In this section, I focus more closely on the relevance of Bakhtin’s work to idiomaticity in ELF. A good place to begin an examination of the relevance of ‘dialogism’ to the puzzle of idiomaticity in L2 conversation is the following quote from Sinclair (2004: 30):

words begin to retain traces of repeated events in their usage, and expectations of events such as collocations arise.

This dual orientation of lexical items looking back and forth is an important principle of Bakhtin’s dialogic approach to language. The principle extends to ‘semantic prosody’, which both Bakhtin (1986) and Louw (1993) describe as an ‘aura’ of meanings with which a form is imbued by its typical generic uses (Bakhtin, 1986: 87) or its collocates (Louw, 1993: 157). This constellation of meanings around a word represent both the

generic character of the utterance but also the difficulty in acquiring it for those who do not belong to the social group that employs the genre.

We have seen that, according to Bakhtin, the words we use do not come to us empty of meaning or with fixed semantic significance but they bring with them the traces of past uses by particular groups of participants in the accomplishment of particular goals that, in turn are shaped by cultural, historical and institutional forces (Kelly Hall, 2002: 11). This observation acquires particular force in the case of 'institutionalized' language such as idiomaticity. The more frequent the use of a particular collocation, formulae or idiom the more resistant it is to negotiation by the individual speaker.

The more institutionalized force there is behind their use the more systematized or codified their shapes become  
(Kelly Hall, 2002: 10).

Idiomaticity, in Bakhtin's terms, has an 'authority' that determines the norms which shape our utterances. Kelly Hall's description of the Bakhtinian notion of authority in language may throw light on the elusive nature of idiomaticity in L2-user conversation:

in the most extreme form of authority, the meaning of such a resource is reified, making its history invisible and, more significantly, the possibility for change or modification of the meaning seem impossible. And, in using the resource, the participant does not acknowledge, indeed, cannot see, the historical voices attached to it. The more institutionalized the meanings of the resources are, the more authoritative their voices and the more difficult they are to change.  
(Kelly Hall, 1995: 212).

Formulaic language and idiomaticity, as institutionalized forms of language, are a good exemplification of the invisible power of historical voices attached to linguistic resources. 'Native-speaker' or members of speech communities, real or 'imagined' (Anderson, 1991), participate in the collective nature of formulaic routines and can, to



some extent, bend them into new shapes in the process of expressing their identity and modifying their relationships:

In what Bakhtin calls double-voiced utterances, the conventional meanings residing in the words are recognized, but they are used to respond to the conditions of the moment, in ways which may or may not be how they are typically meant.

(Kelly Hall, 1995: 212).

Thus, to take one example, the ‘native-speaker’ often opts to literalise the figurative force of an idiomatic expression in a particular context and in this way brings the idiomatic expression ‘down to earth’; by subverting its original meaning, the speaker releases new meanings from its component parts (Bakhtin, 1968: 16). This refashioning of a fixed phrase is one way in which an L1 speaker ‘appropriates’ the language for him or herself. It is a freedom which extends to genres in general but, as Bakhtin says ‘genres must be fully mastered in order to be manipulated freely’ (Bakhtin, 1986: 80). For this capacity to exist, speakers are exposed to ‘concrete utterances’ in ‘live speech communication with people around (them)’. Thus, utterances ‘enter our experience and consciousness together’ (Bakhtin, 1986: 95) in the process of our becoming members of speech communities.

This process is clearly an option, too, for the L2-user of English, but one that is not easily available in the conditions in which ELF/EFL is usually learnt and acquired. The process of ‘expropriating’ an L2, especially the idiomatic system of an L2 ‘is a difficult and complicated process’ because language is ‘shot through’ or ‘populated’ with the pragmatic intentions of others; in the case of idiomaticity, it might be more accurate to say an L2 is ‘overpopulated’ with the ‘intentions of others’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 294). Bakhtin’s dialogism calls attention to the complexities of finding a voice, of being communicatively competent, in heteroglossic speech situations where ‘voices are felt

by the speaker to be in conflict' (Cazden, 1989: 122). One dimension of this complexity is the notion of shared knowledge, to which we now turn.

#### **4.5 Shared knowledge**

A major socio-cultural concept which I will be drawing on in explaining the puzzle of idiomaticity in ELF is shared knowledge. For Sinclair 'shared knowledge' is, on the one hand, a principle of textual interpretation (2004: 15) but Sinclair (1991) also defines shared knowledge in broader terms as one of the cultural factors 'signalled nowhere in the text, but which just have to be known' and which constitute, with phraseology, a key component of 'native-like' fluency. In Goffman's approach, the speaker's utterances assume the respondent's 'background knowledge' (Goffman, 1981: 34) which Goffman, drawing on Rommetveit (1974) elaborates into a picture of the interlocutors' 'intersubjective mental world' which is located in 'a shared social world, established and continuously modified by the participants in acts of communication' (Rommetveit, 1974: 23).

But 'shared knowledge' is more than the product of substantive cultural knowledge. It is also a process whereby dialogue is co-constructed. For Garfinkel (1972), shared knowledge is 'shared rules of interpretation': it is common sense knowledge of how things are said, an open-ended process brought about by the participants; conversational order is thus a contingent, ongoing accomplishment; 'shared agreement refers to various social methods of accomplishing the member's recognition that something was said according to a rule' (Garfinkel, 1972: 320). Thus, shared knowledge is negotiated throughout the discourse; it is an active process of sharing *ways of speaking*.

For both Garfinkel and Bakhtin, shared knowledge of language alone is not enough to interpret utterances. For Bakhtin, shared knowledge can be understood as the background of 'other concrete utterances, on the same theme' against which a



particular utterance is understood (Bakhtin, 1986: 281) by both speaker and listener. Thus, every utterance is 'produced' as much by the addressee as by the speaker. In dialogism, shared knowledge is a matter of active understanding: 'understanding and response are dialectically merged...one is impossible without the other' (Bakhtin, 1986: 282).

This shared understanding affects the pragmatics of idiomaticity. Bakhtin refers to the way each generation, each group 'infects with its own intention certain aspects of language...imposing on them specific semantic nuances and specific axiological overtones; thus it can create slogan-words, curse words, praise-words and so forth' (Bakhtin, 1986: 290).

Bakhtin points out that each individual tries to make these expressions one's own but the process of appropriation is more difficult with some words than others:

Many words stubbornly resist, remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who has appropriated them...they cannot be assimilated into his context and fall out of it; it is as if they put themselves in quotation marks against the will of the speaker.  
(Bakhtin, 1986: 294).

A crucial consequence of the presence of shared knowledge or contextual information is that idiomatic utterances may be ellipted (Wertsch, 1991: 41; Carter and McCarthy, 1997a: 15) or accompanied by vagueness of reference (Channel, 1994). The cultural distance or alienness of the utterance is then increased for those who do not share in the speech community's socio-cultural knowledge or common ways of speaking.

Thus, shared knowledge is also a key factor in understanding the concept of 'commonality', which can be summed up in terms of those linguistic and socio-cultural factors that create a greater or lesser sense of familiarity or distance between the speakers.

#### **4.6 Deep and shallow commonality**

Commonality is the degree of shared cultural experience and knowledge between speakers. The roots of the concept of 'deep' and 'shallow commonality' can be traced to work on speech communities and participation in a shared set of norms (Labov, 1972), activated and deepened by the quality and frequency of interaction (Gumperz, 1971). 'Commonality' is also central in theories of 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 1998) which Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999) distinguish from speech communities precisely in terms of 'deep' and 'shallow' features and/or the 'density' of networks with which they are associated (Holmes and Meyerhoff, 1999: 179). The concepts of 'weak ties' and 'peripheral' members of a 'community of practice' are of particular relevance to the 'deep' and 'shallow' commonality developed in this thesis. The concept of commonality also builds on the work of Schumann on social, psychological and cultural distance and its impact on acquisition (Schumann, 1976; Dörnyei et al, 2004).

In the approach taken here, it is hypothesised that speakers can be related by a deeper or more shallow commonality. It is, however, important to stress that 'deep commonality' is built on 'cultural artefacts of a particular kind' and, like Anderson's 'imagined communities', is not a genetic or biological essence (Anderson, 1991: 4).

Commonality is constructed in time and place, in particular discourse and socio-cultural situations: it is a cline, and speakers can move closer or further along the cline, in both L1 and L2 contexts. Thus, the concept of 'commonality' captures tendencies, not absolutes. This means the L2-user of English in lingua franca contexts usually shares less, in personal or cultural terms, with his or her interlocutors, than do members of the same speech community; usually, L2-users of ELF are not cultural insiders as they are in their own L1 speech community, but belong to the more disparate and diverse culture of the global village (Johnson, 1990: 306).



L2-users tend to be more competent in ideational functions which are ‘context-reduced’ such as professional or academic proficiency (Johnson, 1990: 306) and, McKay claims, ‘their use of English may be restricted to largely formal domains of use’ (McKay, 2003: 18). Thus, the context-dependent, interpersonal features of spoken grammar would be less common in ELF. Implicit in this is that instrumental, transactional language will be more typical of ELF than the language of more intimate contexts.

There are, however, important, exceptions to these typical contexts of use of ELF, as we shall see when we examine the use of English as a common language between couples and friends from different L1 backgrounds. In general, deep commonality can be seen as the product of acquiring a language for integrative purposes within a speech community; for L1 users, this process begins from one’s early year (Davies, 2003: 67). It is my hypothesis that idiomatic competence is inseparable from deep commonality, real or imagined, and that the difficulty L2-users in EFL/ELF contexts face arises from the relative absence of deep commonality (see Adolphs and Durrow, 2004, and Dörnyei et al, 2004, for research which highlights the role of ‘sociocultural adaptation’ in the acquisition of formulaic sequences).

The fluency of informal conversation is closely related to what the speakers have in common; much in face-to-face interaction, unlike writing, can be taken for granted or, literally, taken as ‘said’. The speakers share a common code, memories, knowledge and culture, which may go far back to their childhood or other formative experiences and are often located at the level of ‘the collective subconscious’; they share a ‘deep commonality’. This shared culture shapes the nature of the ‘native-speaker’s’ interpersonal relations and the language in which they are expressed. It is within these terms that Alexander (1983) interprets the socio-cultural dimension of phraseology or the ‘lexicalisation of an element of the common memory of a language community’

(Alexander, 1983: 3). In Bakhtinian terms, this commonality is expressed through the dialogic nature of language:

Each utterance is filled with the echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality (sic) of the sphere of speech communication.

(Bakhtin, 1986: 91).

Johnson (1990) argues that ELF, with its typically loose chance encounters and contingent relationships, cannot evolve the depth and multi-semantic complexity of lexico-grammar, with its accumulation of shared memories, associations and experiences. In Anderson's (1991) terms, ELF has not yet evolved into an 'imagined community', with its own print-culture, capitalism, standardised linguistic codes, dictionaries, official histories, representatives, and so on; rather than a 'temporally shared world' (Blakar and Rommetveit, 1979: 362) ELF resembles a 'temporarily shared world'.

The hypothesis developed in this thesis is that while idiomaticity stubbornly resists submission to the L2-user because, as a socio-linguistic phenomenon, idiomaticity is not a neutral medium but deeply embedded in commonality, that commonality can be achieved in some circumstances in ELF as it can in ENL. It is not whether one is an L1 or L2-user that ultimately counts – it is the way the L2 is used to forge more or less intimate relationships, whether in the personal, professional or broadly cultural sphere, that will influence the degree and kind of idiomaticity that is acquired (Adolphs and Durrow, 2004; Dörnyei et al, 2004).

One can, in other words, achieve 'deep commonality' in some speech genres, in Bakhtin's sense, but not in others, depending on which discourse communities one belongs to, depending on the responsiveness of one's addressee, and to what extent one reduces the cultural distance with one's interlocutor. It must not be forgotten that



ELF, as reflected in my corpus, is used by married couples as a medium not only for communicating but achieving understanding; it is used by colleagues to explore their common professional concerns in depth and, finally, it is used by journalists, politicians and members of the business community to carve out peace between nations in conflict. The same speakers who achieve a depth of commonality when performing these roles may well switch to a shallower voice when negotiating a chance encounter at an airport, a hall of residence or international conference.

In sociocultural approaches to conversation, the texts created by people at various moments in their lives are always in part a transformation of received meanings; people are constantly ‘(re)creating their everyday worlds’ (Kelly Hall, 1995: 211). L2-users are thus able to create their own network within the framework of existing genres:

within such a network, norms, standards and interpretive procedures are likely to be developed, becoming collectively recognizable as a style, peculiar to or at least characteristic of, the specific network. So standards of appropriacy, norms of spoken interaction...become established over the course of regular communications.

(Firth, 1990: 277).

#### **4.7 From speech to dialogism: conclusion**

In the last two chapters, we have moved from laboratory specimens of ‘speech’ to naturally-occurring conversational data; we have moved from a deficit view of ‘non-native’-speaker conversation to a concept of L2-conversation examined on its own terms of communicative achievement. The theoretical framework we have decided to draw on as the best way to throw light on the way L2-speakers create and re-create their own worlds in time and space is broadly socio-cultural, and dialogic in the sense associated with the work of Bakhtin.

This thesis will go on to ‘dialogise’ corpus data: it will look behind patterns of frequency to the face-to-face interaction which produced those patterns; in Bakhtinian

terms, we will look at corpus data as a manifestation of the inherent heteroglossia in language; this approach will re-interpret 'violations' of L1 norms as a natural manifestation of the playful, creative energy in language and the inevitable consequence of contextualised, linguistic diversity. Corpus linguists are, by definition, working within a tradition which sees language in its social context.

Corpora capture the 'here-and-now' of situated language, they freeze it, in time and place. However, the quantitative data of a concordance or frequency list cannot tell us much if we do not ask questions about the social context and interactional pressures that give rise to the data. The empirical impersonality of corpus data provides the distance or 'outsideness' that Bakhtin says is required if we are to perceive 'the underlying patterns that are hidden in the apparent spontaneity of our speech' (Holquist, 2002: 195).

It is to corpus techniques of empirical analysis of naturally-occurring data to which we now turn



# Chapter 5

## Data and methodology

*'You must use', said the gentleman, 'for all these purposes, combinations and modifications (in primary colours) of mathematical figures which are susceptible of proof and demonstration. This is the new discovery. This is fact. This is taste'.*

Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*.

*'one single instance may be enough'.*

Haegman (2002: 138).

*'...caught between a rock and a hard place'*

Kasper and Dahl (1991: 245)

## **5. Data and methodology**

### **5.0 Introduction**

The L2 speaker data in the present study is drawn from my own L2-user Corpus (SUEC) of 200,000 words; as this includes the contributions of L1-user interlocutors, for quantitative measures I have extracted a 160,000 word sub-corpus of exclusively L2-user discourse.

Why did I build this corpus? The starting point for the thesis was an intuition, based on thirty years of experience of language teaching, that even advanced users of English as a Lingua Franca avoid or have difficulty with idiomaticity. I needed to check my intuition that the difference between successful ‘native’ as opposed to ‘non-native’ users of English lay essentially in the area of idiomaticity, especially in the production of spontaneous speech. Many of the questions that challenged this intuition arose from the innovative insights of corpus linguistics: to what extent were the insights of first language corpora applicable to the L2-user, especially as regards the central feature of phraseology?

In order to compare the way ‘native speakers’ and ‘non-native speakers’ process idiomaticity in online conversation (as opposed to written or learning situations) I needed to build my own corpus of L2-users of English. A corpus has been defined as ‘a collection of written or transcribed spoken texts, typically in machine readable form’ (McCarthy, 1998a; Kennedy, 1998). There were ample corpora of ‘native speaker’ conversation but none of L2-users of English as an international lingua franca -and especially successful users rather than people still learning the basics of the language. In this chapter, I describe the main issues surrounding the collection and use of original corpus data, the methodology and analytic procedures adopted.



## 5.1 The data

### 5.1.1 Previous L2-user corpora

Apart from the L2 learner, little research is available into what adult users actually do with the language in ELF contexts. Cook's (2002) edited collection of articles *Portraits of the L2-user* does not include any analyses of naturally-occurring samples of L2-user speech. The International Corpus of English (Greenbaum 1991, 1996) is based on ESL/nativized varieties. A number of learner corpora are available based, for example, on students' written work (e.g. Granger, 1993, 1998a) which are useful for studying interlanguage. The first attempts to build L2-user *spoken* corpora within the framework of EFL or ELF are summed up below.

Early research into authentic L2-user conversation has focussed mainly on discourse in institutionalized settings, such as business negotiations (Firth, 1990; Erlich and Wagner, 1995; Firth, 1996) and academic advising sessions (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1996).

Cheng and Warren (1999b, 2001) draw on a 50-hour corpus of 'native' and 'non-native speakers' in Hong Kong'. Pölzl (2003) bases her analysis on a corpus of 20 hours of naturally-occurring conversations among ELF users of 'rather fluent' but 'diverse proficiency' levels in the Middle East. Meierkord (1998, 2000, 2002, 2005) refers to a small corpus of ELF speakers collected in a student hall of residence for overseas students in Great Britain and comprises 40,474 words or a total of 24 hours of informal interactions; the speakers participating in the conversations include both less competent and more competent speakers drawn from the 'outer circle' and 'expanding circle' of L2-users (Kachru, 1985). Lesznyák (2004) bases her research into ELF on a 40-minute, quasi-natural discussion between 'NNS of English recorded at an international conference in the Netherlands' (2004: 94).

A corpus of spoken ELF in academic settings (0.5 million words) is currently being collected at Tampere University (Mauranen, 2003) and a corpus of general ELF (1 million words) is being built at the University of Vienna (Seidlhofer, 2004).

### 5.1.2 The present corpus

My corpus differs from previous work on ‘non-native’ speech in focusing on natural, spontaneous speech produced by *proficient* L1- users of English as a foreign language from a number of different L1 backgrounds. Figure 5.1 summarises the basic design of my L2-user corpus.

<b>Date of recordings:</b> 2000-2003
<b>Type:</b> Spoken, spontaneous, unscripted.
<b>Length of complete corpus</b> (including ‘native-speaker’ interlocutors): 200,000 words
<b>Length of L2 sub-corpus:</b> 160,000 words
<b>Number of participants/successful users:</b> 42
<b>Gender:</b> 50% male, 50% female
<b>Nationality:</b> European (18) and Latin American (6). Countries represented: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Uruguay, Venezuela; Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, The Czech Republic, Finland, France, German, Greece, Holland, Hungary, The Lebanon, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey.
<b>Age:</b> Adult: 25-50.
<b>Education:</b> University graduates and postgraduates.
<b>Profession:</b> EFL teachers, trainers, lecturers, applied linguists but also politicians, journalists, business people, publishers and administrators.
<b>Level of English:</b> Advanced/Proficient.
<b>Register:</b> Informal or non-formal conversation and some informal interviews between friends.
<b>Roles:</b> Family (married couples), friends, colleagues, acquaintances.
<b>Setting:</b> home, office, car, train, restaurant, cafe, hotel
<b>Topics:</b> social chat, gossip, conversation about work, friends, politics, some discussion.

**Figure 5.1: summary of the SUE Corpus.**



### 5.1.2.1 The size of the corpus

*'Small is not beautiful'*

(Sinclair, 2004: 189).

*'Size isn't everything'*

(Carter and McCarthy, 2001: 337).

At 200,000 words, my corpus of Successful Users of English (SUEs) is tiny by the standards of other corpora, e.g. the BNC (The British National Corpus) is 100 million words; the Bank of English is about 500 million words and the 'small' CANCODE (The Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English) is a modest 5 million words. But the importance of size is relative to the purpose to which the corpus is put (Barnbrook, 1996: 25). If one were to use a small corpus to investigate single items of vocabulary it would be hopelessly inadequate. Moreover, if the objective were to use this small corpus to identify the kind of opaque idiom we often refer to as 'colourful' or 'metaphorical' (the *kick the bucket* variety) it would again be pointless as these idioms by their very nature are rare (Moon (1998a : 64; Strässler, 1982: 81; Norrick, 1985: 14). If however, we turn to high frequency grammatical structures even a small corpus can reveal a lot about significant patterns (Meyer, 2002: 33; McEnery and Wilson, 1996: 65; Barnbrook, 1996: 25). Although most lexical items are infrequent and require a large corpus to yield significant patterns, this is not true of many lexico-grammatical categories. If we turn to what Moon (1998a) refers to as 'fixed expressions' and Wray refers to as 'formulaic expressions' even a small corpus is useful. McCarthy and Carter (2002) suggest that in the specific case of collocation and in the case of clusters, especially 2- and 3-word clusters (*you know, you see, sort of, and then, a bit of*) a small corpus can uncover a considerable number of relevant tokens, as this manifestation of idiomaticity is actually very common indeed (McCarthy and Carter, 2002: 30; McCarthy Spöttl, 2003: 133).

In my thesis, I will adopt a corpus-based approach to two areas of idiomaticity: the main focus will be on clusters (and, in particular, 2-word phrases: TWPs) but I will also report on the results of a manual search for ‘colourful opaque idioms’ and other multi-word units (Chapter 11) which will be examined through a largely qualitative analysis.

#### **5.1.2.2 The researcher-as-participant**

In this study, my role as researcher overlaps with my role as participant; I am both an insider and an outsider. I take part in some of the encounters in the ELF corpus as an interlocutor, mostly with people I know (relatives, friends, colleagues). Even in the case of the TV discussion between Greeks and Turks, the culture and the topics discussed are entities I am familiar with. When I was present at the speech event, I was always a participant, merely engaging in conversation with the informants: I was participating as a friend or colleague with whom those taking part were familiar. As someone who had ‘acquired’ English as a child of immigrant parents in the UK and as a friend and/or colleague of the participants, my involvement in some of the conversations afforded me insights I would not otherwise have had. As an ambiguous case of a ‘native/non-native’ speaker (my ‘mother-tongue’ is a dialect of modern Greek - almost forgotten - while my ‘first language’ is English), I had the unique advantage of being both insider and outsider in the process of data collection and interpretation. Being present as an active participant in the ‘context of situation’ enriches my knowledge of the personal and socio-cultural background of the participants; it gives me direct knowledge of the specific speech event and shared rules of interpretation. Given my ‘direct engagement with the lives’ of those I was to study, I am, I hope, in a better position to tell the ‘inside story’ of idiomaticity in ELF (Edge and Richards, 1998: 341) and its implications for the expression of identity (Joseph, 2004: xi); wearing my ‘native-speaker’ hat, I have known what it is like to ‘fix’ my ‘non-native’ interlocutors with a



formulated phrase; as a child of immigrants, I have also known the feeling of being ‘fixed’ (excluded or stereotyped) by a formulated phrase. This dual role gives me a ‘double vision’ on the data; it enables me to take part and to stand back.

The arguments articulated by Cook (1990) concerning the difficulty of interpreting pragmatic intent from the point of view of an outsider poring over a transcription of dialogue torn from its context, including the context of participants’ previous conversations (Cook, 1990: 10) are, to some extent, minimized by the researcher being himself, in my case, an ‘insider’. One can never get inside another’s brain; all one can do is piece out their likely intent from as much previous knowledge and personal intimacy as one can gather. The researcher tries to relate utterances and language choices to the context in which they occur, as they unfold in real time; the speakers’ relationship, their socio-cultural background knowledge and the way speakers themselves orient towards particular ways of ordering their conversation all shape linguistic choice. It is a methodology that attempts to ‘understand the others’ world’ and ‘see things from their point of view’ (Bremer et al, 1996: 31). But there is also an empirical reality to account for in order to strengthen the external reliability and validity of the ethnographic interpretation; this involves making available ‘an appropriate selection of the records and rationale of the research process’ (Edge and Richards, 1998: 351) a process which I describe in the remainder of this chapter.

#### **5.1.2.3 Collecting the samples**

In collecting the samples of ELF speech, it was important to ensure that the resulting data was ‘natural’. This involved more than simply turning on a cassette recorder and asking people to talk. I had to avoid the ‘observer’s paradox’: ‘by observing something, you change its natural behaviour’ (Meyer, 2002: 57). When asking if I could record people or have them record themselves, I avoided specifying the precise linguistic

nature of my research, so the subjects would not self-consciously avoid using idiomatic language or, conversely, attempt to include more idiomatic phenomena than they would in normal circumstances. They were asked to record themselves ‘just talking’ with their friend, colleague or partner. When I was present, for example, at home, in a car, an aeroplane, cafe, or hotel room with a friend or colleague, the conversation ranged spontaneously over matters of mutual interest. My participants knew only that I was investigating ELF but not the precise nature of my research interests.

Most sample texts were 5,000 words and over, a length which allows participants to ‘settle down’ and use the English they would normally use. This is especially true of the data which friends and married couples recorded at home, at work or in cafes, in the researcher’s absence.

#### **5.1.2.4 The types of genres included in the corpus**

As human beings, we engage in conversation more than in any other kind of discourse. It was appropriate therefore that conversation – ‘the quintessence of spoken language’ (Svartvik, 1996: 10) - should be the dominant genre in a corpus of English as an international language which, when complete, might inform the work of teachers, learners, syllabus designers and materials writers. The SUE corpus involves mostly speech produced spontaneously in informal conversation between friends and colleagues in ELF contexts, with some more structured material based on informal interviews with adult L2-users. None of the speech events took place in the UK, USA or other BANA countries (Holliday, 1994).

All of the samples are unscripted and the vast majority are dialogues rather than monologues. There are two talks delivered at ELT conferences, in the informal, interactive style typical of the genre. Finally, there is a chaired TV discussion between representatives of the Greek and Turkish communities of Cyprus, non-formal in style,



which seemed to me be a unique example of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) deployed in the creation of international rapport by the kind of professional users of English that our learners might aspire to emulate, and therefore consistent with the overall aims of the thesis. In a sense, this exceptional discourse is the most important in that it illustrates more than any other of my samples the importance of ELF in the achievement not only of international *communication* but international *understanding* (Maalouf, 2000: 113; Kramsch, 1999: 142; Bremer et al, 1996: 234). The role of idiomaticity in ELF should be seen in this broad context of facilitating rapport, understanding and the expression of identity rather than the mere exchange of information, which would clearly be inadequate in the process of building peace between two communities, as is the case in Cyprus and in many other ‘trouble-spots’ around the world where English is the language of political negotiations (Dovring, 1997).

#### **5.1.2.5 The length of individual texts in the corpus**

There are 50 texts in the corpus, most of which are about 5,000 words in length. The longest is 10,000 words (the Greeks and the Turks). Some samples are shorter or longer than the 5,000 word average. This length facilitates the inclusion of coherent conversations. As a measure of comparison, the spoken component of the International Corpus of English has many samples that total 2,000 words in length (Meyer, 2002: 39; Greenbaum, 1991: 87) and the maximum length of the spoken BNC samples is 10,000 words (Aston and Bunard, 1998: 33).

Meyer (2002) suggests it is better to include more texts from many different speakers than fewer texts from a small number of speakers as this would seem to ensure greater representativeness of the samples. In the case of ELF, with its worldwide diversity, this seems a valid approach and it is the one I have adopted.

#### **5.1.2.6 Determining the range of speakers**

There are 42 different ‘subjects’ in my SUE corpus (I am excluding the L1-user interlocutors and the L2 interlocutors who are not ratified SUEs) and they were chosen to represent the kind of use of English as a lingua franca that might usefully inform the teaching of English worldwide. The subjects represent a total of 24 different countries; ten speakers are from Latin America and the rest are from European countries. Ideally, I would have liked to represent more countries but this was simply not practical within the constraints of a conventional Ph.D thesis. However, my SUE corpus has a greater range of speakers than all of the completed ELF corpora mentioned in 5.1.1 above (Lesznyák, for example, refers to 4 nationalities; Pöltze to 6 and Meierkord to 17).

My SUEs are drawn from a variety of professional backgrounds (European Union administrator, business people, accountant) but with an emphasis on ELT professionals (teachers, trainers, writers, academics, publishers). All participants are university graduates. This range of professional and educational backgrounds seemed appropriate for the kind of successful L2-users to which learners could reasonably and realistically aspire.

The participants in my corpus are not ‘learners’: they have all completed their formal study of the language and gone out into the world to use English in a variety of social, personal and professional contexts. The twin criteria for inclusion - meeting learners’ needs and wants - suggested that the subjects in my study should exemplify a high degree of success in the use of English both in local and in a variety of international, cultural contexts; they had to be people who would have occasion to use English with people from ethnic backgrounds other than their own and to code-switch effectively depending on their interlocutor. It was important that a fair proportion of my ‘non-native speakers’ should be acknowledged experts in the teaching or description of



English or should be recognized by people who know them as above average successful users of English (Appendix 1).

#### **5.1.2.7 Rationale for inclusion**

The initial criterion for inclusion in the SUE corpus was ‘expertise’ (Rampton, 1990, 1995) or ‘accomplishment’ (Edge, 1988, Firth, 1996, Wagner, 1996). I was attempting to respond to the requirement referred to by Alptekin (2002) that teachers in ELF contexts should be ‘successful bilinguals with intercultural insights’. In other words, a variety of English that legitimizes ‘errors’ or an over- simplified grammar is unlikely to meet the aspirations of learners who have invested a great deal of time, energy and money into learning the language (Timmis, 2003; Prodromou, 1992). This does not mean they will necessarily reach an error-free target, but at least it should be seen to be potentially achievable (Gnutzmann, 1999: 160). The possibility that most students will ever speak like the ‘native-speakers’ in their advanced coursebooks, fully idiomatically, is a pipe-dream (Lesznyák, 2004: Johnson, 1990: 313) and yet Gnutzmann’s claim that ‘most learners would probably ...object to being taught by English language teachers who deliberately distance themselves from the ‘native speaker model’ has some empirical support (Prodromou, 1992; Bowers, 1999; Timmis, 2003; Erling, 2005; Grau, 2005). This view, in turn, is challenged by Adolph’s research which, though it finds no evidence for considering ‘native-speaker’ norms ‘irrelevant’ (Widdowson, 1994: 385) to ELF, suggests that L2-users become more critical of L1 models with increased exposure to the ‘real thing’, as opposed to an idealised and reified view of ‘the native speaker’ (Adolphs, 2005).

The requirement that SUEs should be suitable ‘models’ to which learners could aspire also implies that the resulting competence would be appropriate for international *communication* and *understanding*. One would try to achieve a balance between

pedagogic requirements and international communication on a transactional level. But one would also keep an open mind with respect to the use of English in lingua franca settings for the achievement of *understanding*, which I understand to be the capacity to express through the L2 more than transactional or ‘factual’ communication (Meierkord, 2005: 89): the option that English can articulate the L2-users’ voice and identity at a deeper level of commonality was an option I wished to keep open.

My starting point in choosing my subjects was to identify examples of successful users of English in the real world on a largely intuitive and experiential basis and then to describe what it is they do with the language, bearing in mind the need to come up with feasible and attractive classroom models. Intuition at this initial stage of data collection was supported by the researcher’s 30 years of teaching and training in EFL contexts, the views of members of the professional peer group and other validation techniques. The criterion was not whether my subjects sounded ‘native-like’ or even less that they should they should ‘pass as natives’, be ‘indistinguishable from natives’ or even sound ‘the same as native speakers’ (White and Genesee, 1996); neither did I go around with a template, say proficiency criteria as established by international exam boards, which I then tried to match to the subjects. I wanted to get away from the native-centric criteria used by many examination bodies.

However, my intuition was shaped (sharpened or blunted) but not determined exclusively by 25 years of examining for the Cambridge Proficiency examinations. The dangers of unconsciously drawing on the native-centric criteria promoted by international examination boards can be highlighted by recalling, for example, Level 5 of the ALTE framework, to which the Cambridge Proficiency corresponds; this highly influential text defines the ‘Good User’ in terms of cultural flexibility and linguistic competence beyond the grammatical system according to ‘native-speaker’ norms:



at this level the learner is approaching the linguistic level of an educated native speaker and is able to use the language in a range of culturally appropriate ways. Users at this level are able to improve their use of the language by extending their vocabulary and refining their usage and command of style and register than by learning about new areas of grammar.

(UCLES, 2002: 6).

The Michigan Proficiency 'excellent speaker' is similarly defined as having 'native-like prosody' and 'extensive idiomatic' competence and 'rarely makes a mistake' in grammar (University of Michigan, 2001: 11).

More internationally-oriented criteria of successful use that informed my judgement in collecting my data are those developed within the Common European Framework:

it cannot be overemphasised that level C2 (Proficient User) is not intended to imply 'native-speaker' competence or even near-native speaker competence.

(Council of Europe, 2003, reprinted in Morrow, 2004: 132).

The CEF, however, also stipulates 'idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms' as defining features of 'Mastery' at C2 level. Dendrinos (2003), though drawing on CEF criteria, describes the Greek State Examinations for foreign languages as explicitly based on 'heteroglossic, polyphonic' principles (Dendrinos, 2003:1) and represents a useful corrective to the monologic, centralising authority of international examinations. The SUEs in my corpus meet the criterion of 'core' grammatical accuracy (at this stage, I am excluding idiomatic competence from the definition of SUEs), but they also reflect the linguistic and cultural heterogeneity stipulated in Dendrinos' socio-cultural view of assessed proficiency.

Given current orthodoxies, it seems implausible that most learners and teachers will be enthusiastic about a model of English that legitimizes non-canonical grammatical forms and does not potentially lead to a recognized level of certification, whether national or

international. This does not mean the criteria of success set down by international examining bodies should not be challenged and deconstructed. These models, as I see them, are one part of the mosaic that makes up contemporary ELF; they are to be referred to but not deferred to (Timmis, 2003) and above all, they should be seen against a background of 'expertise' which is not defined by native-centric criteria.

#### **5.1.2.8 In search of SUEs**

The overall criterion for inclusion was, then, that SUEs would command wide recognition in the ELT profession as highly competent users of English. 'Competence' was neither a decontextualised absolute nor an abstraction; it was a situated accomplishment. The procedure I followed in building my corpus of 'expert users' or SUEs was as follows:

1. On my visits to Europe and Latin America in my capacity as an ELT author and trainer I frequently interacted, in social and professional contexts, with L2-users who sounded fluent in English, grammatically accurate and pragmatically successful. I arranged to record some of these individuals in informal, spontaneous contexts.
2. On several occasions, a third party who knew what my research was about would recommend I record someone who they considered an outstanding user of English, again as a result of interaction with the individual in question.
3. For many of the participants, I was able to contact people, L1 and L2-users, who knew them and ask these 'objective observers' to express an opinion on the informant's English. This intuitive assessment, based on extensive contact with the L2-user, was invariably positive (Appendix 1).
4. A fair proportion of my L2-users are widely recognised experts in the teaching or description of English or are recognized by ELT professionals who know them as successful users of English.



5. I asked each participant to complete a questionnaire designed to elicit relevant bio-data; from this data, it emerged that all of the subjects had spent most of their life in an EFL rather than an ESL context (Appendix 2).
6. Most of the informants had formal English language qualifications of a high level and/or postgraduate degrees (M.A. or Ph.D) from English-speaking universities (Appendix 2).
7. The participants in my corpus confirmed that they are not ‘learners’ but regular users of ELF. All of the informants use English regularly in personal, social or professional contexts with ‘native’ and ‘non-native speakers’, from ethnic backgrounds other than their own; they thus need to code-switch effectively depending on their interlocutor, an important aspect of ELF competence or ‘expertise’.
8. I transcribed the recordings (200, 000 words altogether) and was able to confirm that the level of English was grammatically and lexically accurate, if not necessarily ‘native-like’. The data at this stage also confirmed that in all but very few instances my subjects were pragmatically successful users of English as an international language. There were no significant cases of what Thomas (1983) refers to as ‘pragmatic failure’. At this stage, some of my initial participants were excluded on the basis of formal or pragmatic inaccuracy (I left open the question of the role played by idiomaticity, as this was one of the objects of the investigation).
9. I compared my impressions and data of successful users with widely used definitions by international examining bodies (Cambridge Proficiency, Michigan Proficiency) and the Common European Framework – excluding native-centric criteria that referred to phraseology. (Many of my SUEs are themselves or have been oral examiners for international English language examinations).

10. I circulated anonymous samples of the transcriptions to 100 professional ELT people (both L1 and L2-users) and asked them to give each sample a score to indicate the level of English suggested by the sample. The assessment was invariably very positive (i.e. excellent) (Appendix 3).

Thus, the process by which SUEs were selected involved my own knowledge and experience as a professional ‘insider’ and bilingual user of ELF but it also involved the knowledge and experience of members of the peer group, both L1 and L2-users (Edge and Richards, 1998: 352).

### **5.1. 2. 9 The notion of ‘expertise’**

The belief that there might be an alternative to the monocultural ‘native-speaker’ model for ELF found support amongst many ELT professionals (e.g. Paikeday, 1985; Rampton, 1990; Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994a; Widdowson, 1994; Bhatt, 1995; Seidlhofer, 1996; Norton, 1997; Brutt-Griffler, 1998; Kramsch, 1998a; Canagarajah, 1999a; Thomas, 1999; Braine, 1999; Cook, 1999; Jenkins, 2000; Medgyes, 2000; Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, 2001; Illes, 2001; Modiano, 2001; Singh et al, 2002; Alptekin, 2002).

The concept of the SUE is, for example, akin to Alptekin’s ‘successful bilinguals with intercultural competence’ (Alptekin, 2002) Modiano’s code-switching ‘proficient users’ (Modiano, 1990, 1999) and Rampton’s ‘experts’. Rampton says of his concept of expertise that to achieve it, ‘you go through processes of certification, in which you are judged by others whose standards of assessment can be reviewed and disputed’ (Rampton, 1995: 341). Unlike monolingual, non-code-switching ‘native-speakers’, ‘experts’ learn the language and do not necessarily identify with the socio-cultural milieu of the ‘native-speaker’ (Rampton, 1995: 340). Expertise is partial and both L1 and L2-users may have an excellent command of a language in certain spheres but



not in others ‘because they do not have a practical command of the generic forms used in given spheres’ (Bakhtin, 1986: 96).

In sum, SUEs, are defined by what they can do in a practical performance sense in ELF contexts, not where they come from or what they know in terms of Chomskyan competence or what they can do in ‘native-speaker’ dominated cultural contexts. In this perspective, both ‘native’ and ‘non-native speakers’ can be ‘successful users’ of English. My own experience had been mostly with language teaching professionals and employees of international organisations such as the British Council, the American Center and the Goethe Institute and it seemed common sense that these people and people in similar positions might constitute a reasonable model for learners of ELF to aspire to:

L1 and L2 English speakers who have mastered IE might be expected to be found in international agencies such as those funded by the United Nations or in agencies that operate internationally such as the USIS or the British Council.  
(Johnson, 1990: 312).

#### **5.1.2.10 SUEs are not ‘near-native’ speakers**

Although it is not claimed that SUEs are ‘native-like’, ‘near-native’ or that they have reached a stage of ‘ultimate achievement’, the debate on ultimate attainment will, however, help define more clearly what it is exactly that SUEs represent. The question of ‘native-like’ competence has been seen in terms of Universal Grammar (UG) rather than pragmatics or idiomaticity. Research evidence regarding the ability of ‘non-native speakers’ to reach a command of grammatical competence indistinguishable from ‘native speakers’ is conflicting, but in terms of the search for a pedagogically appropriate model of a SUE all of these studies confirm the very high level of grammatical competence/intuition that ‘non-native speakers’ can reach.

The very best adult learners exhibit few, if any syntactic errors.  
(Scovel, 1977: 39).

This view is corroborated by research into ultimate attainment:

Ultimate attainment in an L2 can indeed be native-like in the UG domain.

(White and Genesee, 1996: 258).

Furthermore, Birdsong (1992) and Ioup et al (1994) came to similarly optimistic conclusion regarding the possibility of ‘ultimate native-like attainment’, but they, too, refer to the level of grammar. Although Coppieters (1987) found that there was a level of ‘native-speaker’ intuition of grammaticality that even the ‘near-native speaker’ could not attain the level she is referring to is, nevertheless, ‘near-native’, and would undoubtedly meet the needs and aspirations of the overwhelming majority of learners in an EFL context (see Seidlhofer, 2005, for a similar view).

Nearly all of the research into the possibility of ‘native-like’ competence in L2 speakers is based on grammaticality judgments: as Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2000: 155) point out: ‘more comprehensive measures of native-like language proficiency’ are needed. White and Genesee (1996) caution that it remains to be clarified in which areas ‘native-like’ success is not attainable and why not (White and Genesee (1996: 155). None of the researchers interested in ultimate attainment have taken idiomaticity as the final frontier of ‘native-like’ fluency. Idiomaticity, is, however frequently cited, as an indicator of high proficiency (Wilkins, 1972: 128; Alexander, 1978: 24; Coulmas, 1981: 150; Yorio, 1989; Sinclair, 1992: 496; McCarthy and Carter, 2002). As far as the current research is concerned, the question of whether ‘native-speaker’ targets are attainable is not the issue. As Cook (in press) says, the fact that a few individuals have been found who can pass for ‘native speakers’ is as relevant to SLA as Michael Schumacher’s driving skills are to ordinary mortals’ daily drive to work. ‘The proper goal for an L2-user is believed to be speaking the second language like an L2-user, not



like an L1-user, with the exception, say, of those who want to be spies' (Cook, in press). As Cook points out, we do not have at present descriptions of what successful L2 usage might be. Similarly, McCarthy (2001) argues that 'as a programme for research within applied linguistics, identifying criteria for expert use of a language like English in different cultural contexts is an urgent one' (McCarthy, 2001: 141). This empirical gap can be said to have given me my cue for the present research. It is certainly not my aim to question the potential of adult L2-users to attain a high level of even 'near-native' grammatical competence; on the contrary, this potential would seem to be real enough to make of 'bilingual successful users' a reasonable model for classroom purposes; this potential, however, contrasts sharply with the difficulty L2-users face in achieving a 'near-native' command of idiomaticity.

#### 5.1.2.11 Transcription

The 200,000 words of the complete L2-user corpus were transcribed by the author of this thesis. How data are transcribed depends on the research objective (Kasper, 1997: 308). Bearing in mind the aims of this research, I have chosen a transcription that relies on standard orthography and thus enhances readability (Figure 5.2)

Notation	Feature
<S1> <S2> <S3>	Speaker IDs at the beginning of each turn in L1 corpora
Name e.g.. John	Speaker ID (pseudonym) in SUE corpus.
er...erm	Filled pause or hesitation
...	Unfilled pause or hesitation
(laughs)	Laughter
(<S>)	Backchannel
[       ] [       ]	Overlapping speech
<i>inaudible</i>	Inaudible segments
Wo...(word)	Interruption in flow of speech
wo-word	Restart word or phrase
Text text text	Repeated morphemes, words and phrases
(contextual event)	Non-speech events (e.g. telephone rings)
<text>	Reported or quotative speech
S1: text= S2: =text	Immediate other-continuation

Figure 5.2 Transcription conventions



As this research is not based on a fine-grained CA model but a broader contextual and cultural approach to the data, I feel this choice facilitates the research objectives.

### **5.1.3 Other Corpus data**

The L1 data quoted in this thesis are taken from ‘native-speaker’ corpora (L1UC): the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE) and the British National Corpus (BNC). CANCODE (The Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English) is a 5 million word corpus of informal and non-formal spoken English. The BNC runs at 100 million words, ten million of which are spoken English. I will be drawing on the 5 million words of the BNC made up of informal spoken English.

The analytical software used in this investigation will be Wordsmith Tools (Scott, 1999).

## **5.2 Methodology**

### **5.2.1 Building an analytical model for L2-user data.**

A restatement of my core research questions will facilitate the development of an appropriate analytical model for investigating the issues raised:

1. Why do even advanced users of English as a Lingua Franca avoid or have difficulty with idiomaticity?

Sub-questions

2. Which kinds of idiomaticity do advanced L2-users have difficulty with?

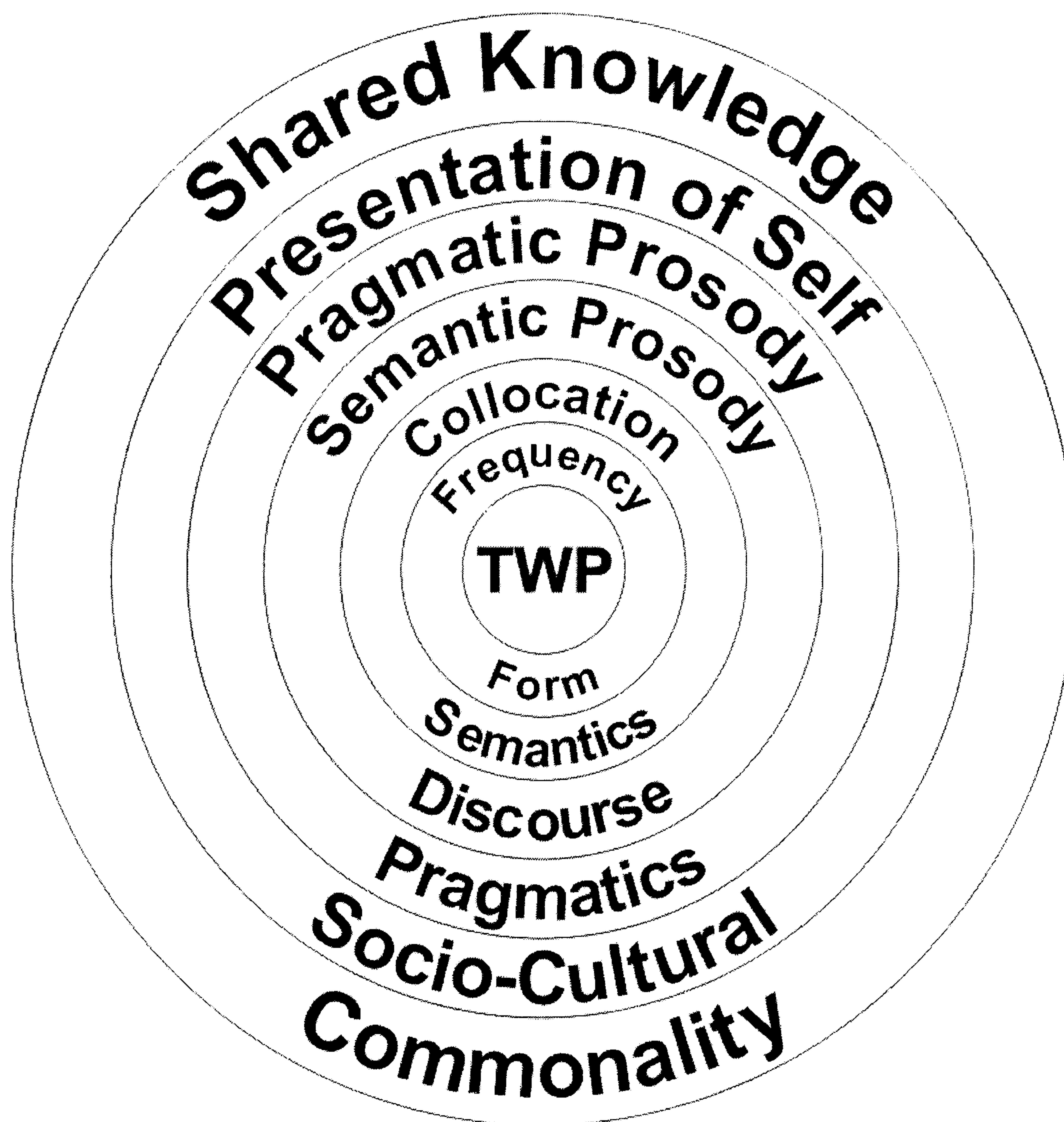
3. Is L2 fluency different from L1 fluency?

4. What is the role of idiomaticity in an emerging ELF?

Implicit in these questions is the issue of why variation exists in the occurrence and use of idiomaticity across different groups of speakers. Thus, there are two central research goals: (1) identifying the extent of the patterns in corpora relating to different



groups of users and (2) analyzing the contextual factors that influence variability (Biber et al, 1998: 3).



**Figure 5.3 Analytic Approach to Two-Word Phrases (TWPs)**

In order to investigate these questions, an analytical framework was constructed, which began with a quantitative empirical analysis of the data and developed into qualitative discourse and ethnographic analysis. In extracting information and identifying patterns from my data I adopted different approaches at different points in the analysis, which can be summed up as corpus-based in the initial stages and

discourse analytic within a socio-cultural-dialogic framework in the later stages (Figure 5.3).

This model suggests that lexical phrases function on different, inter-related levels. For the purposes of analysis it will be necessary to examine these levels separately but it is important to bear in mind that a contextualised approach to lexical phrases in naturally-occurring data operates on the different levels at the same time. A node phrase - or TWP - is like a pebble dropped into a pool; it generates ripples of increasing size, and these ripples are both separate and part of the whole. The linguistic choice made by speakers generates these ripples and at the same time is constrained by them. The central research question – why is idiomaticity apparently recalcitrant for L2-users? – will be addressed in terms of the multiple layers of meaning which shape TWPs. Bakhtin expresses well the way the small units of idiomaticity I will be examining contain layers of interrelated meanings:

Each individual utterance is a link in the chain of communication. It has clear-cut boundaries...but within these boundaries the utterance, like Leibniz's monad, reflects the speech process, others' utterances, and above all, preceding links in the chain of communication - sometimes close and sometimes – in areas of cultural communication - very distant.

(Bakhtin, 1986: 93).

### **5.2.2 A corpus-based approach**

The analytical methodology adopted in this thesis begins with the data contained in the corpus itself. Initially, I look at the data inductively, in the form of frequency lists and concordance lines. At this stage, the texts are examined in detail in relation to other texts (Carter, 2004b: 4) and with 'as little attention as possible to theory' (Sinclair, 2004: 10).



Thus, in my case, the L2 data was compared to L1 data in terms of frequency and contextual patterning. Similarities and differences in frequency were noted and then the differences were investigated using concordance lines to identify patterns of lexical and grammatical co-occurrence. The two kinds of software used at this stage were frequency lists of two-word phrases (TWPs) using the 'cluster' function of Wordsmith Tools and concordancers for the generation of Key Words In Context (KWIC).

The identification of patterns involved looking, at the semantic level, at the way words and, in my case, two word phrases, combine with other words (collocation); on the lexico-grammatical level, I looked at the way TWPs associate with grammatical structures (colligation).

The more one uncovered of the co-text of a search phrase the more one detected patterns which made the concept of an 'extended unit of meaning' (Sinclair, 1996a) a natural and appropriate choice, emerging from the data itself. The effort to explain the frequency of occurrence of the search item connects the lexical item with its semantic references and grammatical preferences and, in the wider co-text, to its semantic and pragmatic prosodies (Sinclair, 2004: 173; Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 11).

### **5.2.3 The discourse context**

The explanation of patterns of pragmatic prosody demanded a wider contextualisation of the data in terms of discourse and the socio-interactional constraints and needs of the speakers. These features of context, in turn, raised questions about who the participants were, how they oriented to each other and the language choices available to them. Thus, the general approach to conversation taken in this thesis is functional rather than formal. It was important to identify what the speakers were trying to achieve in terms of communication but I was also interested in the linguistic expression of interpersonal needs, including personal identity (Joseph, 2004), variously referred to in the relevant

literature as the ‘presentation of self in everyday life’ (Goffman, 1959) ‘the promotion of self’ (Wray, 2002) and ‘one’s own voice’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 348).

While this study is not located within a Conversation Analytic framework, strictly defined, I will draw on some of its principles and some of its findings in discussing L2 conversation. The close analysis of conversation will, for example, be helpful in my own work insofar as the meaning of each utterance in which TWPs occur is dependent on previous utterances and, in many cases, subsequent utterances. Spoken communication is a chain of utterances with backward and forward links. These links and their pragmatic impact are traced within a wider discourse framework rather than a CA framework. Discourse produced in lingua franca English has specific characteristics, and these make it difficult to apply, in a pure form, existing categories proposed by Conversation Analysis (CA), which had originally been developed for turn-by-turn analyses of interactions between one ‘native’ speaker and another (Meierkord, 2000; Wong and Olsner, 2000). The interpretation of the results produced by data analyses of L2 use, will need to take into account the broader intercultural and socio-cultural aspects of language that I outlined in the previous chapter.

Moreover, CA could not accommodate the larger discourse functions of idiomaticity in specific encounters, which is at the heart of the analysis in this thesis. In elucidating the operation of idiomaticity in specific ELF speech events, I will also be drawing on my own role in the encounters and my knowledge of the social context and ‘life histories’ of the participants where appropriate (Edge and Richards, 1998: 346).

The research approach can, therefore, be described as discourse analysis in an ethnographic framework, informed by empirical corpus data.



## Chapter 6

### Two-word lexical phrases: frequency

*good phrases are surely, and ever were, very commendable.*

*Henry IV*, 2. Act 3, scene 2.



## 6. Two word lexical phrases: frequency

### 6.0 Introduction

Given the vast and fuzzy nature of idiomaticity it was difficult to know where to begin investigating the phenomenon in 'native' and 'non-native' discourse. I therefore took the simplest definitions of 'idiom' I could find as my starting point:

an idiom is a combination of two or more words which function  
as a unit of meaning.

(Cowie and Mackin, 1975 : viii-ix).

The procedure I adopted was to begin with this minimal unit of idiomaticity, and work outwards from form to meaning, from meaning to context and from context to pragmatics. The procedure was as follows:

To identify examples of these units of meaning without pre-judging what counts as 'idiomatic', I created a list of frequent two-word 'clusters' based on the CANCODE corpus, using the Wordsmith Tools cluster function (Scott, 1999). Scott (1997: 41) describes clusters as 'words which are found repeatedly in each other's company'; thus they are a kind of collocation but they 'represent a tighter relationship than collocates, more like groups or phrases' (Scott, 1996: 35). However, one immediately notices that many of these 'clusters' are meaningless, random fragments (Table 6.1):

	word	freq
1	You know	28,013
2	I mean	17,158
3	I think	14,086
4	In the	13,887
5	It was	12,608
6	I don't	11,975
7	Of the	11,048
8	And I	9,722
9	Sort of	9,586
10	Do you	9,164

**Table 6.1: random list of clusters**

Although Altenberg (1998: 118) includes syntactically incomplete strings in his calculation of formulae, from my lists I decided to filter out random grammatical



fragments such as: *in the, of the, it was, I don't, and I* etc and was left with two word lexical phrases which seemed to me to 'function as units of meaning'. Examples of these two lexical phrases or TWPs are: *you know, I think, I mean*. In the next section, I outline the rationale behind this procedure.

## 6.1 Defining clusters

Lexical clusters (or 'bundles' as Biber et al, 1999; 2004, refer to them) are defined simply as 'the most frequent recurring lexical sequences in a register' (Biber et al, 2004: 376). Taking a corpus-based analysis of multi-word strings from two to five words, De Cock (1998a) and De Cock et al (1998), like McCarthy and Carter (2002) distinguish random 'phrase or clause fragments' from 'formulae', which De Cock defines as:

frequently used multi-word units that perform pragmatic or discourse structuring functions.

(De Cock et al, 1998: 67).

The filtering procedure outlined by De Cock is very similar to the one adopted in this thesis, so I will make the steps explicit.

1. From the automatically produced list of clusters, all tokens which the researcher considers to be random fragments are filtered out; examples of such fragments are: *the the, in the* or *don't know if you*.

2. A 'function filter' is then applied, which removes from the list of potential pragmatic formulae all referential, topic-dependent items such as *the United States* or *on campus*.

3. The remaining items are then examined in context using the Key Words in Context (KWIC) concordance facility to identify those which are not pragmatically meaningful but simply form part of larger utterances, as is the case with *you know* in *do you know what I mean?*

One of the problems with cluster-counting is that the researcher gets a false impression of frequencies if one only does a count of two-word items. So *sort of* gives a high reading, but many of the occurrences of *sort of* will be part of the longer chunk, for example, *that sort of thing; you see* will be part of *you see what I mean, do you see where I'm coming from*, etc., so the figure for two-word chunks or clusters may be artificially inflated (De Cock, 1998a: 71). One can get over this skewing effect by examining concordances in great detail for one's chosen items, which is the procedure adopted here.

4. Finally, those clusters which seem to be integral formulaic sequences performing a pragmatic function, such as *you know*, *sort of* and *you see* are examined in the wider context of discourse to establish whether they are really being used as pragmatic formulae or occur simply in their literal sense: De Cock (1998a) gives the example of *you see: because I don't really see them enough you see them an hour an hour in the lecture and an hour in the seminar maybe* (De Cock, 1998a: 71).

This literal use of *you see* can be contrasted with its pragmatic function: *I think that's the thing, you see. I hadn't lived for the present day* (De Cock, 1998a: 71).

5. In ambiguous cases, where even after the scrutiny of a cluster in context it was still not clear whether the item was being used in its literal or pragmatic function, a decision is made to 'retain any instances which could be read as having a plausible pragmatic function and to discard those which are clearly non-formulaic' (De Cock, 1998a: 72).

Stubbs (2002) proposes a method for identifying and studying 'frequent grammatical frames and the lexis which occurs in them' with a view to exploring 'the semantic and pragmatic features of frequent collocations and multi-word chains' (Stubbs, 2002: 238). Stubbs, like De Cock, uses corpus methods to identify 'recurrent chains of



word-forms' in texts. He defines a word-chain as 'a linear sequence of uninterrupted word forms, either two adjacent words, or longer strings, which occur more than once in a text or corpus' (Stubbs, 2002: 230). Stubbs is, in other words, interested in both collocation and colligation and considers that the importance of these strings lies in their cohesive function and 'their relation to 'wider inter-textual patterns in the language' (Stubbs, 2002: 230-231). Stubbs filters out random fragments and retains those strings which have 'intuitively core meanings' (for example, *at the end of the*) or have obvious discourse functions (*on the other hand*). He compares the most frequent strings in his 'small' corpus of 2.5 million words with that of other, larger corpora, to ensure that the frequencies shown are not the result of some idiosyncrasy of his own corpus. This procedure of cross-checking the frequency of recurrent strings in a small corpus against larger corpora will be particularly important in my own work where the corpus amounts to only 200,000 words.

The frequency of strings containing common grammatical words, argues Stubbs, is not the result of the frequency of these grammatical items in isolation but of the fact that 'the normal use of language is to select more than word at a time' (Renouf and Sinclair, 1991) and can only be explained 'in social terms' (Stubbs, 2002: 236). The attempt to explain the 'social' importance of multi-word strings is undertaken by Stubbs in his book-length study of words and phrases, in which the semantic, pragmatic and cultural functions of phraseology are analysed (Stubbs, 2001a).

McCarthy and Carter (2002), like De Cock and Stubbs, identify 'multi-word strings' that display semantic, syntactic and pragmatic integrity. Items such as *you know*, *I mean* and *I think* intuitively constitute syntactic and semantic units, while *in the*, *it was* and *of the* do not. These clusters, in contrast to the low frequency of opaque idiomatic expressions, are frequent occurrences in spoken and written English and,

unlike idioms and fixed expressions, are very common in L2-user discourse, too (cf. Moon, 1994; Biber et al, 2004). Carter and McCarthy, like Stubbs, see a social significance in the frequency of these clusters and underline their importance in the shaping of interaction: they are not random fragments but pragmatic devices made 'visible'.

Partington and Morely (2004) use a similar metaphor when they describe word clusters as 'shadows' which reflect not only the discourse and pragmatic features of a text but the ideological perspective of the speaker/writer:

clusters/bundles can reveal the way a speaker sees the world...they are the shadows we can see on the wall of our cave, reflections of something we call language which is going on outside the cave...

(Partington and Morley: 2004: 179-192).

Partington and Morely, following Biber et al (1999) and Biber and Conrad, (1999) exclude 'more primitive clusters' which are 'local repetitions' which happen to occur because of the subject-matter of the texts under consideration (compare De Cock's exclusion of referential, topic-dependent items such as *the United States*). What Partington and Morely are left with are strings like *at the heart of* which are neither fish nor fowl: they are not traditional grammatical structures but neither are they 'colourful idioms' of the *kick the bucket* variety. They are lexico-grammatical units with a discourse and pragmatic function which are often genre-typical.

In comparison to single-word lexical items, two-word lexico-grammatical clusters may seem peripheral but, as McCarthy and Carter (2002) demonstrate, they are not only more frequent than many common one-word items but also perform a significant pragmatic role in face-to-face interaction. They contribute to the creation of speaker meanings in context: the preservation of face, the expression of politeness, hedging and purposive vagueness (McCarthy and Carter, 2002: 40).



In conversational English, these items, though not ‘idiomatic’ in the traditional sense of the ‘colourful idiom’ (Biber et al, 2004: 376) nevertheless, display features of idiomaticity, such as fixedness, non-compositionality and pragmatic specificity which makes it reasonable to consider them as examples of minimal idiomatic units (see also Alexander, 1978: 15, who includes them in his ‘fixed expressions in conversation’).

For the learner, these less salient items are as much of a problem of acquisition, if not more so, than more obviously ‘central’ items; the ‘small words’ and phrases of language may be subliminal but their frequency and pragmatic functions give them importance in terms of coherence, the co-construction of turn-taking mechanisms and the establishment of common cultural ground.

## **6.2 TWPs: Two-word phrases**

Having identified what constitutes a random fragment and what is a pragmatically integrated ‘two word lexical phrase’ (TWP), I was left with two lists: one list of TWPs based on a ‘native speaker’ corpus of spoken English (CANCODE) and one based on my own L2-user corpus of spoken English (SUEC). I then identified the degree of similarity and divergence in the two lists, in terms of the order of occurrence and frequency of occurrence of the TWPs.

### **6.2.1 Quantitative analysis**

If we compare the SUEC to the L1UC corpus, we notice a considerable similarity in the most frequent TWPs in the two corpora (Table 6.2):



	Phrase	L1 pm	L1 %	L2 pm	L2 %
1	You know	5,602	0.58	4,113	0.41
2	I mean	3,431	0.36	3,060	0.31
3	I think	2,817	0.29	3,093	0.31
4	Sort of	1,917	0.18	546	0.05
5	And then	1,547	0.16	1,613	0.16
6	Don't know	1,323	0.14	1,426	0.15
7	Have to	1,182	0.12	1,766	0.18
8	You can	1,165	0.12	1,520	0.15
9	Going to	1,106	0.11	1,093	0.11
10	A bit	1,068	0.11	446	0.04
11	I know	994	0.10	660	0.07
12	As well	980	0.10	553	0.05
13	A lot	971	0.10	1,146	0.12
14	Like that	851	0.09	546	0.05
15	All right	842	0.09	226	0.02
16	Used to	728	0.08	987	0.11
17	You see	727	0.08	387	0.04
18	I thought	688	0.07	353	0.04
19	Kind of	663	0.07	1,113	0.11
20	I said	654	0.07	680	0.06

**Table 6.2 TWPs in L1UC (5m words) and SUEC (160,000 words)  
(normalized to occurrence per million words)**

The degree of similarity in the two lists is striking. Generally speaking, the same items occur with comparable rates of frequency. In fact, seventeen out of the twenty most frequent items in the 'native speaker' list also appear in the twenty most frequent items in the SUE spoken corpus, illustrating the possible operation of an 'idiomatic common core' across L1 and L2 spoken discourse. The three TWPs which are amongst the first twenty most frequent two word clusters in L1UC but occur later in the SUEC list are: *you see*, *I thought* and *all right*. One of these, *you see* and *I thought* occupy a position just outside the twenty most frequent TWPs in SUEC (Table 6.3) . There is thus a remarkable overlap in the two corpora of most frequent TWPs, though the level of frequency of individual items, as we shall see, shows interesting differences (Table 6.3).



N	Word	Freq.	%
1	You know	617	0,41
2	I think	464	0,31
3	I mean	459	0,31
4	Have to	265	0,18
5	And then	242	0,16
6	You can	228	0,15
7	Don't know	217	0,15
8	A lot	172	0,12
9	The same	171	0,11
10	Kind of	168	0,11
11	Going to	164	0,11
12	Of course	164	0,11
13	Used to	148	0,10
14	For example	107	0,07
15	I said	102	0,07
16	I know	99	0,07
17	As well	83	0,06
18	Like that	82	0,05
19	Sort of	81	0,05
20	A bit	67	0,04
21	You see	59	0,04
22	I thought	54	0,04

**Table 6.3 22 most frequent 2-word lexical phrases in L2 conversation (160,000 words)**

Conversely, the two items that appear in the first twenty TWPs in SUEC but appear later in the L1UC are: *of course* and *for example*; these TWPs are significantly more frequent among L2-users than 'native-speakers' (Table 6.4).

	CAN	BNC	SUEC
Of course	0.03	0.05	0.11
For example	0.008	0.01	0.06

**Table 6.4 – occurrences of *of course* and *for example* in Cancode, BNC and SUEC.**

De Cock (2000) corroborates the findings of my SUEC that L2-users tend to use *for example* and *of course* more often than 'native-speakers' (Table 6.5).

	NS	NNS
For example	8	55
For instance	2	43
Of course	31	116

**Table 6.5 Examples of formulae 'overused' by learners in speech – raw figures (De Cock, 2000)**

The first three two-word phrases are the same in both L1 and L2 corpora: *you know*, *I mean* and *I think* and the levels of frequency of two out of the three are very similar in



both corpora (*I mean*: 0.36%/0.31% and *I think*: 0.29%/0.31%, respectively). The most frequent item in both L1UC and SUEC is *you know* but here there is a somewhat greater difference in the frequency of the item in the L1- and L2-user corpora: 0.58% and 0.41% respectively. These patterns of frequency are also consistent with Meierkord's findings that lingua franca users use a high amount of 'cajolars' such as *you know*, *I mean* and *I see* (Meierkord, 2000).

The fourth item in the L1UC list is, however, striking in its degree of divergence: *sort of* (0.18%/0.05%), which means *sort of* is at least three times more frequent in L1 conversation than it is in L2 conversation. (These are occurrences of *sort of* as a vague marker – I have filtered out the occurrences of *sort of* where it is used as a classifier.) A near-synonym of *sort of*, *kind of*, seems to be more frequent in SUEC (0.11% compared to the L1UC 0.07%) . The figures for *sort of/kind of*, however, need to be seen together and I shall return to this point later in the thesis.

The next item which behaves very differently in the two lists is *a bit* (0.11%/0.04%) which, like *sort of*, is nearly 3 times more frequent in 'native-speaker' discourse.

There follows another stretch of common ground (*I know*, *as well*, *a lot*, *like that*) which is interrupted by the item *all right*; *all right* appears to be significantly less frequent in L2-user conversation than it is 'native-speaker' conversation (0.09%/0.02%) but the cluster *all right* is an idiosyncratic case in that it is part of a group of (more or less) synonymous phrases (*alright*, *OK*, *Okay*) with variable orthography; its apparently infrequent occurrence in SUEC (0.2%) clearly needs to be seen as part of the group of synonyms/homophones to which it belongs.

Continuing our journey down the list of TWPs, we find that *you see* is twice as frequent in SUEC than it is in L1UC (0.08/0.04%). The final item in the list, *I said* shows a broad similarity in frequency across the two corpora. Figure 6.1 sums up the



overall pattern of overlap and divergence in the frequencies of two word items in L1UC and SUEC.

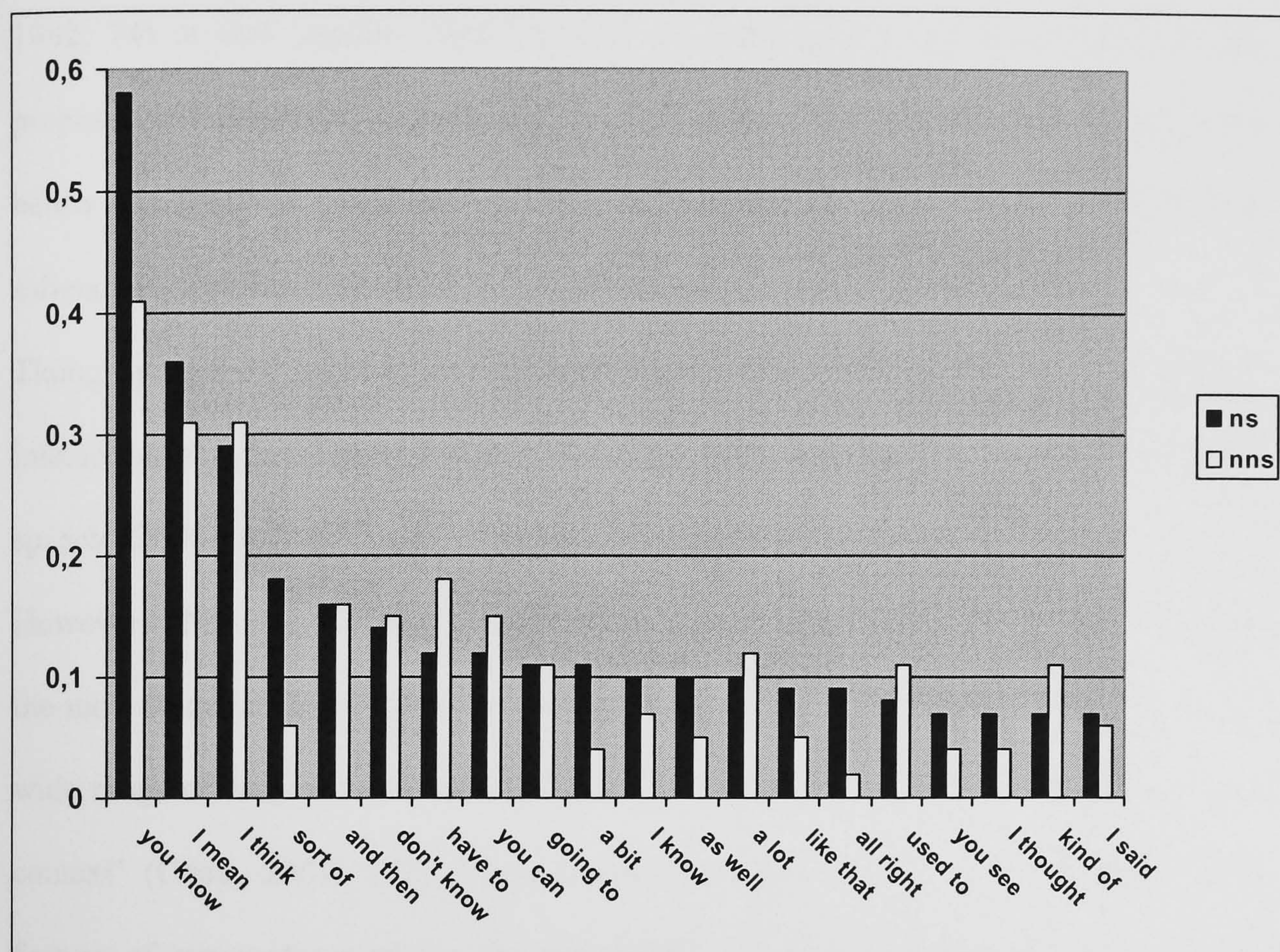


Figure 6.1. Comparison of TWPs in L1UC and SUEC (%)

### 6.2.2 Pragmatic markers

At this point, I would like to make a few preliminary observations regarding the semantic and pragmatic functions of the most frequent TWPs in L1UC and SUEC. The first pattern that strikes the researcher is that the majority of the TWPs, in both corpora, are items that have a pragmatic rather than a referential function. They are what are variously referred to in the literature as discourse particles (Schourup, 1985; Aijmer, 2002), pragmatic markers (Brinton, 1996), pragmatic particles (Holmes, 1988), pragmatic expressions (Erman, 1987) and discourse markers (Schiffrin, 1987). Longacre (1976) refers to them as 'mystery particles' and the range of terms used by Biber et al (1999) to describe these items is an indication of their elusiveness: 'comment clauses', 'stance adverbials', 'lexical bundles', 'inserts', 'discourse



markers' and 'utterance launchers'. The temptation has been to see them as empty of meaning, as 'crutches' (Schourup, 1985: 2) the 'detritus' of conversation (Schegloff, 1982: 74) or just 'prefabs' that function as 'fillers' while one is working out the propositional content of the message (Brown, 1978, 275). Even to L1-users they exist below the level of consciousness and for most speakers they lack psychological saliency (Cheshire, 1999: 133).

Though pragmatic particles usually pass unnoticed in the ebb and flow of spoken interaction, they are often remarked upon as symptoms of lazy, sloppy or 'unskilful' speech (O'Donnell and Todd, 1980: 67), a view rejected by Watts (1989).

However, these small items, though elusive and thin on semantic content, are among the most frequent items in the lexicon and are by no means insignificant; they have a wide range of context-embedded functions which 'emerge from the immediate speech context' (Cook, 2001: 177). Their frequently contradictory functions are a central feature of pragmatic markers; the divergence between core semantic meaning and contextual pragmatic uses is typical of the flexibility and usefulness of these items, but may at the same time be a clue to their elusiveness for L2-users.

For Crystal and Davy they are 'connectives' that facilitate fluency (Crystal and Davy, 1975: 91) and for Alexander (1978) they are a kind of fixed expression that function as markers of politeness, shared knowledge and group membership (Alexander, 1978: 16).

In using pragmatic markers such as *you know*, *sort of*, *I mean* and *you see*, the speaker may wish to invoke affective common ground or to mitigate the force of a potentially face-threatening act (Brown and Levinson, 1987). An important function of pragmatic markers, which relates to the speakers' expression of politeness, is the articulation of vagueness in discourse (Channell, 1994). Speakers often deliberately make the



propositional content of an utterance seem vague either in deference to their interlocutor's face needs or in order to invoke shared knowledge.

Pragmatic markers thus foreground the kinds of social and relational meanings a speaker wishes to signal. Typically, they occur in face-to-face interaction and signal the speaker's epistemic and/or affective stance towards the content and the addressee, often by indexing shared knowledge (Cook, 2001: 176). At the same time as signalling 'shared worlds', they also 'evince' 'private worlds' or 'unexpressed thinking' (Schourup, 1985: 7).

Altenberg refers to them as 'frames' which function on an interactive, interpersonal and textual level (Altenberg, 1998: 112). The term 'discourse marker' captures the way these words and phrases 'bracket units of talk' (Schiffrin (1987: 31) and help to organize the discourse in terms of what has gone before and what follows.

Finally, the most frequent two-word pragmatic markers (*you know, I mean, I think sort of*) contain a non-literal, holistic element which has led some scholars to include them in the general category of idiomaticity, fixed expressions or formulaic language (Fromkin, 1973: 42; Alexander, 1978:15; Gramley and Pätzold, 1992: 54; Powell, 1992: 28; McCarthy, 1998: 121; Carter, 1998: 66; Moon, 1998: 94).

Thus, pragmatic phrases are made up of a 'string of words with a single meaning' (Schmitt, 97: 96) which is usually at variance with the literal meaning of the individual words; in this sense, they qualify as 'formulaic' in terms of Wray's definition (Wray, 2002: 9):

A sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other meaning elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated; that is stored and retrieved whole from the memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar.

(Wray, 2000: 465).



They also illustrate Sinclair's 'idiom principle' in being 'semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they might appear to be analyzable into segments' (Sinclair, 1991: 110). I will, therefore, consider them examples of minimal idiomatic units, in contrast to the more extended idiomatic units of the 'colourful' variety (proverbs, sayings, nursery rhymes and so on).

I shall use the terms 'pragmatic marker', 'pragmatic particle' and 'discourse marker' interchangeably, in the sense outlined in Holmes (1986, 1988) and Schiffrin (1987), and not in the narrower definition of 'discourse marker' adopted in Fraser (1999) who focusses on connectors such as *so*, *and*, *furthermore*, *but*, *after all*. In order to distinguish the specific two-word pragmatic markers from one word pragmatic markers (such as *well*, *but*, *because*) I will also refer to them as 'pragmatic phrases' or Two-Word Phrases (TWP), which captures the formulaic nature of these items.

### 6.2.3 Divergence

Turning to those items where the L1UC and SUEC seem to diverge most, we notice that the following items occur twice as frequently in L1-user conversation than they do in L2-user conversation: *sort of*, *a bit*, *as well*, *you see* (I have omitted *all right* from this list for the reasons given above) (Figure 6.2)



Figure 6.2 Two-word lexical phrases: deviations between L1UC and SUEC (%)

In this group of TWPs, two of the items, *sort of* and *a bit*, are semantically vague markers (they 'convey imprecision', Biber et al, 1999: 557) and, pragmatically, they are used as hedging devices which mitigate the propositional content of the utterance



(they soften or downtone the effect of the semantic content) or in Biber et al's terms they express 'stance' (Biber et al, 1999: 969).

As a pragmatic marker, *you see* shares with *sort of* and *a bit* the potential to signal an appeal to shared knowledge on the part of the interlocutors (Schiffrin, 1987; Erman, 1987).

In short, three out of the four most divergent TWPs in L1UC and SUEC are pragmatic phrases of shared knowledge that regulate interpersonal relations and modify attitudes towards propositional content on the part of the speaker. These semantic and pragmatic features may be clues to why these three items display a different pattern of occurrence in the two corpora and we will, therefore, return to them in greater detail later in the thesis.

#### **6.2.4 Two-word lexical phrases: conclusion**

In this chapter, we have identified the most frequent two-word clusters in L1 and L2 spoken corpora. These items happen to be 'minimal idiomatic units' which function as pragmatic markers. There may be reasons of an interactional, socio-cultural kind that explain why some TWPs occur with almost identical frequency in both corpora and why others are less frequent and occasionally more frequent. It will be interesting to see, as we proceed with the investigation, if such connections emerge. The hypothesis in this thesis is that such expressions contain formulaic and idiomatic features which, along with their pragmatic functions, also contribute to the differences in occurrence in L1 and L2 conversation.

I will now go on to examine more closely the items that stand out in terms of differential frequency and follow the data wherever it may lead.

*Sort of*, the most striking case of deviation in the two corpora as far as TWP's are concerned, would seem to be a good place to start our pursuit of L1-user and L2-user idiomaticity.



## Chapter 7

### *A sort of puzzle for the L1-user*

Bardolph: *Pardon me, sir; I have heard the word. Phrase call you it? by this good day, I know not the phrase; but I will maintain the word with my sword to be a soldier-like word, and a word of exceeding good command, by heaven.*

*Henry IV* 2. Act 3, scene 2.



## 7. A sort of puzzle for the L1-user

### 7.0 Introduction

Having looked at the overall pattern of frequency of TWPs in L1 and L2 corpora, in this chapter we focus on the frequency and use of *sort of* in a corpus of informal L1 spoken English, CANCODE. *Sort of* is the TWP which differs most dramatically in frequency in L1 and L2 corpora and my aim in this chapter will be to begin to explain this pattern by summarising the meaning and use of *sort of* in L1 as a background to the detailed study of *sort of* in my SUE corpus in the next chapter.

### 7.1 The frequency of *sort of*

We have seen that the vague expression, *sort of*, with a raw frequency of 9,586, is the fourth most common two-word lexical phrase in the CANCODE corpus of informal spoken English (Table 7.1)

	TWP	Freq.	%
1	You know	28,013	0.58
2	I mean	17,158	0.36
3	I think	14,086	0.29
4	Sort of	9,586	0.18
5	And then	7,733	0.16
5	Don't know	6,614	0.14
6	Have to	5,914	0.12
7	You can	5,828	0.12
8	Going to	5,530	0.11
9	A bit	5,341	0.11
10	I know	4,973	0.11

Table 7.1 The most frequent 2-word phrases in L1UC

*Sort of* is, moreover, the 120<sup>th</sup> most frequent lexical item of any length in the informal spoken English captured in the CANCODE corpus. It is as frequent as *want* in L1-user conversation and almost as frequent as *okay*. *Sort of* is more frequent in CANCODE than *thing* and *come* and phrases such as *going to*, *I know* and *a bit*. Finally, *sort of* is much more frequent than the most frequent three-part collocation in the CANCODE corpus: *I don't know* (Figure 7.1). Thus, *sort of* is a very important



lexical item in the spoken language as a whole, even it is not always salient to speakers.

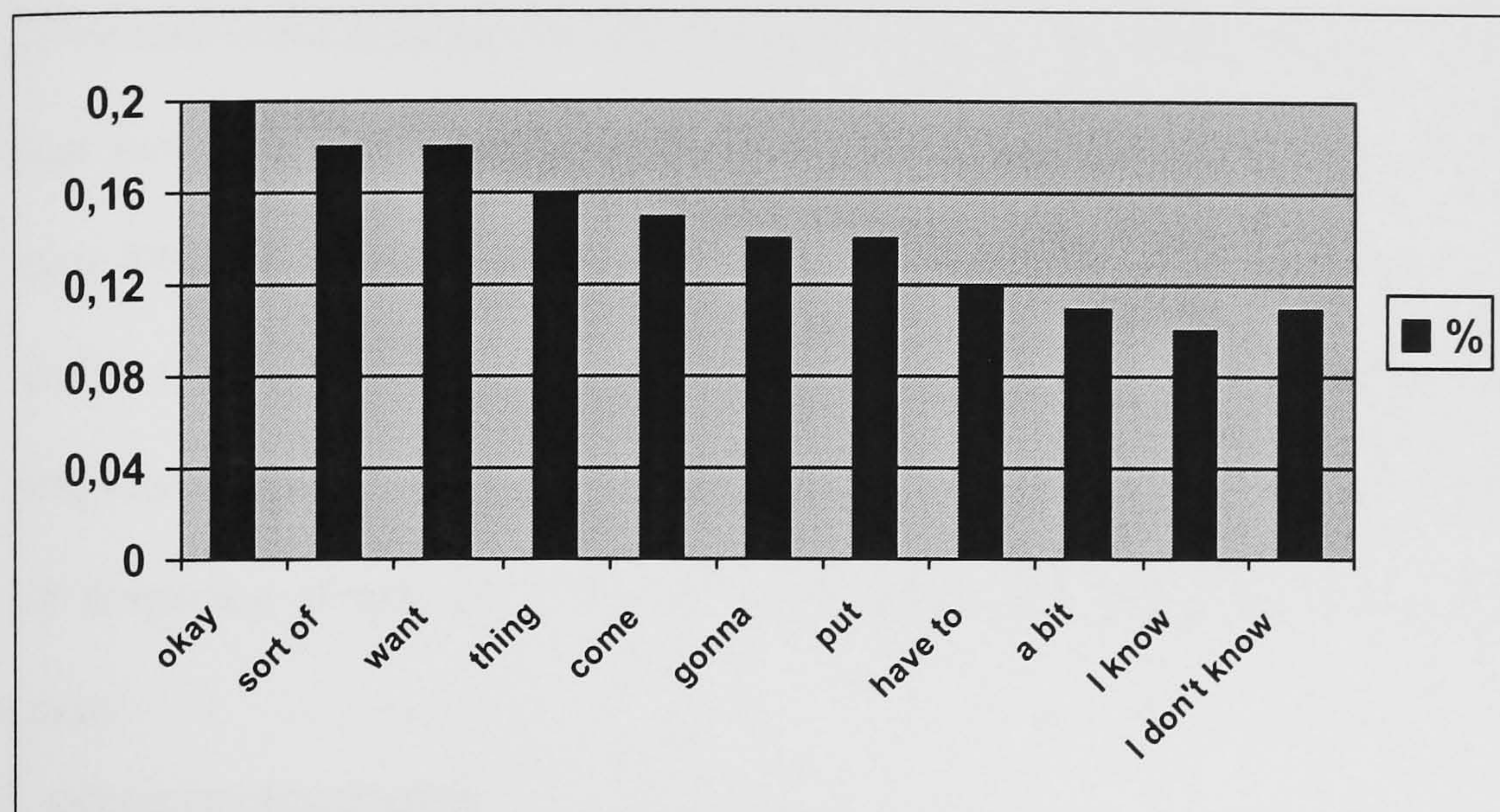


Figure 7.1 The importance of *sort of*.

In the spoken English component of the British National Corpus (BNC), consisting of 10 million words, *sort of* is again the 4<sup>th</sup> most frequent two-word lexical phrase though its overall percentage in the corpus is lower, at 0.11%, reflecting, possibly, the fact that *sort of* as a vague marker is less frequent in the more formal varieties of speech, such as lectures, news commentaries, sermons, political speeches and interviews, which are included in the BNC along with informal varieties. Poos and Simpson report that *sort of* (as a 'hedge') is one the most common two-word phrases in academic spoken English, especially in the humanities and social sciences (Poos and Simpson, 2002: 12-13). In the London-Lund Corpus, the order of frequency of the top four TWPs is strikingly similar to CANCODE and the spoken component of the BNC: *you know*, *I think*, *I mean*, *sort of* (Altenberg and Eeg-Olofsson, 1990: 13). Pos and Simpson (2002) report similar results for *sort of/kind of* using data from the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE).

In short, *sort of* is consistently pervasive in the language of spoken discourse, both informal and non-formal, as indicated in a variety of 'native-speaker' corpora. We



shall see later in this chapter that its importance in terms of frequency is matched by its pragmatic versatility in interpersonal discourse.

If we turn to the subcorpus of 160,000 words of L2-user conversation (SUEC) we find that *sort of*, as a pragmatic marker, occurs 81 times or 0,05% of the total (Table 6.3, page 140). De Cock et al (1998) drawing on an 80,000 word spoken corpus of ‘non-native speaker’ interviews, confirms the importance of *sort of* as one of the most frequent two-word combinations (Table 7.3) and also corroborates the general pattern of frequency of two-word lexical items as found in the SUEC used in the present study.

Two-word phrase
You know
Sort of
I mean
I think
I don't
And then

**Table 7.3: Most frequent two-word items - De Cock et al, 1998.**

De Cock et al (1998) also found that learners of English used a smaller range of lexical phrases such as *sort of*, *you know*, and *I mean* and in particular used far fewer expressions of vagueness (*sort of thing*, *like that*, and *everything*). The ‘underuse’ of *sort of* by L2-users is confirmed in later data described by De Cock (2000) who looked at the speech and writing of advanced learners (Table 7.4)

TWP	NS	NNS
For example	8	55
For instance	2	43
Of course	31	116
I mean	428	144
Sort of	470	31
Kind of	92	47
You know	586	182

**Table 7.4: Examples of formulae ‘overused’ and ‘underused’ by learners in speech (De Cock, 2000)**



In De Cock's data, the rarity of *sort of* in L2-user English is much more marked than it is in the case of my SUE corpus and may be explicable in terms of the lower level of competence of the informants or the kind of data used (a mixture of spoken and written). This may suggest that the more competent the learner becomes the greater the deployment of pragmatic phrases such as *sort of*. I shall take up this point later in the thesis.

The overall thrust of De Cock's findings does, however, confirm the existence of a 'puzzle' in the frequency of *sort of* in L2-user discourse, though I am not arguing, as she does, that by the standards of 'native-speaker' models, L2-users 'over-use' or 'under-use' particular lexical chunks. My focus in this study is on the contextual conditions that make the users' choice of lexico-grammatical or idiomatic items appropriate or inappropriate in situated discourse between members of particular speech communities; my aim is not to perpetuate the 'deficit' model of ELF described in Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis.

## **7.2 Explaining the frequency of *sort of***

### **7.2.1 *Kind of***

There are factors in the design of SUEC which may diminish the significance of the relative infrequency of *sort of*. It may, for example, be the case, that some L2-users use *sort of* while others prefer the synonymous *kind of*.

As a pragmatic marker, *kind of* is considered equivalent to *sort of* but more often found in American English than in British English (Aijmer, 1984: 118; Crystal and Davy, 1975: 29). Secondly, while CANCODE is a largely homogeneous corpus of British informal English, my corpus, by definition, entails diversity: it includes a number of speakers who may tend to use American English, either because of geographical location (most Latin American countries) or because of personal



experience (travel, education and so on). Indeed, some of my informants demonstrate a clear preference for *kind of* over *sort of*; most of these speakers come from Latin American countries. About 25% of my informants use both British and North American varieties, thus demonstrating a tendency to code-switch within the same speech event.

If we combine the two exponents of the hedging device found in my L2 corpus the total is 0.12% and in the L1 corpus the combined total is approximately 0.24% (Table 7.5) (Classifier uses of these items have been filtered out of the calculations).

	CAN	SUEC
Sort of	0.18	0.06
Kind of	0.06	0.06
<b>Total hedges</b>	<b>0.24</b>	<b>0.12</b>

**Table 7.5 – Combined occurrence of *sort of/kind of* in L1UC/SUEC**

These patterns of use of *sort of/kind of* are confirmed by research carried out by De Cock (1998a) with advanced learners of English with French as their mother tongue. De Cock's data show a 'highly significant underuse' of 'vagueness tags' by L2-users compared to L1-users, especially in the case of *sort of*, whose use in oral interviews by advanced learners is minimal compared to their L1 counterparts (Table 7.6).

	NS	NNS
Sort of	321	22
Kind of	58	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>53</b>

**Table 7.6 De Cock, 1998b**

From the frequency data on *sort of/kind of* uncovered in my corpus and other corpora we can infer that:

-the combined hedge *sort of/kind of* is significantly more frequent (at least 9%) in the L1 corpus than in the L2 corpus. In the spoken English of advanced learners (as opposed to my SUEs) the difference in frequency is greater (see De Cock 1998, 2000,



Table 7.6). This difference diminishes considerably the more competent the speaker becomes.

### 7.2.2 *Sort of* and informality

Another possible explanation for the discrepancy between *sort of* in the two corpora is the greater informality of the CANCODE corpus compared to SUEC. While many of the speech events in SUEC are of the informal, intimate, variety it is the case that some are in a non-formal discursive style; for example, the TV discussion between politicians and journalists and other extracts between participants who are acquaintances rather than close friends. However, although writers such as Aijmer (2002) Brown (1977) Crystal and Davy (1975) characterize *sort of* as typical of informality it is not only used in informal contexts. Brown points out that *sort of* 'can occur in any style of speech' (1977: 116) Indeed, it may be found to boost rather than downtone the distance between two speakers. Channel (1994) for example, quotes several examples of non-formal spoken data where *sort of/kind of* is common, such as university tutorials and Holmes (1988) draws, in part, on 'formal' and 'semi-formal' data in her study of *sort of* in women's speech. The hypothesis that *sort of / kind of* are not restricted to informal contexts is confirmed by an examination of two-word phrases in the CANCODE spoken academic subcorpus; in this stylistically more neutral context than the CANCODE corpus as a whole, we find an even stronger frequency for *sort of* (0.27%) and a slight increase in the occurrence of *kind of* (0.07%) (Table 7.7).

	Word	Freq.	%
1	You know	1,275	0.37
2	Sort of	941	0.27
3	You can	651	0.19
4	I think	603	0.18
5	I mean	511	0.15
6	And then	422	0.12
7	Going to	408	0.12



8	Have to	380	0.11
9	The same	291	0.08
10	The other	270	0.08
11	Kind of	252	0.07

**Table 7.7: 2-word clusters in CANCODE spoken academic (344,000-word corpus)**

The pervasiveness of *sort of* cuts across different types of spoken genres. Indeed, it would seem that *sort of*, if anything, is more frequent in the less formal variety of spoken academic discourse than it is in more informal contexts. The reason for this must be sought in the contextual constraints on *sort of* and pragmatic demands made upon it and the pragmatic conditions it helps to create e.g. its use in the articulation of negative politeness (Aijmer, 2002: 199; Holmes, 1988: 103). It is to the behaviour of *sort of* in context to which we turn next.

### **7.3 *Sort of*: meaning and use**

#### **7.3.1 *sort of* as a classifier**

*Sort of* has a core, prototypical meaning or ‘classifier’ use, which makes up about 2% of the total in CANCODE. *Sort of* as a ‘classifier’, according to the Macmillan Dictionary (Rundell, 2002) can be paraphrased as referring to ‘a group of things or people with the same qualities or features: kind, type’: ‘What *sort of* car are you going to buy?’ It is not this ‘classifier’ function of *sort of* but its pragmatic use that I will be focusing on in this chapter. The overwhelming majority of occurrences of *sort of* in CANCODE serve pragmatic rather than propositional meaning.

(7.1)  
it’s **sort of** quite it’s **sort of** it’s just like in panels

(7.2)  
it’s like quite **sort of** like a pet

(All corpus examples in the chapter are from CANCODE, unless otherwise stated.)



### 7.3.2 The pragmatic uses of *sort of*

The umbrella term ‘pragmatic marker’ to describe *sort of* includes a wide range of semantic and discourse functions that have been identified by scholars: ‘hedge’ (Lakoff, 1972; Aijmer, 1984; Poos and Simpson, 2002); ‘softener’, ‘connective’ (Crystal and Davy, 1975) ‘compromiser’ (Quirk et al 1972); ‘downtoner’ (Holmes, 1984); ‘vague marker’ (Channell, 1994) ‘stance adverbial’, ‘adverb of imprecision’ (Biber et al, 1999) and ‘adjuster’ (Aijmer, 2002). For some analysts, the term used reflects both the discourse function and the low prestige that often attaches to items such as *sort of* in conversation: ‘filler’ (Brown, 1977: 107ff) and ‘fumble’ (Edmundson, 1981: 153).

For Lakoff, the hedge *sort of* is an expression which involves ‘fuzziness’ or vagueness and is of central importance in language description (Lakoff, 1972: 195). A more pragmatically oriented definition of ‘hedge’ is that provided by Carter and McCarthy:

when a speaker or writer wishes to avoid coming straight to the  
point or to avoid speaking directly  
(Carter and McCarthy, 1997a: 16).

This definition of hedging adds an explicitly relational and interactional dimension to the uses of *sort of*, which may be helpful when we attempt to explain the motivation for the differing patterns of occurrence of the TWP.

One way in which speakers ‘hedge’ is by using what Holmes (1984) refers to as ‘downtoners’ – devices which are used to mitigate or attenuate the force of an utterance. Stubbs (1996: 208) includes *sort of* in his category of ‘surface markers of detachment’ along with *in part*, *in a way* and *more or less*. Markers of mitigation and detachment have an important function in speech communities which place a premium on ‘negative-politeness’ and the preservation of face for the speaker and hearer (Brown and Levinson, 1978: 250).

Related to its hedging function is the way *sort of* can help establish intimacy between speakers (Aijmer, 1986). Aijmer stresses the interactional role of *sort of* in establishing rapport between speakers and thus it is a device that invokes common ground and relies on the co-operation of the speakers for its pragmatic success (Aijmer, 1986: 5; 2002: 209). This intimacy-creating function of *sort of* is reinforced by the phonological reduction of *sort of* in discourse whereby it is articulated as *sorta* (compare *kinda* for *kind of*).

For Schourup (1985: 150), *sort of* belongs to a group of ‘discourse particles’ which ‘evince the availability of more material in the private world than is presented in the shared world’. This is an important point, as it suggests the item often stands ambiguously between ‘what is covert and what is overt in ongoing conversational activity’ (Schourup, 1985: 154).

Poos and Simpson (2002) summarise the multiple pragmatic functions of *sort of* as follows:

1. to express inexactitude
2. to soften the force of a stance or opinion
3. to mitigate criticism or request
4. to precede the use of sophisticated vocabulary or jargon words
5. to establish and maintain rapport between interlocutors
6. to precede metaphors
7. to fill a pause and help the speaker keep the floor.

### **7.3.3 *Sort of thing***

In this study, I will also discuss expressions like *this/that sort of thing*, which Channell includes in the devices used to ‘refer vaguely to categories’ such as *and things like that, or something* and *and all that sort of thing*. Channell (1994: 122) uses the term ‘vague category identifiers’ for such items. Aijmer (1986: 2-3) classifies *sort of thing* (*and*) *that sort of thing* as a hedge. Moreover, Fronek (1982: 636) refers to ‘the poverty of the semantic content’ of the word *thing* which, added to the



‘desemantisation’ of *sort of* (Aijmer: 1986: 9) makes the chunk *sort of thing* a good candidate for semantic vagueness. It is this reinforced ‘semantic poverty’ that facilitates the multiple pragmatic functions and interactive flexibility of *sort of* + *thing*. Speakers fill the ‘emptiness’ of *sort of thing* with their own intentions.

## 7.4 *Sort of*: Colligation and Collocation

### 7.4.1 Colligation and co-operation

Table 7.8 summarises the syntactic position of *sort of* in 100 random examples from the CANCODE corpus (Appendix 4):

Type	CAN%
Noun Phrase	39
Verb phrase	34
Adjective phrase	7
AdvPhrase	1
PrepPhrase	1

**Table 7.8 *Sort of*: modification of major constituents**

The syntactic environments in which *sort of* occurs in CANCODE is similar to the data presented by Aijmer (2002: 182). *Sort of* is especially frequent before NPs and VPs. The most frequent position in the utterance in CANCODE and in Aijmer’s (2002) data is medial (16%) and, with far less frequency, it occurs at the end of the utterance. This picture of the position of *sort of* suggests a great deal of mobility and flexibility, which facilitate the diverse semantic and pragmatic functions of the phrase.

Indeed, an initial observation on the relationship between syntax and function of *sort of* is that the highly frequent colligation of *sort of* with noun and verb phrases reflects the usefulness of *sort of* when the speaker is describing participants and processes, especially in discursive and narrative discourse. Some of the noun and verb phrases which occur after *sort of* are, as Aijmer (1984) points out, metaphorical in nature and facilitate the wider descriptive / narrative function. The high frequency of noun and



verb phrases in combination with *sort of* reflects the ordinariness of narrative, descriptive and discursive speech acts in everyday conversation.

On a relational level, the deployment of *sort of* in these contexts will have the effect of involving the listener in the construction of the ‘message’. The effect of *sort of* on the descriptive items is often to suggest an imperfect account of events and thus to call upon the hearer to ‘reconstruct’ and complete the description (Aijmer, 1984: 123). This feature of *sort of* highlights the co-operative nature of spoken discourse and the way it draws the hearer into the discourse. The choice of *sort of* in particular instances is the product of the speaker’s anticipation of the here-and-now needs of the hearer or the assumption of what degree of background knowledge the speaker already has; backchannelling and turn-taking will confirm this reading of the hearers’ needs or lead to adjustments in discourse strategies if necessary. The process is dialogic and the lexico-grammatical choices that facilitate the dialogue are emergent rather than fixed, the result of the constant to-and-fro of negotiation rather than the transfer of data from one brain to another.

In the case of *sort of*, the ‘meaning’ or pragmatic effect of the phrase can vary depending on the context; indeed, it often seems to have contradictory uses which can be paraphrased as ‘you know what I mean’ or ‘you probably won’t know what I mean’. Paradoxically, *sort of* can suggest difficulty in articulating the speaker’s intended meaning or it can give the impression of fluency. It is the pressure of local, interactional circumstances that will determine the initial choice of the item *sort of* and how it will be received by the hearer.

In the following examples, by using *sort of* before descriptive phrases the speaker is implicitly inviting the hearer to draw on his or her shared background knowledge to fill in any fuzziness in the description.



(7.3)

So that'd be ideal because on a **sort of** ...er...is it a boat thing.

(7.4)

it...it...gets this **sort of** faded stuff.

The noun in the NP is often preceded by a descriptive adjective; we find: *sort of* + *preppy school*, *posh suburbs*, *Russian elite*, *intense kind*, *similar features*, and so on.

Reported speech is one of the narrative contexts in which *sort of* occurs and thus we find *sort of* occurring in combination with the reporting verb *say* but also *go/went* as a more informal reporting verb:

(7.5)

Robert **sort of** said that...

(7.6)

he just **sort of** goes blah-blah-blah every now and then.

(7.7)

and he just **sort of went** 'Derek?'

The occurrences of *sort of* before or within an adjective phrase also fit into this narrative-descriptive use of *sort of*:

(7.8)

it's all rough as it was yeah **sort of** rough

Thus, we see *sort of* functioning as a 'contextualisation cue' (Gumperz, 1992) or a signal that the speaker is switching to a narrative and/or descriptive footing (Goffman, 1979). The frequency of *sort of* as a device framing a narrative episode in conversation confirms Goffman's observation that not only do we spend much of our speaking time 're-telling events' but that we rely on our audience 'to take the part for the whole and co-operatively catch our meaning' (Goffman, 1981: 2). This is precisely what *sort of* in combination with major grammatical constituents seems to be doing.



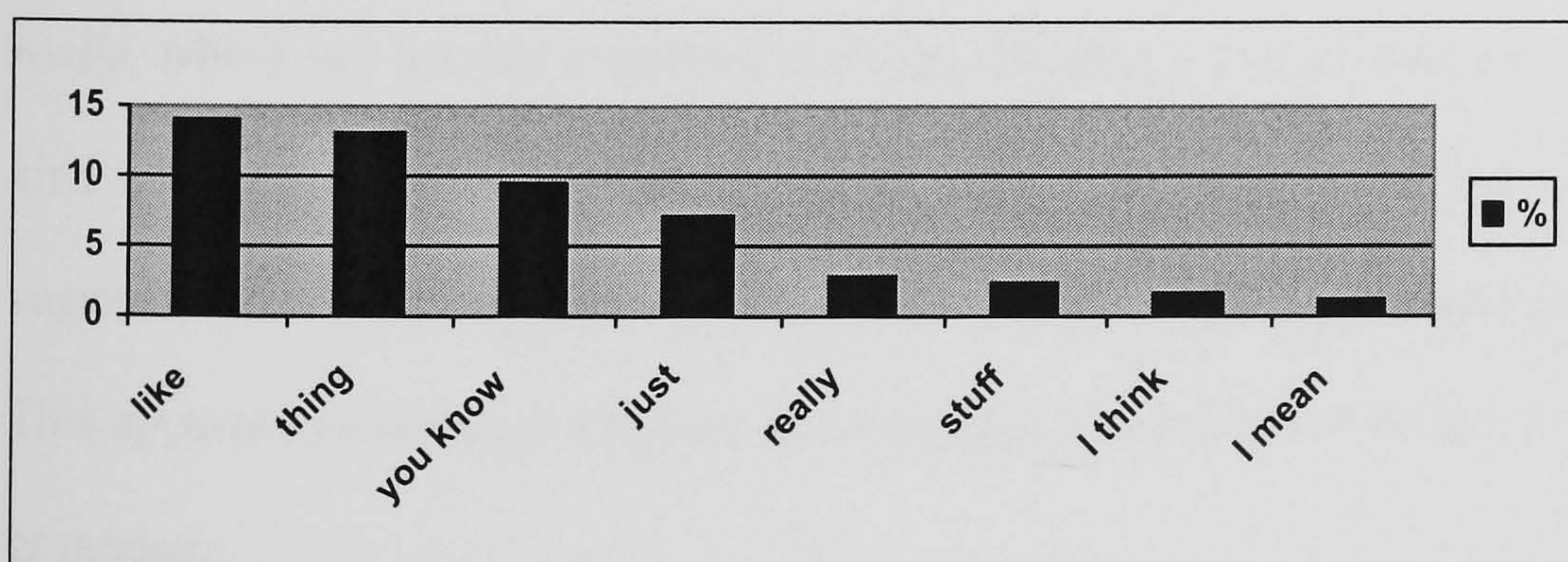
### 7.4.2 Colligation: concluding remarks

The numerous colligations of *sort of* are a part of the system of choices available to the ‘native-speaker’ that help create the impression of fluent, comfortable informality. The preceding examples of the pragmatic uses to which the syntactic flexibility of *sort of* can be put contradicts the popular fallacy that *sort of* is merely a ‘filler’, a symptom of speaker-oriented laziness and lack of articulacy. The syntactic mobility of *sort of* can be seen as a device for stitching together utterances as they are produced in real-time discourse and thus contribute to smooth, coherent discourse rather than militating against it. Colligation is thus an important formal indication of what pragmatic functions *sort of* performs but for Aijmer (2002, 189) an even more important indicator of the pragmatic functions of *sort of* is its collocates, which is the topic covered in the next section.

## 7.5 Collocation

### 7.5.1 Vagueness attracts vagueness

Figure 7.2 shows the most common collocates of *sort of* in L2 spoken discourse, occurring within five words to the left or right of the node phrase:



**Figure 7.2: Most frequent collocates of *sort of* in L1UC**  
(out of a total of 250 random hits, see Appendix 4)

Before we go on to examine the meaning and function of these collocates of *sort of*, taken from a small sample of concordance lines, it is worth comparing their



representativeness against a larger corpus such as the British National Corpus conversational sub-corpus of 5 million words (Aston and Burnard, 1998: 31).

A glance at the collocational profile of *sort of* in the BNC confirms that all of the collocates identified in our small sample (apart from *stuff*) reappear in the larger spoken corpus as amongst the most frequent co-selections of the node phrase *sort of*.

Aijmer (2002: 191) identifies a similar range of collocates for *sort of*: *a bit, just, you know* and other vagueness markers. Table 7.9 summarises the main pragmatic functions of these collocates of *sort of*, as reported in the literature:

	Uncertainty	vagueness	cohesion	Shared knowledge	Involvement (addressee)	soften	boost
Thing	*	*	*	*	*		
Stuff	*	*	*	*	*		
Like		*		*	*		
You know		*		*	*		
Just		*				*	
Really							*
I think	*	*				*	*
I mean	*	*	*	*		*	

Table 7.9 Pragmatic uses of collocates of *sort of*

The first thing about the collocates of *sort of* that strikes the researcher is that they are all potential realizations of hedges and mitigating devices, with the exception of *really*, which has mainly a booster function. Bearing in mind that *sort of* itself is a kind of hedge, what we seem to have on a semantic level is the tendency for vagueness to attract vagueness or, pragmatically-speaking, that hedges attract hedges. This apparent redundancy requires investigation to ascertain whether it is motivated or random.

In the chart, we can see at a glance how *sort of* collocates frequently with individual words or phrases which foreground and reinforce its role as a pragmatic device through which the speaker expresses an appeal to shared knowledge, all in the service of increasing the involvement of the hearer in the discourse. In the following section, I



illustrate these pragmatic patterns in more detail, basing my analysis on the existing literature.

#### 7.5.1.1 *Thing and stuff*

The expression of uncertainty and imprecision are amongst the most salient uses of *sort of* and they are signaled by the occurrence of the words *thing* and *stuff* in the immediate vicinity of the node phrase.

*Thing* is found so often in the company of *sort of* that it forms a distinct multi-word unit functioning as a ‘list completer’ or as an ‘empty head’ (Fronek, 1982: 647). The label ‘empty’ does not do justice, however, to the substantial role that *thing* performs in combination with *sort of* in actual discourse. Its meaning derives from its association with other words and from the way speakers and listeners ‘populate’ it with their feelings, attitudes and shared experiences.

In semantic terms, *thing* often stands in for items recoverable in previous parts of the text and thus performs an important discourse function in achieving textual cohesion. Many instances of *sort of thing sort of stuff* are, however, explicable less in semantic terms and more in pragmatic terms, as devices for foregrounding shared assumptions and background knowledge between members of the same speech community (O’Keeffe, 2003: 96). The very vagueness of *sort of* and its collocates *thing* and *stuff* provides points of entry for the interlocutor; they are addressee-sensitive. Chafe (1982) sees vagueness markers in speech as ‘involvement devices’ which implicitly draw on what the speakers share within a particular socio-cultural framework. Thus, in collocation with *sort of*, *thing* may be semantically empty but, pragmatically, it is full of meaning.



### 7.5.1.2 *Like*

*Like*, like *thing*, is another one of those vague little words that in the popular imagination seems sloppy and empty of meaning (Schourup, 1985: 39). Paradoxically, it is this lack of specificity that makes it a suitable candidate for dialogic co-construction of meaning by the interlocutors. When *like* functions as a vague marker it invites the active involvement of the audience in filling in for the lack of precision (Levey, 2003: 28). In conversational narrative it is often an appeal to the listener's knowledge of the situation:

(7.9)

She **sort of** caught this girl's eye and she was **sort of** like trying not to laugh.

Schourup (1985) gives a detailed account of the quotative function of *like*; he sees *like* as evincing the speaker's private thoughts concerning the inexact nature of quotation.

Other researchers have explored the way quotative *like* signals a self-quote, as in 'I'm like...you know this stuff. I got a 77 last time' (Dailey-O'Cain, 2000: 61) and also introduces other voices into the conversation as in 'he's like 'do it now' and I'm like 'No!' (Levey, 2003: 28; on 'quotative' *like*, see also: Carter and Adolphs, 2003).

Thus, the co-occurrence of *sort of* and *like* reinforces the dialogic co-construction of the utterance.

### 7.5.1.3 *you know*

Aijmer (1984) identifies the frequent collocation of *sort of* with *you know* and she argues that they are both used to evoke shared background knowledge between the speaker and listener (Aijmer, 1984: 122).

There is, however, an odd contradiction in the use of these items: utterances that seem on the surface to be an appeal to 'shared knowledge' are in fact fulfilling quite distinct pragmatic functions. Holmes (1986) describes the way *you know* can be an

exponent of both speaker certainty and uncertainty, two diametrically opposed concepts (Holmes, 1986: 8-9). Östman (1981) on the other hand, describes the core meaning of *you know* in terms of the speaker's striving towards getting the listener to accept what he or she is saying as 'mutual background knowledge' (Östman, 1981: 17). Schourup (1985: 104) identifies the way *you know* evinces uncertainty between the shared world and the private world of the speakers.

The explanation for these conflicting tendencies in the pragmatic uses of *you know* is to be found in its stylistic function in establishing 'camaraderie' (Lakoff, 1972) or what Aston (1988) refers to as 'comity' between speaker and addressee. It is when there is a lack of shared knowledge that the speaker – in deference to the listener and wary of the threat of loss of face to the listener – calls on hedging devices such as *you know* to mitigate potential friction or loss of face. It is worth pointing out that all appeals to shared knowledge are to projected or assumed shared knowledge – we rarely know for certain that our interlocutor shares our view of the world. It is part of the Bakhtinian dialogic process which Morson describes as including 'the listener's identification of the speaker's apparent and concealed motives and of the responses that the speaker invites and hopes to forestall' (Morson, 1986: 6).

*You know*, then, is not only a highly useful and versatile hedging device but a paradoxical one; as a frequent collocate of *sort of* it reinforces the pragmatic meanings inherent in *sort of*, especially those which have to do with deferring to the existing knowledge of the hearer and encouraging a dialogic involvement in the discourse.



#### 7.5.1.4 *Just*

Like the collocation *sort of* + *you know*, *sort of* and *just* co-occur frequently enough to justify seeing them as a formulaic sequence in their own right. The order of the items that make up the sequence is reversible: *sort of just* / *just sort of*.

Aijmer (1984: 125) suggests that the combination of *sort of* with *just* has the effect of softening the effect of *just* and making it more ‘fuzzy’ in Lakoff’s (1972) terms. She considers *just* as ‘too strong or categorical’ and thus she argues that *sort of* has the effect of blurring the precise edges of *just* and mitigating its categorical force.

The examples of the collocation *sort of* + *just* or *just* + *sort of* that I consulted in CANCODE and the British National Corpus point also to the way it reinforces the relaxed, self-effacing effect of both lexical items.

(7.10)

I try to just **sort of** just hope my life isn't affected

Like the collocational effect of *you know* and *like*, the addition of *just* to *sort of* seems somewhat redundant: in practice, however, it has a distinct pragmatic function: it doubles the effect of attenuating the utterance, exerting less pressure on the listener.

#### 7.5.1.5 *I think*

As with the other collocates of *sort of* there is a paradoxical element in the different uses of *I think*. Holmes (1985) identifies two main functions of this hedge as ‘deliberative’ and ‘tentative’. In the case of deliberative uses of *I think* the speaker expresses confidence and adds weight to the message (this is the booster function referred to by Holmes, 1984). The ‘tentative’ function of *I think* expresses uncertainty and a softening of the proposition (Holmes, 1986: 3). Once again we see *sort of* attracting items that reinforce its hedging effect; *like* attracts *like*: vagueness, tentativeness, indirectness, politeness.

*I think*, can also be used, in isolation, to express assertiveness, emphasis or speaker authority; the lexico-grammatical chunk, *I think*, may mean what it says it means ('I am not sure of the facts of what I'm saying') or it may mean 'I believe X to be the case'.

#### 7.5.1.6 *Really*

As a collocate of *sort of*, *really*, at first glance, seems to differ from the other examples we have been discussing. Unlike the other hedges, which all have the potential to serve as 'softeners' or 'mitigators' of the speaker's propositional meaning, 'really' can be described as having the opposite effect; it functions as what Holmes (1984) refers to as a 'booster' which strengthens the effect of the message:

(7.11)  
they're both **really sort of** nurturing nice excellent people

The speaker here wishes to emphasize his/her approval of the fact that 'they' are nurturing nice people and thus *really* strengthens the impact of *nurturing*. Thus, the pragmatic effect of *really* here seems to be in tune with its prototypical semantic content. 'It is often difficult' as Kramsch points out, 'to draw a clear line between the generic semantic meanings of the code and the pragmatic meanings of the code in various contexts of use' (Kramsch, 1998: 23). The core or prototypical meaning influences the contextualised, pragmatic meaning. In a sense, many of the pragmatic markers we are looking at engage in a dialogue with their core semantic meanings.

But looked at more closely, *really* also contributes to contextual conflicts. In example (11) above, *really* acts as a booster, while *sort of* acts as a downtoner of the same lexical item: *nurturing*. The speaker seems, literally, to be in two minds about how to present the message. Is he or she being assertive or low key?



### 7.5.1.7 *I mean*

*I mean* has, like many discourse markers in conversation been stigmatized as ‘verbal garbage’ (discussed in Schourup, 1985: 94) or a time-filling ‘fumble’ (Edmundson, 1981, discussed –and rejected - in Erman, 1987). But the range of uses of *I mean* presents a more complicated picture. Beyond its prototypical, propositional meaning, *I mean* has several pragmatic functions: it gives the hearer information about the speaker, the situation and it modifies the level of politeness (Fox Tree and Schrock, 2002: 729). *I mean* can co-occur with *you know* and when it does, we have a highly interactive chunk - *I mean you know* – that moves dialogically from speaker to hearer and captures the proto-typically interpersonal function of hedging devices as the embodiment of the ‘I and you’ principle in spoken discourse. On an interpersonal level, they both relate to face-saving strategies built on an appeal to shared understanding.

### 7.6 Collocates of *sort of*: summary

one has to strive to avoid using these useless expressions (such as *sort of*, *you know*). If you use them once in a while it’s fine; but when you use them very often it’s really annoying.  
(Italian teacher, SUEC)

The popular view that pragmatic markers like *you know*, *I mean*, *sort of* and *like*, are simply evidence of sloppy speech and dysfluency is not borne out by the preceding analysis. We have demonstrated that, on the contrary, *sort of*, at least, is an addressee-oriented means of involving the listener and facilitating the flow of discourse. This function is reinforced by the lexical items with which *sort of* collocates.

In sum, we can say that most of the collocates of *sort of*:

1. are hedging devices of the downtoning or mitigating variety.
2. are linked to conventions of face and politeness.
3. draw on shared background knowledge.

4. often serve conflicting functions in particular contexts, whether as softeners or boosters, expressions of certainty or uncertainty, confidence or insecurity.
5. involve the addressee in co-constructing the discourse.
6. are dialogic.

Three of these collocates – *you know*, *I mean* and *I think* – also happen to be the three most frequent two word lexical phrases in informal spoken English, in both L1 and L2 discourse. The node phrase with which they form collocations, *sort of*, as we have seen, is the fourth most frequent two-word lexical phrase in spoken English. Together, *you know*, *I think*, *I mean* and *sort of* form a quartet of collocations which are pervasive in informal spoken English. More evidence of the intimate company these items keep will be described in the next section.

### **7.7 Repetition of collocates**

Holmes (1984) warns against the danger of describing linguistic devices in isolation from other items with which they co-occur (Holmes, 1984: 363). The above analysis, however, based largely on previously published research, misses out on the extent of the phenomenon of co-occurrence that surrounds *sort of* and its collocates.

There is a great degree of apparently redundant but in reality highly functional repetition in the ‘native-speaker’ data of both the node phrase *sort of* and its collocates. In the section that follows, I illustrate the different degrees of repetition that accompany *sort of* and its collocates.

#### **7.7.1 Collocational compounds**

‘Collocational compounds’ are made up of the node phrase (*sort of*) plus one more of its collocates in an adjacent position within the same turn or across turns, either to the left or the right of the node phrase. Some of the collocational compounds composed of *sort of* and another pragmatic marker in CANCODE include:



(7.12)  
All this **sort of** stuff its **really really** useless

(7.13)  
I try to **just sort of just** hope my life isn't affected

(7.15)  
It's **like** quite **sort of like** a pet

(7.16)  
**you know** and kissing his feet and **sort of you know** bathing him in oil

### 7.7.2 Collocational complexes

A 'collocational complex' is the co-occurrence of the node phrase and two or more collocates together in adjacent positions:

(7.17)  
And **I think** it's that **sort of thing I think**

(7.18)  
It was **sort of well sort of like really** weird

### 7.7.3 Collocational Cascades

I will use the term 'collocational cascades' to refer to the co-occurrence of collocates of the node phrase, in the company of the node phrase or in its absence, within the same speaker turn or across turns, in the wider co-text. In other words, cascades involve discontinuous co-occurrences of collocates: they do not form holistic chunks of the compound or cluster variety, but are scattered throughout the text and are thus important features of discourse and pragmatic cohesion and coherence. In the full flow of conversational interaction, whether during monologues or dialogues, the discourse marker collocates of *sort of* are woven in and out of the discourse.

(7.19)  
And **you know** she **just sort of** eats...

(7.20)  
and it's very short **like** cos it's **sort of** quite **sort of** it's **just like** in panels

(7.21)

a better person and is **really** trying to sort of **you know** get it together

### **7.8. Discourse rhapsody: the function of collocate repetition**

On reading, in the cold light of print, the way these collocates of *sort of* combine to form larger units in spoken discourse, one can almost feel the speaker tacking on item after item, semantic chunk after semantic chunk, under the pressure of the on-going evolution of the utterance in real-time.

Yet, in actual discourse, these compounds, complexes and cascades, pass almost unnoticed and contribute to the sense of flow in informal conversation. What we hear are small phrases which, in combination, have an integrative effect on the utterances and help construct Bakhtin's 'chain of communication'. The repeated collocates are not merely mechanical – they have a cumulative impact on their context of situation and the pragmatic outcomes.

On one level, one can see these duplications of the same item as a subliminal attempt to hold the floor while one finds one's words. The usefulness can thus be limited to the filler and fumbler function, and be seen in a negative light as far as fluency is concerned.

It seems likely, however, that such pervasive repetition is motivated in terms of the pressures of the sequential development of discourse and serves a range of constructive or co-constructive purposes in the discourse: turn-taking conventions, holding the floor, repair-strategies and generally establishing and maintaining the desired interpersonal relationship between the interlocutors.

On a discourse coherence level, we can see these reiterations as examples of the way utterances are created in real-time not according to a pre-determined grammatical pattern but improvised phrase by phrase, concept by concept, and stitched together, as they appear in the mind and in the texture of the discourse. The whole utterance or



speech event moves forward dynamically towards a fulfillment of the pragmatic intent, pushed along incrementally and held together by relations of semantic synonymy or functional harmony:

increments are things which push the topic forward; a non-increment deliberately stalls it.

(McCarthy, 1998a: 114)

Increments can be interpreted as moving one's present position in the talk, of agreeing to converge with or accommodate to one's fellow-speakers. This rhapsodic weaving together of discourse through *sort of* and its collocates may thus be seen as one example of Brazil's 'grammar of speech', which is not sentence-based but phraseological in the broad sense:

(in the) the dynamic notion of a sequence of states... item succeeds item along the time dimension...the end that speakers have in view is one which relates more directly to their common understanding of what they are about...

(Brazil, 1995: 38-39)

On another level, one can interpret this repetition as a way of intensifying the speaker's appeal to the real - or manipulated - shared background knowledge of the addressee. The closer we look at the data the more we realize that these patterns of co-occurrence are part of a wider lexical and semantic configuration which serve to promote speaker-hearer convergence.

Finally, these repetitions can be added to the 'repeats and other nonfluencies' referred to by Stenström and Svarvik (1994: 252) as, paradoxically, promoting fluency. Like pauses and fillers these collocational repetitions promote fluency through a realization of a range of pragmatic and interpersonal functions which facilitate speaker-listener convergence. The fluency and the convergence are mutually defining.

In Brazil's model, as in that of Bakhtin, the speaker does not engage in autonomous monologues but is addressee-sensitive. Thus, L1 fluency has more to do with this

reiterative, unifying function of phrases and their dialogic co-construction by speaker-and-hearer than with the application either of an integrative grammatical system or of the deployment pre-fabricated phrases in isolation. If this is the case, it may have important implications for the nature of L2 fluency and the role of phraseology and emergent grammar in the acquisition of fluency. In this model, bursts of speech or increments are held together by discourse markers. Their repeated use gives an impression of integrated smoothness which is actually lacking on a syntactic level.

Fluency, then, is not to be found on the grammatical level alone or even on the level of formulaic expressions in isolation but in the construction of ‘extended units of meaning’ or the ‘idiom principle’ broadly defined in textual, contextual and pragmatic terms. This ‘extended’ concept of idiomaticity includes collocation, collocational networks such as the ones we have been examining, but it also includes semantic and pragmatic prosody, to which we now turn.

### **7.9 Semantic Prosody of *sort of***

*...the great, or the mighty, or the huge, or the magnanimous, are all one reckonings, save the phrase is a little variations.*

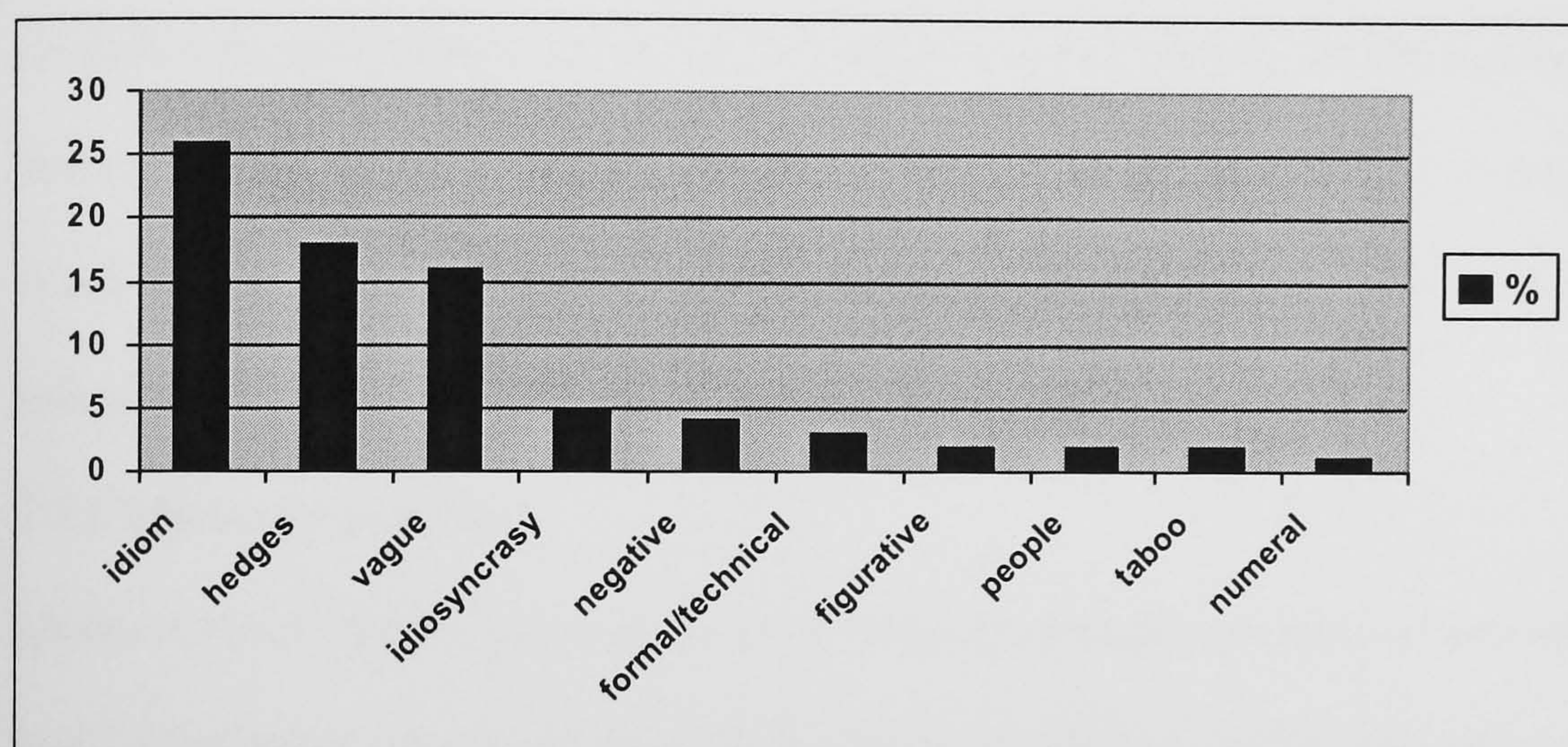
*Henry V*, Act IV sc.vii.

If we look back at the most frequent collocates of *sort of* – *like, thing, you know, just, really, stuff, I think, I mean* – only two words seem, on the surface at least, to have a related meaning: *thing* and *stuff*, which both share the quality of vagueness. This suggests that *sort of* is associated with a semantic prosody of vagueness or imprecision. We shall investigate this semantic pattern later.

The other most frequent collocates of *sort of* – *like, you know, just, really, I think, I mean* – do not at first glance seem to have much in common in terms of ideational or semantic meaning. They are, however, as we have seen all examples of ‘hedges’,



which we have been using as a pragmatic category. Thus, these frequent collocates of *sort of* do share a common communicative purpose (to mitigate propositional meaning). They form a pattern of use we have referred to as ‘pragmatic prosody’. To facilitate the analysis, I will group the semantic prosodies into the following broadly semantic categories: vagueness, negativity, idiosyncrasy, taboo words, people, numbers and times; the remainder are more easily grouped as ‘pragmatic’: hedges, idioms, formality and technical language (Figure 7.3).



**Figure 7.3** Most frequent semantic/pragmatic prosodies of *sort of*

In Table 7.10, I exemplify each of these prosodies with data from CANCODE.

	Prosody	Freq	%	Example of collocates
1	Idiomaticity	100	26	Go back, start off, jet set, black and white
2	Hedges	67	18	You know, you see, I mean, like, just, a bit
3	Vagueness	63	16	floppy, jungly, purple, bluey-green, shortish, greenish, eleven o'clock-ish,
4	Idiosyncrasy	20	5	crazy, funny, unusual, unexpected, Delia oriented, carfuffle,
5	Negativity	17	4	Primitive, hideous, dodgy, suspicious, bother
6	Formal, technical	13	3	Contemplate, nurture, assign, protocol, computer, graphics
7	Figurative	9	2	Snake out, nurturing
8	People	7	2	People, person, mate, guy, chap
9	Taboo, swear	7	2	Arse, bum, shit, shite, crap, nude
10	Numbers, times	4	1	Twenty five, mid-day

**Table 7.10** Examples of Semantic/Pragmatic Prosodies of *sort of*



The above categories have been arrived at taking the semantic features in each collocate of *sort of* which seemed to be foregrounded in each context. These features were then counted only once. While this serves the purposes of an initial breakdown and analysis of semantic prosody, it ignores the way the same item operates at different levels: semantic, discoursal, pragmatic, often at the same time. Of particular interest in this section, is the way the same item may be ‘polypragmatic’ and have different communicative or interactional functions. I will return to the general prosodies formed by these more specific prosodies later in this chapter and the need to re-count collocates in order to account for their multiple functions.. At this stage, I would like to focus on the semantic and prosodic features which seemed to me to be salient in combination with *sort of* in particular instances.

### 7.9.1 Idiomatic prosody

Idiomaticity of various kinds is the most frequent semantic prosody of *sort of*; *sort of*, itself a formulaic chunk, is followed by phrasal verbs (*go back*, *start off*) compound nouns (*jet set*) binomials (*black and white*) and collocations (*half-hearted attempt*).

On one level, we can interpret the ‘idiomatic prosody’ of *sort of* as the result of the informality which we associate with *sort of* as a discourse marker. The informality is appropriate to the kind of interaction between friends which is typical of the sub-corpus of CANCODE which I am in part drawing on for this study. Notice the co-occurrence of the informal lexical items *dad*, *dodgy* and *bloke*, with the phrasal verb *run off with* in the following extract:

(7.22)

she erm leaves her dad and runs off with this **sort of** dodgy Spanish bloke

*Sort of* and idiomaticity seem to have a mutual attraction; if one sees *sort of* in a text, there is likely to be an idiom somewhere in the vicinity, whether before or after the



node word. In terms of pragmatics, the co-occurrence of *sort of* with idiomaticity is, as a rule, a sign that the speaker wishes to switch to a more informal or intimate style:

(7.23)  
they're going to **sort of** bum around

(7.24)  
(they were) **sort of fiddling around**

Another possible explanation for the co-occurrence of *sort of* and idiomaticity is as a signal that the speaker is switching to a 'deeper commonality', that he or she is, at least subliminally, asserting the sense of shared cultural space.

### 7.9.2 Vagueness

The semantic prosody of *sort of* includes a large component of vagueness (18%). Vagueness is expressed via a number of linguistic devices, including nouns, adjectives, adverbs and suffixes. These exponents of vagueness have the effect of reinforcing the already vague feel of *sort of*. The combination of *sort of* with imprecise items thus emphasizes the speaker's difficulty - or assumed difficulty - in giving a precise description of something. The cluster of vague expressions which often accompanies *sort of* is redundant semantically but important pragmatically, as it helps to establish and maintain mutuality (Powell, 1992:42); it shifts the focus from facts and information to the people involved and their attitudes, feelings and relationships. This semantically 'redundant' degree of vagueness invites the hearer to apply his or her knowledge of the kind of items under discussion to co-operatively 'piece out' the speaker's 'imperfections with (their) thoughts'.

McCarthy and Carter (1997) point out the frequent co-occurrence of hedges such as *sort of* with various expressions of modality (*might, could, perhaps, probably*) and this is consistent with the vague attitudinal function of *sort of*. The combination of *sort of* and epistemic modality also foregrounds the way speakers shift attention from

the ideational content of the utterance to how they see or feel about the relative truth value of the content and to moderate the degree of commitment they feel towards the truth of the proposition:

(7.25)

You **can** like **sort of** get dismissed

(7.26)

I **could** have had **sort of** like magical powers

### 7.9.3 Idiosyncratic prosody

By ‘idiosyncratic’ I refer to words meaning something like ‘strange’ or ‘unusual’ as well as lexical items which, in context, refer to concepts which deviate from a norm, including the use of innovative, creative language by the speaker:

**Nouns:** *carfuffle, granny flat, very small shoulders, paranoia, pidgin, caricature, curly legs, fracas, a miniature Mount Fuji, a canary-hopping attitude*

**Adjectives:** *crazy, funny, unusual, secret, unexpected, Delia-oriented, grotesque*

**Exclamations:** *whoop, yuk.*

In the example below, the description of crazy paving is hedged round with three mitigating devices: *all*, *sort of* and *like*, which highlights the distancing effect of the utterance.

(7.27)

But she wanted all **sort of** like crazy paving

The main pragmatic functions of *sort of* in its co-occurrence with ‘idiosyncratic’ meanings seem to be:

- to mark an innovative and therefore deviant use of language
- to foreground the vividness of the description, in order to enliven the narrative
- to involve the hearer in the imaginative co-construction of the discourse



-to suggest that the collocate is an instance of ‘echoic mention’ rather than ‘use’ (Sperber and Wilson, 1981) or is ‘quotative’, that is, language borrowed or ‘appropriated’ from others (Bakhtin, 1981: 77)

-to suggest that there is something extraordinary in the propositional content of the utterance

(7.28)

Rex, ebullient and gregarious, ensuring a meal at his place is a  
**sort of crazy** party with himself as the slightly eccentric host.

There is something self-conscious in the use of *sort of* in these markedly descriptive contexts, as if the speaker is aware of deviating from the neutral norms of everyday routine conversation, both in terms of what is said and how it is said: ‘do I dare disturb the universe’?

#### 7.9.4 Figurative prosody

*Sort of* also signals the quotative use of another kind of ‘extra-ordinary’ language; metaphor and figurative speech in general. In the following example, we see the way *sort of* evokes the presence of two voices at the same time, the voice of the speaker and the voice of another, in words or phrases which are marked out as not the speaker’s own. The speaker attracts attention to the oddness of the concepts referred to but also the self-consciously baroque nature of the descriptions:

(7.29)

you can see the tractor beam below er as it **sort of snakes out** to  
grasp you

In veering off the well-trodden paths of verbal cliché or colourless green ideas into more creative realms one risks pragmatic failure; *sort of* and other hedges shield the speaker from some of the hazards of indulging in language which is more ‘colourful’ than average.

In terms of ‘commonality’, the speaker can be seen to be taking shelter in the collective safety of membership of a speech community and of the haven of shared background knowledge that that provides.

#### 7.9.5 Negative prosody

Another clearly identifiable semantic prosody of *sort of* is negativity. Here are some examples of the more generally negative nouns and adjectives that occur in the immediate environment of *sort of* in the data, mostly adjacent to the node word:

**Nouns:** *breakdown, bully, crisis, deficit, dishonesty, crookery, drug, scum, passivity, inertia, lie, disease.*

**Adjectives:** *primitive, hideous, dodgy, nervous, suspicious, apathetic, undesirable, rough, very little, sad, feeble.*

The reason why these words attract *sort of* has more to do with the problems of managing negativity in everyday interaction than in the inherent meaning of the words: they are not imprecise words and they are not metaphorical or idiomatic; their semantics are quite transparent. The expression of negative opinions or feelings involves a possible risk to face, whether by the speaker or hearer; negativity may also rock the social equilibrium; thus, if one hedges the negative expression with a vague softener like *sort of*, which at the same time has the effect, as we have seen, of putting the collocates in oral quotation marks, one is shielded from the possible charge of disrupting the social order, albeit on a small scale (Powell, 1992: 43). Again we see that the pragmatic marker *sort of*, like *like*, has developed ‘a non-verbatim quotative function’ (Levey, 2003: 27) which protects the speaker from potential embarrassment. *Sort of* in these cases acquires a distancing function, whereby the speaker signals that he or she is saying one thing but does not necessarily identify with the form he or she



has chosen. Prufrock's 'do I dare disturb the universe'? is ironic, but highlights our reluctance to rock the boat in public.

#### **7.9.6 Vulgar / Taboo prosody**

This protective, quotative function is even more useful when the speaker indulges in language which is socially disapproved of. A particular strong kind of 'negativity' in everyday spoken discourse are 'taboo' words. 'Taboo' words come at the extreme end of the informality continuum and are notoriously difficult for L2-users to manage without risking socio-pragmatic failure (Thomas, 1982). One way in which L1 speakers shield themselves from a social *faux pas* is to use intonation and tone of voice to hedge the offending item; another way is to take off the rough edges of the taboo expression by accompanying it with *sort of*.

In the CANCODE and BNC data we find *sort of* collocating with: *crap, shit, shite, bum, nude, arse* et al. In the case of taboo words such as these, we have another example of the speaker using *sort of* as a device for dissociating him/herself from the potentially embarrassing or face-threatening words that follow. As with metaphorical or literary language, *sort of* distances the speaker from the socially unacceptable use of swear words by suggesting that (a) there is a common shared perception of the object being described through the vulgar language and (b) the offensive language is not 100% the responsibility of the speaker but is being 'mentioned' or echoed from other, familiar contexts, which are shared by the interlocutor (Sperber and Wilson, 1981) in Bakhtin's terms the sting is taken out of the taboo language by being 'populated with others' intentions' it is 'another's speech, to be taken only in quotation marks' (Bakhtin, 1981: 303).

### 7.9.10 Formal, technical prosody

If *sort of* defuses the idiosyncratic and socially taboo, thus ensuring the speaker against loss of face by disclaiming personal and exclusive responsibility for the risky expressions, in the case of words and phrases that are borrowed from a formal or technical registers *sort of* acts as a signal of modesty and unpretentiousness:

(7.30)

And they do **sort of assign** people to go

(7.31)

they're both really **sort of nurturing** nice excellent people

This may be a sign of a particular kind of British self-effacement and tendency towards understatement (Rundell, 1997), but it is consistent with the way *sort of* deflects attention from the literary or metaphorical style that speakers engage in even in informal contexts. It may be that *sort of* adds a 'fuzziness' to the intention of the speaker rather than that *sort of* makes the actual collocates 'fuzzy'. After all, *assign* means 'assign' and is a very precise term which does not cease to be precise because of the addition of *sort of*. It is as if the speaker is saying 'I am actually using this formal or technical word in a relaxed, loose kind of way' and thereby diminishing the impression given of 'expertise', real or imagined. It is a similar strategy to that in which the speaker in British English will prelude a comment with 'I am no expert, but...' or 'I don't know much about it but...' or 'I'm probably talking nonsense, but...' or 'correct me if I'm wrong but...'.

If *sort of* is a way of disclaiming responsibility for risqué expressions, in the case of formal or technical words it is a way of disclaiming superiority to one's hearer and is thus rooted deeply in the rules of social-interaction of not rocking the boat and maintaining commonality. If informality is the default position in spoken English



between friends and acquaintances, then formality is 'marked' and it is 'marked' by a hedge such as *sort of*.

The use of formal or technical language in everyday casual conversation is a kind of deviation from the common ground and *sort of* helps the speaker signal that he or she is quoting from another register before reverting to the cultural common ground between members of the same speech community. In Bakhtinian terms, *sort of* has the metalinguistic function of marking the utterance containing the technical terminology as 'double-voiced'.

### 7.10 General prosodies

Although I have tried to break down the occurrence of semantic and discourse prosodies into distinct types, it is possible to observe general patterns in the kind of collocations we find with *sort of* (Figure 7.4):

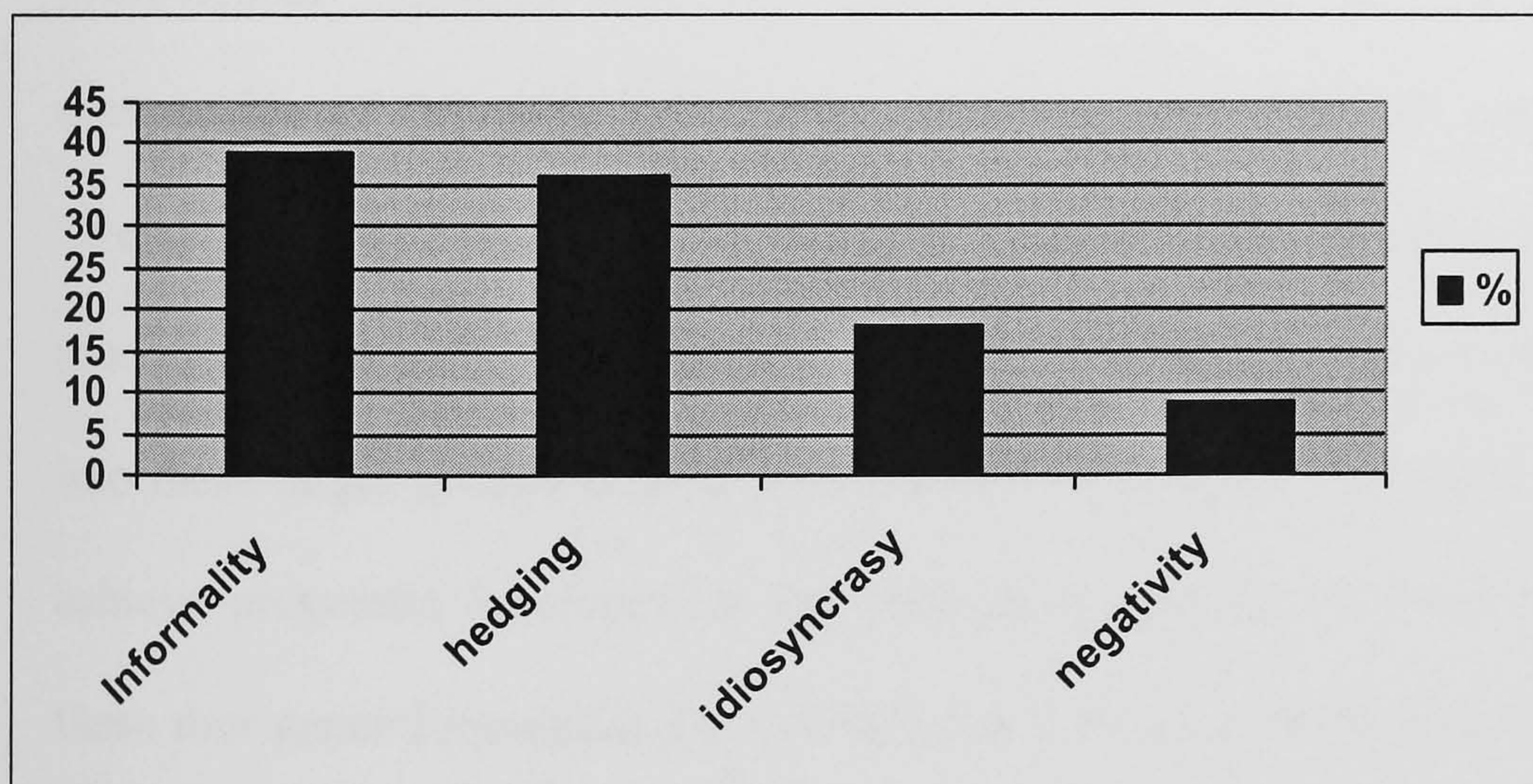


Figure 7.4: General prosodies of *sort of* in L1UC

In order to arrive at these more general prosodies, I re-counted the categories listed on page 174, grouping together those that seem to be different realisations of the more general prosody. Thus, taboo words such as *bum* and negative words such as *hideous* would both count towards the formation of the more general semantic prosody of negativity. At the same time, many realisations of taboo or negative prosodies contribute to the stylistic effect of informality. This approach to semantic and



pragmatic prosody is consistent with the emergent view of word meaning outlined in chapter 4 in our review of dialogism (see, for example, pages 89-90).

Thus, the ‘polypragmatic’ function of collocates is taken account of, giving the following ‘general prosodies’ of *sort of*:

1. informality: this includes individual items of vocabulary such as *pad*, *guy*, many idiomatic expressions, taboo words and most hedges).
2. hedging: this includes ‘hedges’ such as *you know*, *like*, *just etc*, vagueness, numbers and times).
3. idiosyncrasy: this includes negative meanings, taboo words, formal and technical items and literary-metaphorical expressions.
4. negativity: this includes words expressing negative feelings, complaints, anger, taboo and swear words).

These broad areas of meaning are activated in discourse to express a wide range of interpersonal functions and particularly in achieving the convergence and co-construction of discourse which is so characteristic of informal conversation. At this level of analysis, it is difficult to distinguish between semantic, discourse and pragmatic prosody, as the point of bringing together the specific instances of semantic prosodies into these larger groups is to demonstrate the way different features work together to achieve pragmatic outcomes. In the preceding analysis, we have identified the way these four general prosodies are activated towards the achievement of convergence and cooperation in everyday conversation between friends or acquaintances who are on good terms.

It is not surprising that, given the casual nature of the spoken data in the L1 speaker corpus, the most prominent general pragmatic prosody of *sort of* is ‘informality’. This informality is realized in a number of ways, drawing on the various semantic resources available in the system of which *sort of* is a pivotal part: idiomaticity, taboo words and



other individual lexical items that carry traces of informality. Informality is thus a strategic means of achieving convergence between speakers.

A deviation from the tone of informality by, for example, selecting a formal, technical or literary lexical item, will activate the need to use some kind of hedge to bring the discourse back into line or within the limits of comfortable, common ground. Hedging and vagueness are thus a major function in maintaining equilibrium in conversation and this is reflected in the predominance of the 'hedging' pragmatic prosody of *sort of* in L1-user discourse.

Idiosyncrasy is, par excellence, an occasion when *sort of* needs to be mobilized to re-establish the common ground when the speaker slips into some violation of the linguistic or social norm. This includes a multitude of sins, from unusual or rare words, words which mean 'strange' 'funny', and so on; words which are borrowed from other genres, such as literary genres, technical genres etc and of course, curses, oaths, taboo words. In all such cases, *sort of* can *re-present* the speaker's self in the light of shared background knowledge and the safe familiarity of the speech community to which the interlocutor belongs or which is salient in a particular encounter. It is a process of making the subliminally dialogic nature of discourse more conscious.

Finally, 'negativity' also occurs frequently in the company of *sort of* in various guises, and this is predictable given the function of *sort of* in promoting co-operation and convergence. Talk of problems, death, failure, dislike, enmity, disappointment are all occasions when speakers deviate from the agreeable, often phatic, default position of so much casual conversation and from which interlocutors, notoriously, desire to slip away from and return to more pleasant matters.

### **7.11 *Sort of* in L1-user conversation: conclusion**

In this chapter, we have come a long way from the initial, prototypical semantics of vagueness or notions of sloppy speech with which *sort of* is often associated; but the pragmatic dimension I have moved towards retains traces of the core meaning of imprecision with which I began this analysis. In a deep sense, socio-cultural convergence is inseparable from imprecision, which by leaving so much unsaid allows the interlocutors greater space in which to move and establish reciprocity: in pragmatic terms, we piece out each other's 'imperfections' with our thoughts. This is an inherent feature of interpersonal rapport and comity and both signals and reinforces deep commonality. Too much transactional precision is a one-way, take-it-or-leave it process. Smooth-talk isolates and distances the speaker and excludes the interlocutor from involvement. Vague language presupposes and promotes intimacy and the creation of common ground. In sum, *sort of* helps L1 speakers establish, maintain and regulate relationships, in terms of degrees of idiomaticity, informality and politeness strategies.

#### **7.11.1. The 'difficulty' of idiomaticity**

*Sort of*, is not difficult in itself, in its dictionary sense. But it has a range of prosodic functions, that can only be acquired in situated interaction. Its main semantic prosody – idiomaticity- makes of *sort of* a kind of extended lexical or idiomatic unit. But its frequency in L1 discourse is inseparable from its full range of accompanying prosodies (Figure 7.3); the 'difficulty' or 'avoidance' can only be explained in terms of the whole complex of relationships with which it co-occurs. *Sort of* is associated with pragmatic prosodies of idiomaticity, informality and idiosyncrasy: therein lies the 'difficulty' of this apparently slight linguistic item. It co-occurs with pragmatic intentions or intuitions that are normal for an L1-user but 'marked' for the L2-user.



The socio-pragmatic rootedness of *sort of* may be one reason why the L2-user might find it a difficult item to acquire: its ‘meanings’ are not pre-packaged, ready-made but emergent (Hopper, 1979, 1998), actively constructed in real-time in response to the pressures of face-to-face interaction; one cannot understand *sort of* by looking it up in a dictionary:

Can the requirement of language for fixed meanings be yoked together with the no less urgent need of language users for meanings that can be various in the countless different contexts created by the flux of everyday life?

(Clark and Holquist, 1984, quoted by Wertsch, 1991: 50).

One may add to this Bakhtinian view of language that while the L2-user has no choice but to accept the ‘countless different contexts created by the flux of everyday life’ it is understandable that the learner might occasionally yearn for (at least some) fixed propositional meanings, as this dialogic flux threatens to sweep him or her away in a sea of heteroglossia. Sadly, one cannot ‘learn’ *sort of* analytically or ‘con it by rote’.

### **7.11.2 Fluency: convergent and co-constructed**

We have seen that *sort of* is characterised by a systematic co-occurrence with other pragmatic phrases belonging to the same set : *you know, I think, I mean* etc); together, these groups of TWPs serve to promote interactive fluency. The various functions of *sort of* have also given us some insight into the co-constructed nature of fluency. The data in this research demonstrates that there is an important sense in which fluency is not made up of ‘smooth-talk’ but of incomplete sentences, which on the level of the utterance are perfectly fluent. Utterances hedged about with *sort of*, its collocates and pragmatic prosodies, are co-constructed entities in wider chains of communication. The fluency is in the convergence and in working with one’s interlocutor to construct these links.

Another important way in which *sort of* signals and facilitates convergence is its ‘quotative’ function. Speakers from the same speech community are constantly marking what they say with ‘invisible quotation marks’, either as a sign of ‘insider’ knowledge (idiomatic expressions, allusions) or as a shield against unwelcome ownership of someone’s else’s words e.g. ‘posh’ language of a technical or metaphorical kind: ‘Pseuds’ corner’ in the satirical magazine *Private Eye* is a very British institution.

One can see from the examples of idiomatic and idiosyncratic language we have been examining the advantages of involving – or implicating – the hearer in one’s venture beyond the norm. The function of facilitating co-operation and convergence is foregrounded when, for example, two speakers complete each other’s utterances or repeat each other’s words – these devices facilitate the co-construction of dialogue and mark the co-operative nature of conversation (Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000; Bublitz, 1988; Tannen, 1987a, 1987b, 1989, 1995).

### **7.11.3 Idiomaticity in ELF**

One begins to appreciate why *sort of*, in its extended sense, prosodies and co-occurrences included, is such a handy device in the informal spoken interaction of L1-users. The question is whether L2-users express the kinds of meanings that *sort of* has evolved to serve, and whether L2-users bring to the complex of shifting meanings to which *sort of* belongs the depth of commonality that would make this TWP a frequent and natural choice. This minimally idiomatic unit acquires increased idiomaticity with the pragmatic intentions that are normal for an L1-user but may be ‘marked’ or ‘deviant’ for an L2-user. One will not choose *sort of* if one doesn’t also choose idiomatic, idiosyncratic and informal modes of interaction.

It is to the tricky task of using *sort of* in ELF contexts that we now turn.



## Chapter 8

### *A Sort of* puzzle for the L2-user

*Isabella:*        *Pardon it;*

*The phrase is to the matter.*

*Measure for Measure* Act V, scene i.

## 8. *Sort of* in SUEC

### 8.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will analyse the uses of *sort of* in L2-user spoken discourse in order to throw light on its relative infrequency in my corpus and other L2-user spoken corpora.

There are 81 occurrences of the hedge *sort of* in my subcorpus of 160,000 words of L2-user conversation. In this chapter, I look at the behaviour of *sort of* in L2-user conversation in terms of colligation, collocation and semantic / pragmatic prosody in order to establish quantitative and qualitative differences between the L1 and L2 corpus evidence and to try and offer an explanation for any such difference in terms of the socio-interactive, socio-cultural aspects of the discourse. But first we look at the patterns of frequency of *sort of* in the L2 corpus.

#### 8.1 The SK factor: density of *sort of/kind of* in L2 corpus

How can one begin to explain the difference in frequency of *sort of* in the two corpora? In fact, the puzzle is even more intriguing if one looks more closely at the actual distribution of the occurrences of *sort of* amongst the participants in the corpus of L2-users (Table 8.1).

The table shows the nationality (N), gender (M or F) of the speakers. I list the occurrence of *sort of* (S) and *kind of* (K) separately and the combined occurrence of *sort of/kind of* (SK) for each speaker. Under 'Words', I have listed the number of running words each speaker contributes to the SUEC.

'Density' refers to the frequency of *sort of/kind of* in relation to the number of words the informant contributes (on lexical density see: Ure, 1971, Stubbs, 1986, McCarthy, 1998). The final column indicates the percentage of occurrences of *sort of/kind of* that each



	Name	N	G	S	K	SK	Words	Density	%
1	Hans	German	M	15	11	26	3,624	0.071	14.0
2	Isabel	Chilean	F	1	9	10	1,500	0.067	5.5
3	Rosa	Mexican	F	7	2	9	2,000	0.045	5.0
4	Greg	Polish	M	16	4	20	6,700	0.029	11.1
5	Maro	Mexican	F	0	9	9	4,000	0.025	5.0
6	Christine	Finnish	F	8	0	8	3,500	0.023	4.4
7	Hanna	Dutch	F	3	2	5	2,500	0.020	2.7
8	Mario	Uruguay	M	5	2	7	3,500	0.020	3.8
9	Maria	Brazilian	F	0	2	2	1,000	0.020	1.1
10	Patty	Swedish	F	2	1	3	1,500	0.020	1.6
11	Nick	Greek	M	3	5	8	4,700	0.017	4.4
12	Celia	Argentinian	F	0	8	8	5,000	0.016	4.4
13	Ignatio	Brazilian	M	0	7	7	4,500	0.015	3.8
14	Cathy	French	F	3	0	3	2,000	0.015	1.6
15	Gabrielle	Chilean	F	3	0	3	2,000	0.015	1.6
16	Liv	Swedish	F	5	0	5	3,500	0.014	2.7
17	Marta	Hungarian	F	1	5	6	5,000	0.012	3.3
18	Dina	Lebanon	F	0	3	3	2,400	0.012	1.6
19	Tomas	Hungarian	M	0	7	7	7,000	0.010	3.8
20	Isabel	Venezuelan	F	0	3	3	3,000	0.010	1.6
21	Helda	Finnish	F	2	0	2	2,000	0.010	1.1
22	Willy	Austrian	M	0	2	2	2,000	0.010	1.1
23	Juan	Spanish	M	1	0	1	1,000	0.010	0.5
24	Lamberto	Italian	F	2	1	3	3,300	0.009	1.6
25	Tania	Polish	F	4	1	5	7,000	0.007	2.7
26	Oran	Turk	M	0	1	1	1,500	0.006	0.5
27	Debbie	Greek	F	0	3	3	4,500	0.006	1.6
28	Dimitri	Greek	M	0	3	3	4,500	0.006	1.6
29	Elsa	Hungarian	F	0	2	2	3,000	0.006	1.1
30	Anton	Czech	M	0	2	2	3,700	0.005	1.1
31	Juanita	Brazilian	F	0	1	1	2,000	0.005	0.5
32	Alekos	Gr. Cypriot	M	1	0	1	4,500	0.002	0.5
33	Eve	Slovene	F	1	0	1	5,000	0.002	0.5
34	George	Greek	F	1	0	1	6,000	0.001	0.5
35	Andreas	Gr. Cypriot	M	0	0	0	1,500	-	-
36	Ali	Turk. Cypriot	M	0	0	0	1,500	-	-
37	Mike	Gr. Cypriot	M	0	0	0	1,500	-	-
38	Hasan	Turk. Cypriot	M	0	2	2	1,500	-	-
39	Peter	Belgian	M	0	0	0	3,000	-	-
40	Kostas	Greek	M	0	0	0	3,500	-	-
41	Joan	Spanish	M	0	0	0	2,000	-	-
42	Irma	German	F	0	0	0	1,700	-	-
<b>Totals</b>			<b>82</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>179</b>				

**Table 8.1 Distribution of *sort of* (S) and *kind of* (K) amongst L2-users**

speaker contributes in relation to the total number of SKs. Table 8.1 shows that only 20 out of the 42 speakers use *sort of* at least once. Of the 22 SUEs do not use *sort of* at



all, fifteen use the synonymous *kind of*. Thus, eight of the speakers do not use either of the two hedges *sort of* or *kind of*. This is predictable given the length of the spoken texts in the corpus for these speakers (about 1,500 words).

However, the average frequency of *sort of/kind of* amongst the speakers is much lower than the total for the whole corpus (0.06%) would suggest. In fact, the first ten speakers account for more than 56% of the total number of occurrences (100 out of 177). As Table 8.1 illustrates, the first speaker accounts for over 14% of the total.

A suggestive but by no means conclusive indication that there may be a correlation between the use of hedges such as *sort of/kind of* and perceived levels of competence comes from the survey I conducted with 100 teachers in order to cross-check my own intuition concerning the status of my informants as Successful Users of English (see Chapter 5). The survey asked 100 evaluators to grade the competence of 12 informants from my SUEC on a scale of 1-4 with the higher score representing greater competence. Although the main aim of the task was to triangulate my own subjective assessment of the corpus informants as 'successful' users of English, the procedure incidentally gave me a score for each L2 speaker, which could form the basis for ranking the speakers in order of perceived competence.

SK Order	Nationality		SUE Test Score	Rank
1	German	Hans	484	1
2	Mexican	Rosa	437	2
3	Polish	Gregory	385	4
4	Finnish	Christine	435	3
5	Dutch	Hanna	363	9
6	Swedish	Patty	355	10
7	Argentine	Celia	367	7
8	Hungarian	Marta	361	8
9	Polish	Tania	376	6
10	Brazilian	Ignatio	338	11
11	Slovenian	Eva	312	12
12	Belgian	Peter	380	5

**Table 8.2: SK order = ranking in terms of density of use of *sort of/kind of* in SUEC**  
**SUE Test Score = assessment of competence by 100 informants on the basis of extracts from SUEC.**



It will be seen from the results that there is an intriguing correlation between the frequency of use of the combined hedge *sort of/kind of* (SK order) and the order of competence of the speakers as perceived by the evaluators (Table 8.2). The first four speakers in my corpus, ranked in terms of how often they use *sort of/kind of*, are the same four speakers who are considered ‘most competent’ in the SUE Test. Half of the remaining eight speakers are given a ranking which approximates to their SK use. The sample on which the evaluation was made (see Appendix 3) and the size of the SUEC itself are too small to base any firm claims on this correlation but it does suggest that the relationship between pragmatic markers and fluency would be a fruitful topic for further research (De Cock et al, 1998: 74; see also: Carter and McCarthy, 2002; Schmitt et al, 2004b). This interesting serendipitous outcome of my attempts at triangulation also illustrates the value of going into research with a reasonably open agenda.

As one cannot draw definite conclusions on the basis of such a quantitatively limited sample, it will be interesting to see the qualitative use made of *sort of/kind of* by those speakers who do have frequent recourse to the chunk. We will begin our investigation with an analysis of the position occupied by *sort of* in the utterance.

## **8.2 *Sort of*: position**

### **8.2.1 *Sort of* in medial position**

In the L2 corpus, the medial discourse function of *sort of* accounts for 17% of all occurrences of the phrase, which is virtually the same frequency as the occurrence of the medial position of *sort of* in the L1 data.

The filler function of *sort of*, often accompanied by pauses and hesitations can be unfilled or marked non-verbally by *er/erm* or marked verbally by hedges indicating

shared knowledge (*you know, really, this*) and expressions of vagueness (*thing, somehow*) (Figure 8.1).

```
1 e also said something      this is like, sort of you know, it's like a foreign cu
2 of', 'At the top of', 'At the end of' - sort of, yeah, something they know by he
3 g; there was a programme to honour him, sort of..so there wasn't much I could sa
4 ish and he loved literature and he was, sort of, really only concerned about tha
5 would like to go on doing it but she's sort of...you know, she realizes more and
6 ud...alluding to that somehow but he was sort of he didn't say it very well he ju
7 Right      So what kind of high level, sort of er,      Another thing, an - y
8 ng two books in English; that's why I'm sort of...I can find my words      : Good
9 command and at the end she was in this sort of 'I'm one of you and my heart goe
```

**Figure 8.1: sample concordance of *sort of* in medial position**

L2-users, like L1-users, draw on *sort of* to fill in while they search for the right word, correct a verbal slip, hesitate or change their mind about what to say or how to say it:

(8.1)

there's the semantic element isn't there because it seems to me that

it...it's more **sort of**...the more you can break them down the easier

it is

(Mario, Uruguayan).

L2-users also deploy *sort of* to mark a use of a mother-tongue word in place of an L1 item (De Cock et al, 1998: 78). These communication strategies have little to do with semantic vagueness but act as ways of holding the floor and getting the message across using all available resources.

The use of *because* in extract 8.1 is a marker of hesitation rather than a logical device for giving a reason and it thus reinforces the strategy of playing for time implicit in *sort of* (Stenström, 1998; Schleppegrall, 1992). The pragmatic function of *sort of* can be seen as a marker of shared knowledge, meaning something like 'you know the kind of thing I'm talking about; well, I'll give you more detail...'. This invocation of shared knowledge is reinforced by a marker of speaker involvement, the tag *isn't there*. Even the general statement which sums up the proposition the speaker is striving to articulate is cast in the form of inclusiveness and involvement of the



addressee in the choice of the second person pronoun *you*. Finally, *it seems to me* is a modal expression which reinforces the downtoning effect of *sort of*. The cumulative pragmatic effect of these devices is to involve the listener in the discourse as someone who will be on the same wavelength as the speaker.

*Sort of*, in other words, is at the heart of a network of pauses, hedges, softeners and markers of shared knowledge that creates a comfortable fluid interaction between speaker and hearer. It is as though *sort of* is a ‘link in the chain of communication’, made up of pragmatically related items. The words and phrases energise each other. Moreover, moving from the utterance to the interaction it serves, it cannot be fortuitous that all the links in the chain are markers of addressivity, showing, *in toto*, an intense awareness of the listener.

The addressee’s voice is also involved in the chain of speech communication in as much as the speaking voice may indicate an awareness of it and reflect it in the very production of utterances  
(Wertsch, 1991: 53)

Thus, *sort of* is polypragmatic: when it marks a pause it performs other functions at the same time.

### **8.2.1 *Sort of* in final position**

In L1 use, *sort of* in final position is common:

(8.2)  
Her mother had known. **Sort of.**

In my L2-user corpus, there are no occurrences of *sort of* in final position. Why L2-users might avoid *sort of* in final position is a puzzle, accentuated by the fact that this syntactic position does not seem particularly complex or difficult to realise. One way to throw light on such puzzles is not to look at the structure of the sentence but the pragmatic functions of the utterance and the way the utterance relates to the discourse

context and to factors relating to assumed knowledge between the speakers. The ‘avoidance’ of *sort of* in final position may relate to the contextual presuppositions of *sort of* in this position. The interpretation of *sort of* in the following examples depends on situational ellipsis:

(8.3)  
he used to work as an accountant, **sort of**  
(Crystal and Davy, 1975: 99).

(8.4)  
<S1>: Are you on social security?  
<S2>: I smiled. **Sort of.**

In these examples, it is not clear what it is that *sort of* is attached to, or which part of the utterance it is modifying. *Sort of* may be referring specifically to a single word (*accountant, social security*) or to the whole of the previous clause. The use of *sort of* in final position casts an ambiguous light on the previous utterance.

In example 8.4, *sort of* embodies a degree of situational ellipsis which involves the hearer in reconstructing the possible intended meaning. Is the speaker referring to being unemployed? Is he or she working part-time? Is he or she receiving family allowance? Disambiguating the utterance can only be done by recovering not only stated but unstated features of the discourse or what Sinclair (1992: 498) refers to as ‘aspects of the culture, signalled nowhere in the text, but which just have to be known’; in example 8.4 the hearer will need to know the significance of the cultural allusion ‘social security’, the conventions of work and unemployment in the United Kingdom and perhaps the individual speaker’s personality and personal history.

Thus, the sentence-final and independent clause function of *sort of* seems to entail a greater degree of imprecision and active co-construction by the hearer than the other examples of *sort of* we have been examining. This may be a factor in the absence of this feature from the L2-user data.



To uncover further differences between L1 and L2-user I will now look more closely at the colligational and collocational patterns of *sort of*.

### 8.3 Colligation of *sort of* in SUEC

In the colligational patterns of *sort of*, the Noun and Verb Phrase predominates. (Figure 8.2).

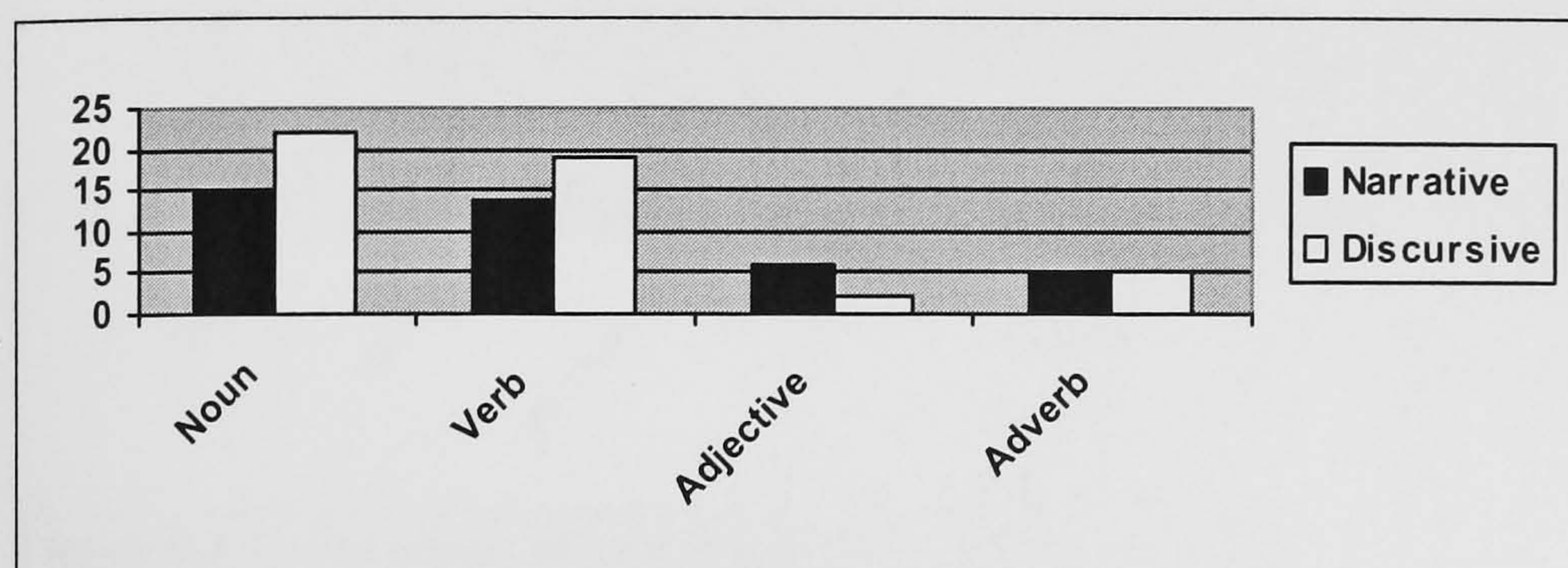


Figure 8.2: Narrative and discourse functions of *sort of* colligations. (%)

The common colligation of *sort of* with the major word classes, suggests that L2-users, like L1 speakers, will have frequent occasion to refer to material, mental and verbal processes in the real world and to describe them, often within a narrative or descriptive framework:

(8.5)

we are talking about six, seven years ago it was still **sort of**  
developing... how it will be, how it would like look

(8.6)

they put all the tables **sort of** together to have different groups  
working in different tables

In the above examples, the words that combine with *sort of* (*situation, develop, together*) do not in themselves occur frequently enough to constitute predictable collocations and neither do they have semantic meaning in common. Looked at in the wider discourse context, they can be seen as micro-realizations of the narrative, which Goffman (1981: 2) reminds us occupies most of our speaking time. This seems to apply equally to L2 as to L1-users of English.



#### 8.4 Collocates of *sort of* in SUEC

Figure 8.3 compares the most frequent collocates of *sort of* in the L1 and L2-user data. The L1 speaker frequencies are based on 250 examples of *sort of* (figures are given in percentages).

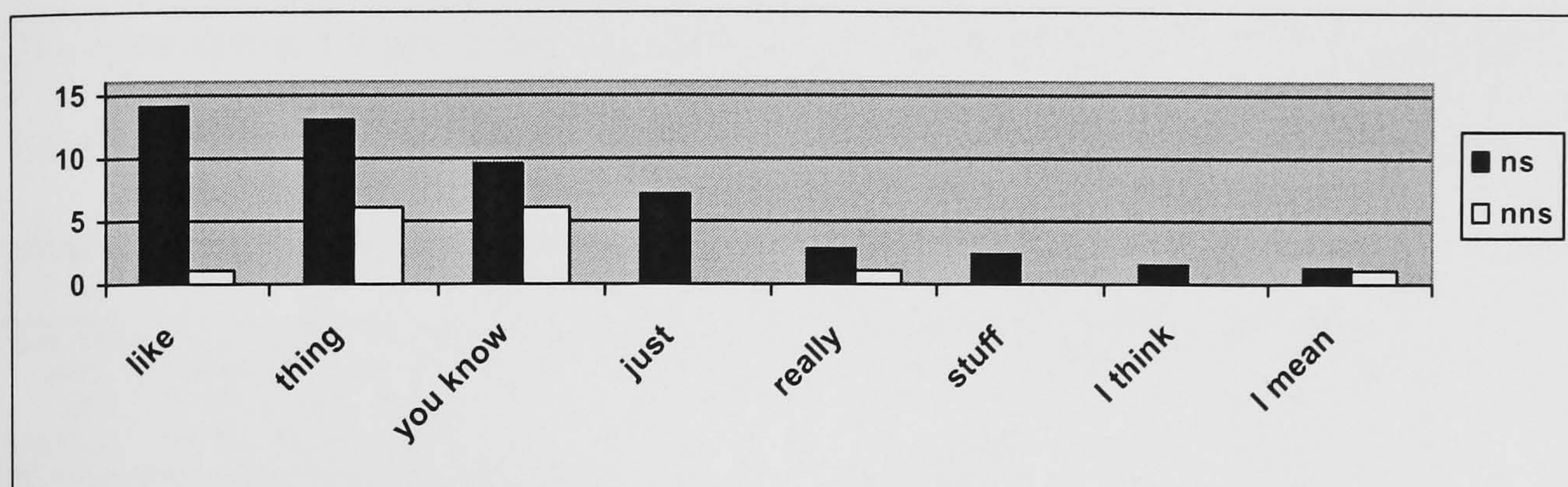


Figure 8.3 Collocations of *sort of* in L1UC and SUEC

The first and most obvious thing to report concerning collocates of *sort of* in L2 conversation is that there isn't very much to report, with the possible exception of the hedge *you know* and the vague marker *thing*. (Figure 8.3). This paucity of collocates for *sort of* of the kind we have seen recurring in the 'native-speaker' data is confirmed in the findings of De Cock et al (1998) who report the total absence of recurrent word combinations involving *stuff* and *thing* (*and stuff*, *sort of thing*, *that sort of thing*) from their data of advanced learner spoken English; in addition, the formulaic strings *you know* and *I mean* are considerably 'underused' by the L2-users in the De Cock (1998) study.

By contrast, in the L1 data *you know*, *really* and *just* are highly frequent collocates of *sort of*; the CANCODE data I have drawn on is corroborated by Aijmer (2002: 190).

The combination *sort of you know* or *you know sort of* and *just sort of* are so frequent as to constitute virtually distinct formulaic sequences or collocational compounds in spoken English. This feature is absent or rare in SUEC.



The only collocates of *sort of* in the SUEC that in a way reflect a common core with the L1UC are *you know* and *thing* so it may be worth investigating the contexts in which these items occur and how they are used.

#### 8.4.1 *Sort of* + *you know* in SUEC

*You know* occurs 5 times in the immediate environment of *sort of* in 160,000 words of L2-user conversation. It occurs twice in a continuous form with *sort of* and in the other three instances it is discontinuous (Figure 8.4).

<p><b>you know</b>, was it Don Quixote absolutely sort of Don Quixote de la Mancha,  much at home because at home we speak sort of Greeklisch , <b>you know</b>, she change  Yeah so they, <b>you know</b>, there's this sort of mateying, kind of bonding  would like to go on doing it but she's sort of...<b>you know</b>, she realizes more  e also said something            this is like, sort of <b>you know</b>, it's like a foreign cu</p>
---

**Figure 8.4 Concordance for *you know* in SUEC**

The first observation I would like to make about these five instances of the collocation of *sort of* and *you know* is that four out of the five occurrences are produced by the same speaker, Hans. This SUE, a German teacher trainer, uses more tokens of *sort of* and *kind of* than any other of my 42 informants and the density of their occurrence is greater in his discourse than that of all the other informants.

In extract 8.7 Hans is talking to his wife, Marta, who is Hungarian; he is discussing how he feels about using Hungarian at staff meetings at the University where he works:

(8.7)

Hans:        this is like, **sort of**, **you know**, it's like a foreign culture to me.  
                 I'm not sure, language-wise, and culturally-speaking, whether  
                 I'm in a position to...to...make these points but there are people  
                 there who care about these things, **you know**, I think you  
                 could...

If we look more closely at the occurrence of *sort of* + *you know* in the context of Hans' discourse we notice the frequency of hedges, vague expressions and formulae. The speaker uses a range of hedges (*like*, *sort of*, *you know*, *I'm not sure*) to express his lack of confidence with the language and culture of Hungary; at the same time

these hedges express the expectation that his wife will be sympathetic, sharing as she does the social and cultural background to which he is alluding.

In suggesting that Marta take the responsibility of speaking out, Hans softens the potential imposition by hedging it with *these things, you know* and *I think*. The majority of these hedging devices are also a means of activating the shared socio-cultural space indicated by the deictics *it, these* and *there* (O’Keeffe, 2003: 91).

Hans has the highest SK score of all my SUEs and he was rated the most proficient user by the 100 assessors in the SUE test. It is perhaps a measure of Hans’ fluent command of the language that in 44 words of text, 15 are hedges or parts of hedges. To this feature, we could add the additional degree of idiomaticity displayed in his use of compound expressions (*language-wise, culturally-speaking*) and collocational sequences (*in a position to, make these points, care about*).

In example 8.8, the collocation of *sort of* and *you know* occurs in an environment saturated in signals of shared knowledge (*this; kind of, like*), which provoke several backchannels from Marta:

(8.8)

Hans: They don’t want to be seen as naïve or stupid or...(<Marta>: Yeah) so they, you know, there’s *this* sort of mateying, kind of bonding <Marta>: Yeah) and colluding type of thing which is safe (<Marta>: Yeah) usually you check out who you can bond with and collude with. And then there’s the **sort of** ‘eye-winking’, which I also picked up like.

Hans displays a creative penchant in his grammatical reclassification and pattern-forming of lexical items (*mateying, eye-winking*) and the ability to stitch together his discourse through re-lexicalisation (*mateying/bonding; colluding/eye-winking*). Notice also the familiarity created by deictic items such as *this* and *I* and *you* and the informality of the formulaic *check out* and *picked up*.



The overall effect of these devices is to create a comfortable intimacy with his interlocutor, a sense of membership of a social group, be it the family or a community of professional practice. Thus, the occurrence of *sort of* and its collocate *you know* is not an isolated or discrete feature but forms part of a chain of communication, that reflects the state of the discourse at that moment, and not the meaning of the words as separate entities (Sinclair, 2004: 13).

#### 8.4.2 *Sort of* + *thing* in SUEC

In Chapter 7, we saw that the collocation *sort of* + *thing* is so common in L1UC that it is more accurate to refer to it as an autonomous lexical chunk. In order to achieve its pragmatic function, which is to save verbal energy by avoiding spelling out all the specific instances of a particular category, *sort of thing* implicitly relies on the hearer sharing common background knowledge with the speaker.

It will be interesting, therefore, to examine the five instances of *sort of thing* in SUEC to establish the kind of common background knowledge the speaker is assuming in his or her listeners (Figure 8.5)

<p>was a sort of gentleman's agreement <b>sort of thing</b> ...but they're not..on..on..  tishCanadian, Australian-English, this <b>sort of thing</b> - Scottish-English, you na  Yeah, yeah or rifles and guns and this <b>sort of thing</b> but you see it all around,  uup on the next traffic light and this <b>sort of thing</b>, which you hear cases whic  nred, very traditional, very spoon-fed <b>sort of thing</b>. &lt;S2&gt;: Yeah, so there's an  ion - you wouldn't normally find this <b>sort of thing</b> would you? I dunno,</p>
--

**Table 8.5: Concordance of *sort of thing* in SUEC**

The six instances of *sort of thing* are produced by only three out of the total of 42 participants in the SUEC. These speakers happen to be the top three in frequency of use of *sort of/kind of* and two of them were rated the best speakers in the SUE test.

Four of the collocations of *sort of* + *thing* are produced by one and the same speaker, a Mexican teacher trainer, Rosa (number 2 in the SUE test and number 2 in SK density). In the analysis that follows, I will focus on the four uses of *sort of thing* produced Rosa.

The following extract occurs in an outdoor café in Mexico; Rosa is chatting to a friend and colleague, an L1-user, Jack; they are discussing the Mexican educational system:

(8.9)

1. Rosa: It has to be structured it has to be guided and especially in the Mexican system, which I think still now is very very teacher-centred, very traditional, very spoon-fed, **sort of thing.**
2. Jack: Yeah, so there's an expectation there, there's an educational background which, to some extent, defines how far you can go.
3. Rosa: Absolutely.

*Sort of thing* follows the expression *spoon-fed*. The use of *sort of thing* is a way of telling her interlocutor that 'you know the kind of thing I'm referring to' and as they are both teachers, the domain of education is naturally assumed to be shared cultural knowledge. Jack shows his agreement with Rosa and confirms the validity of Rosa's invocation of shared knowledge in the affirmative backchannel *yeah*, followed by an expansion of the topic marked by *so* and the turn that follows. Jack reinforces the sense of shared cultural space in his use of the deictic *there*, referring to the educational context referred to by Rosa and in the generalizing and familiarising function of the pronoun *you*. The agreement and shared ground between the two speakers is neatly rounded off with Rosa's *absolutely*, which is what McCarthy (2002) refers to as a 'non-minimal response token' and is a device, like the minimalist *yeah*, which contributes to the 'creation and maintenance of sociability and affective well-being' in the discourse (McCarthy, 2002: 69) Thus, *sort of thing* is only one way in which the interactional solidarity between the speakers is achieved.



The next extract involves the same speakers, and again the shared knowledge signalled by *sort of* thing is drawn from the professional domain of language teaching:

(8.10)

Rosa: Code – co-de – switching.. ! I do that. Being in the States, being in Canada, being in England; ‘cause I’ve noticed that among native speakers 3. there’s a lot of er .. reactions to expressions which they might not consider appropriate. British-Canadian, Australian-English, this **sort of thing** – Scottish-English, you name it, and as a L2-user that’s shocking. It’s like ‘What’s the right thing’, you know

As in the previous extract, the solidarity between the speakers is created through a range of devices which project the speaker as a member of particular discourse community, that of language professionals in an international context. That *sort of thing* refers back to the compounds *British-Canadian*, *Australian-English* as examples of a class of items which the hearer will be au fait with; the list completer (*this sort of thing*) thus looks forward to the *you name it*, which is itself a kind of ‘list completer’ and thus reinforces and re-asserts the assumption that the hearer can ‘fill in’ the rest of the list. The hedges *like* and *you know* that round off this stretch of discourse broaden the area of shared knowledge alluded to and include the feeling of uncertainty or even ‘shock’ that a L2-user may feel when confronted with the bewildering array of varieties of English available on a global scale. The apparent quote *what’s the right thing* is in fact a ‘mention’ of the interrogative rather than an instance of ‘use’ (Sperber and Wilson, 1981); it is a rhetorical question which, hedged as it is between *like* and *you know*, operates as an intensifier of commonality between the speakers.

In extract 8.11 *sort of thing* points to another area of neutral cultural knowledge (*guns and rifles*) rather than concepts drawn from a specifically Mexican or Anglo-American background.

(8.11)

1. Rosa: Well, perhaps you might be shocked if you've never seen people with guns...but that's all over Mexico
2. Jack: er, er, Bandoleros
3. Rosa: Yeah, yeah, or rifles and guns and **this sort of thing** but you see it all around, so you **kind of** get used to it, but when you're not used to... then it's shocking; then it's shocking. It's like going to a public place and some public places in Mexico, restaurants or... yeah, restaurants **or places**, you will go but you will, people will touch you and see if you have any guns ... but when you get used to ...you don't see... you see it **like** er 'Yes, fine.' Security things but if you're not used to... you you really it's really shocking. It's **like** 'Mmm' and it's also 'Bye!'

The co-text once again strengthens the sense of commonality through *you*, *kind of*, the quotative *like*, but also through the chunk *or places* which, in this context, is synonymous with *sort of thing* and is a list completer for items such as *bar*, *cafe*, *club*, and so on.

The final instance of *sort of thing* is rather different from the other examples I have examined insofar as it invokes the hearer's knowledge not of a specific class of items (*guns*, *public places*, *varieties of English*) but an extended situation drawn from the Mexican context, made up of a series of events (getting into a taxi with strangers and an untrustworthy taxi-driver and being robbed at the traffic lights etc):

(8.12)

1. Jack: No kidding?
2. Rosa: Oh, yes! So I try not to do that and whenever I go out I get a taxi from a t...., er a stand. Not a taxi



from out **you know** from the streets because that could be dangerous from the same taxi-driver in combination with other people that might hold you up on the next traffic light **and this sort of thing**.

Although the context described by Rosa is highly specific to a particular socio-cultural space, Mexico City, the use of *sort of thing* and its reinforcement through the demonstrative adjective *this* indicates that the speaker is crediting her hearer with enough real world knowledge, albeit of a second hand nature, to piece out the imperfections of her narrative.

Thus, *and this sort of thing*, is semantically a list completer but it is at the same time achieving multiple objectives at a pragmatic level. *Sort of thing*:

1. links with other exponents of vagueness to form discourse networks of imprecision and uncertainty.
2. performs the pragmatic task of expressing solidarity and shared cultural knowledge.
3. it links up with other discourse markers to deepen the sense of commonality between the speakers.

In order to explore these patterns further, we now turn to a more detailed description and interpretation of semantic and pragmatic prosody, in the context of SUEC.

### **8.5 Semantic and pragmatic prosodies of *sort of* in SUEC**

In examining the L1 data, we noticed the way *sort of* tends to collocate with words that have particular semantic connotations (vagueness, unpleasantness, people words, taboo words and numerals) but we also saw that *sort of* also tends to be associated with words and phrases that have primarily a pragmatic rather than a semantic function (hedges, metaphors, idioms); finally, we looked at examples of the way



repetition and clustering of these items helps establish the cohesion and discourse of the texts, within and across turns.

In the description that follows, the semantic prosodies are based on words which not only occur within five words to the left or right of the node phrase (*sort of*) but which occur within the more immediate co-text of the node phrase. The discourse and pragmatic functions of the prosodies of *sort of* will require an examination of a greater quantity of co-text and this will be achieved by quoting and analyzing longer extracts from the corpus within the context of situation (who is talking to who, the purpose of the interaction, the register, roles, status, topic, attitude and so on).

Figure 8.6 gives the raw frequency of the semantic prosodies for *sort of* in the SUEC out of a total of 142 collocates.

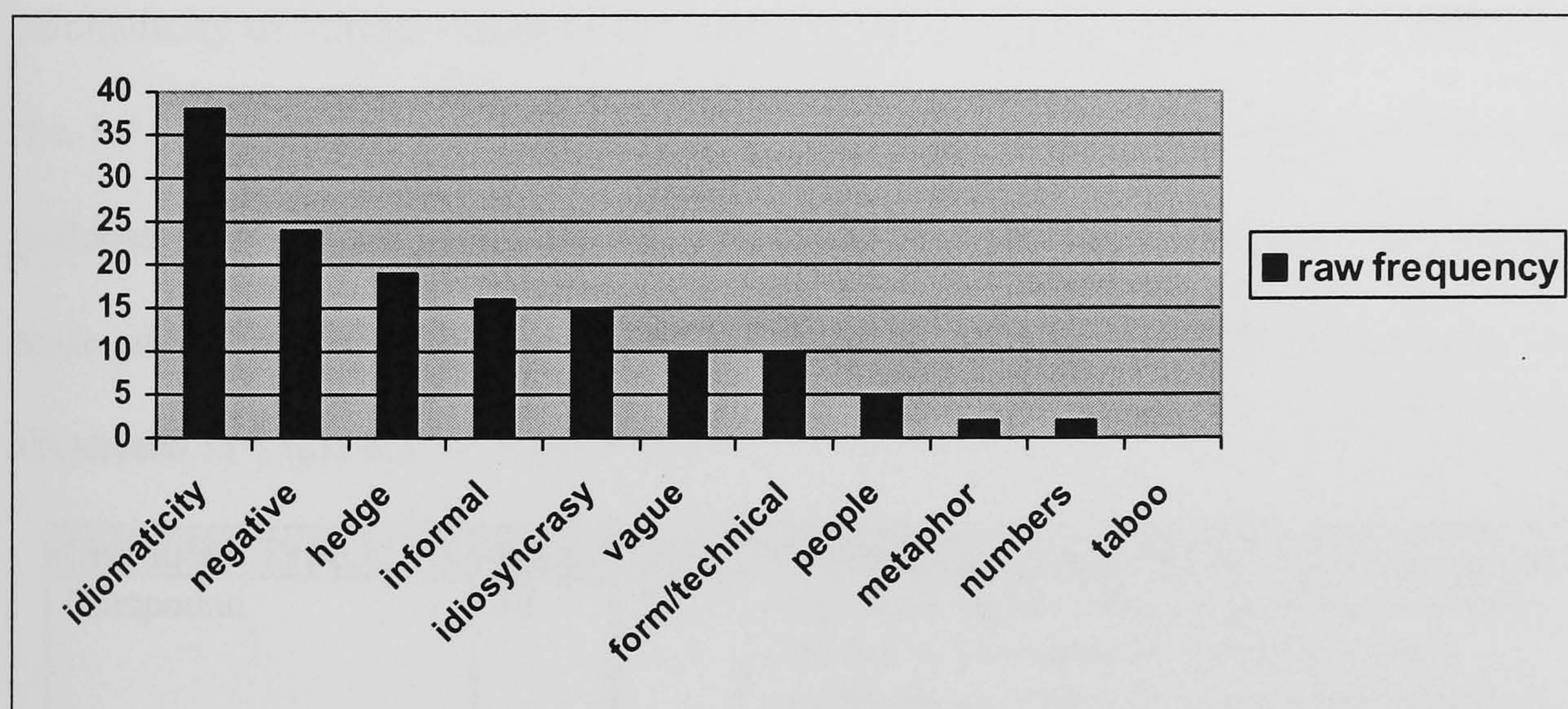


Figure 8.6 Semantic / pragmatic prosodies of *sort of* in SUEC

From this figure we can see that the most common semantic prosodies of *sort of* are idiomacity and negativity. Figure 8.7 compares the prosodic patterns of *sort of* in L1 and L2-user spoken corpora.



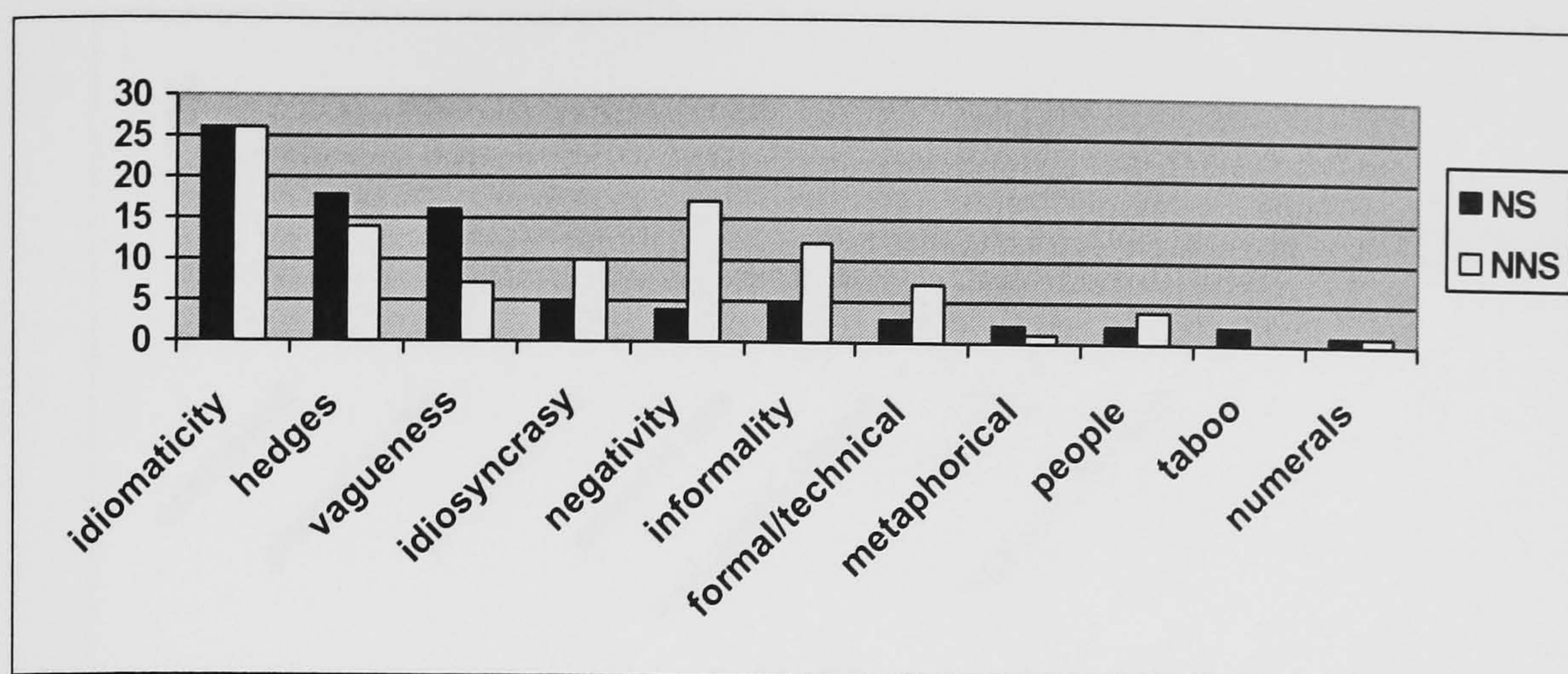


Figure 8.7: Semantic and pragmatic prosodies of *sort of* L1UC and SUEC (%)

We see that there is a great deal of overlap in the semantic company that *sort of* keeps in the two contexts, but there are also some unexpected divergences which we will examine in this section. First, we will look at the semantic- pragmatic prosody which both corpora seem to share, idiomaticity.

### 8.5.1 Idiomatic prosody in SUEC

Idiomaticity of various kinds is the largest prosodic group associated with *sort of* in the L2 spoken discourse. There are 36 formulaic expressions (20% of the total collocates) which occur in the immediate vicinity of *sort of*, mostly following the node phrase and mostly continuous with it; the various types of idiomaticity are illustrated in Table 8.3.

Formulaic Type	Freq	%	examples
Compound	14	38	Cross-step, spoon feed, break down, teaching certificate, eye-winking, refresher course, gentleman's agreement, intermediate user. I conversation-oriented, great-great grandmother, teacher-centred.
Phrasal / prep verbs	7	22	Sort out bring up calm down play about show off go on have on
Prepositional phrases	6	19	At the end in the long term in sight at home from time to time
Collocations	3	7	Make your way to the top make trouble go round and round
Lexicalised clause	1	3	I'm-one-of-you-and-my-heart-goes-out-to- you
NP X of Y	1	3	A distribution of labour
Cultural allusion	1	3	Don Quixote

Table 8.3: L2 user *sort of* semantic and pragmatic prosody: idiomaticity



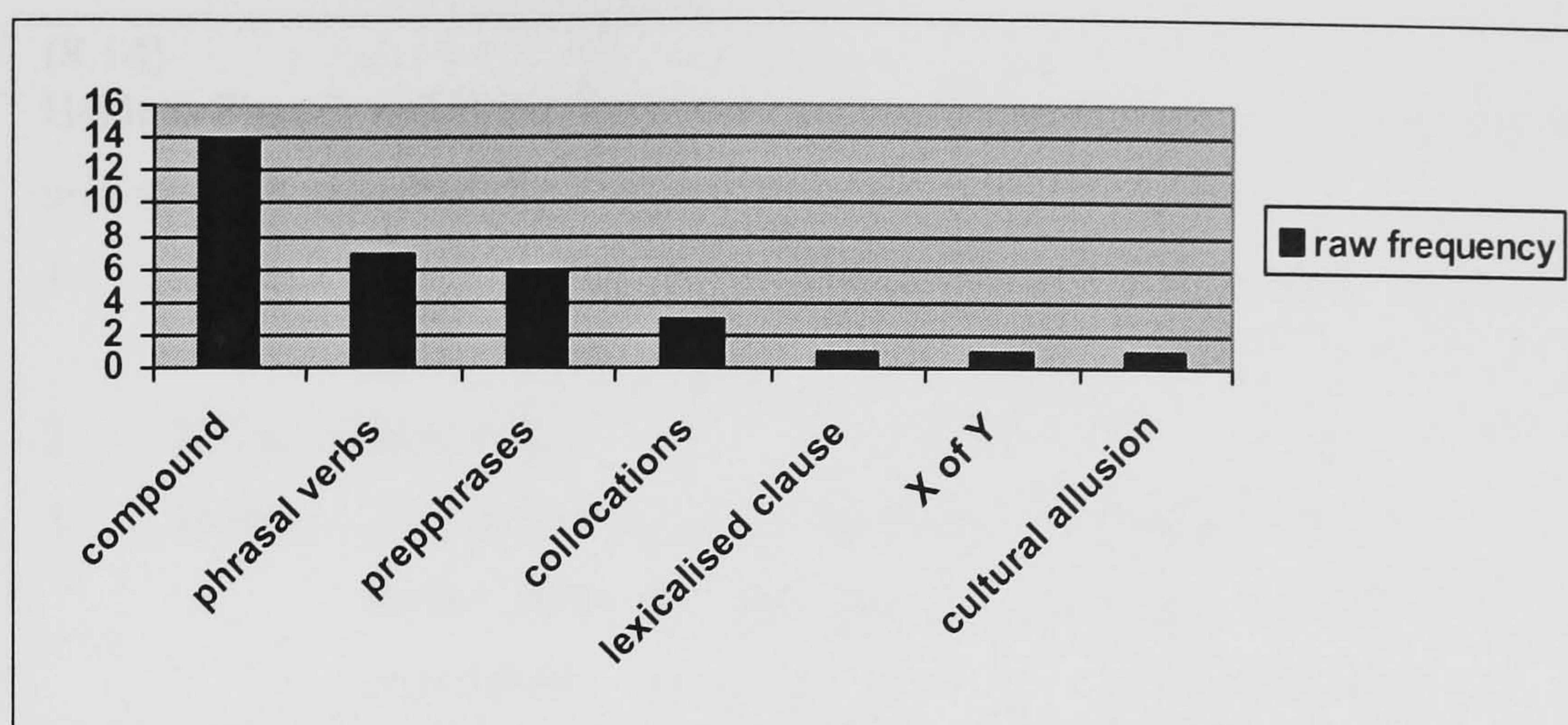


Figure 8.8: L2-user idiomatic types collocating with *sort of*.

The most frequent type of formulaic phrase occurring with *sort of* is the compound, whether nominal, verbal and adjectival. The general semantic prosodies of *sort of* that we have been examining in the context of L1UC suggest the speaker feels uncertain about the collocate in some way or feels the need to mitigate the use of an idiosyncratic item. In some cases, this idiosyncrasy includes an element of creative manipulation of the phraseological resources of English and *sort of* may signal an awareness that the speaker is doing something novel. In example 8.8 above, we saw the speaker engaging in a bold lexico-grammatical experiment: Hans idiomatized the verb *wink* to form an original collocation: *to wink an eye*; the speaker also transformed ‘wink’ from an intransitive to a transitive verb and the whole unorthodox phrase is then re-refashioned into an –ing form: *And then there’s the sort of eye-winking, which I also picked up like*. The same speaker, later in the same stretch of discourse, also lexicalises a complete clause:

(8.13)

at the end she was in this **sort of** <I’m-one-of-you-and-my-heart-goes-out-to –all-of-you> and <together-we-can-change-the-world> kind of role

The above examples of *sort of* involve a degree of idiomatic creativity and thereby serve as a measure of the speakers’ skill with the canonical forms of the language.

Example 8.14 illustrates a similar process of creativity with compounding in ELF:



(8.14)

Helda is Finnish and Heinz is German; they are fellow academics. Helda is explaining a new research project into language diversity.

1. Helda: this little report which I have upstairs with a very big map  
is the first attempt to ...
2. Heinz: Interesting.
3. Helda: ..to...er **sort of...cross-step** those knowledges,. to put  
on the same map partly the...er...ecological ...er...bio-  
eco-regions eco-regions of the world and then  
to...er...to... to cross- tabulate that with the knowledge  
that we have about where indigenous languages and  
indigenous people live

Helda is explaining a complex and novel process to her colleague and has recourse to manipulate the language in non-canonical ways to make her point clear. Helda coins the compound *cross-step* to mean something like ‘cross-tabulate’, which occurs a couple of lines later. The preceding *sort of* signals her awareness that this is a creative use of lexis. She uses the irregular countable form *knowledges* and the unusual compound *bio-eco-region* in the same discourse context. Helda’s use of the canonical forms *cross-tabulate* and *knowledge* suggest she is aware of the creative potential of English and makes a deliberate choice in creating novel forms.

The speaker in 8.15 illustrates the opposing tendency when there may be uncertainty concerning the accuracy of the idiomatic expression used; the potential threat to face is mitigated by the addition of the shield-like *sort of*:

(8.15)

(Gregory is a Polish teacher trainer)

- Gregory: they stop and ask you what it means even that the word is  
not important or that the word doesn’t have any impact on  
the overall **sort of great picture** or the general meaning of  
the text.

The normal collocation here would be the big/bigger/wider picture, meaning the whole or complete situation. The BNC has 11 occurrences of *great picture*, all having

a literal meaning: a ‘good picture’. *Big picture* occurs 43 times, many of which mean, literally, ‘a large picture’. The speaker seems to indicate his awareness either of the idiomatic status of the phrase or his uncertainty as to its accuracy in L1 terms. The insertion of *sort of* before *great picture* signals its idiomatic but potentially ambiguous status.

### 8.5.2 Cultural allusions

One area which one would expect the L2-user to show less affinity with is the type of idiomatic expression which refers to cultural phenomena, especially of the more ephemeral kind, that L1-users would feel intuitively at home with (*Marks and Sparks, Coronation Street, Army and Navy* etc). One would, on the other hand, expect allusions to cultural concepts which have become international common currency to present no difficulty for non-members of British speech communities (*Great Expectations, the Beatles, Downing Street*, and so on)

There is one clear-cut case of a ‘cultural allusion’ collocating with *sort of* in SUEC: *Don Quixote*, which is not British, of course, but has become an international allusion, often expressed adjectivally in English as ‘Quixotic’. Hans collocates *sort of* + *Don Quixote* as he discusses a former teacher with his wife, Marta:

(8.13)

Hans: He was a decent guy and ...erm...**you know**, and also had **this...this...this**...posture, **you know** <here we are, **things** can only get worse, but we’ll uphold the academic spirit> **of some sort** (*laughs*) **like, you know, yeah**, he reminded me of, **you know**, was it Don Quixote **absolutely sort of** <**Don Quixote de la Mancha**>, (<Marta>: Hm) **you know**, that <I shall battle on with my house> **you know** <breaking down under me but I shall fight to the end>.

One cannot but be struck by the plethora of hedges and markers of shared knowledge accompanying this brief venture into cultural allusion. Not only is the alien generic



provenance of the knight of the sad countenance foregrounded by *sort of* but the path leading towards the chunk *sort of Don Quixote* is strewn with hedges and markers of stance: *like, you know, yeah, you know, was it?* and *absolutely*. On the one hand, the speaker displays an impressive command of modifying devices, down-toners and boosters, but one is reminded of De Cock's claim that the advanced learners in her research tended to 'over-use' recurrent phrases (De Cock, 2000). Medgyes (1994) makes a similar point from the point of view of the proficient L2-user:

other (pseudo-native speakers) tend to be over-idiomatic,  
perhaps in an effort not to sound too drab  
(Medgyes: 1994: 14)

Moreover, if we connect the use of hedges with a negative politeness culture (Brown and Levinson, 1978; Thomas, 1982) we may begin to wonder whether so many markers of co-operation and convergence are really necessary in the intimate relationship between husband and wife, where conjugal conviviality often goes unsaid or takes a limited verbal form (Östman, 1981). However, the points made by Medgyes assume a 'native-speaker' linguistic and pragmatic norm, the generalized appropriacy of which this thesis is, in part, deconstructing.

In my SUEC, Hans, the German teacher-trainer, uses one more semi-cultural allusion, the compound *gentleman's agreement*, which is semi-transparent in meaning, though no doubt originally a British cultural concept; this, too, is hedged with redundancy:

(8.14)

Hans and Marta are discussing a Ph.D candidate.

1. Marta: but isn't that part of her contract that she has an extra...an extra day ?
2. Hans: No, it isn't, maybe it was a **sort of** <gentleman's agreement> sort of thing ...but they're not....on....on.....in reality, it doesn't work quite

well...she can't focus, 'cause she's doing all these other things so...she needs, like, time away to think about the Ph.D

We may note how the core proposition ('it was a gentleman's agreement') is hedged in to the left and right by markers of mitigation: *sort of/sort of thing*; these hedges act as a double downtoning of the rather literary/idiomatic turn of phrase: *a gentleman's agreement*. We now see that the highly idiomatic string *sort of gentleman's agreement sort of thing* is part of a much bigger picture of pragmatic prosody. The hedging we observed in the collocation *sort of gentleman's agreement* is actually introduced by another hedge: *maybe* (line 3) and ends as he began with a vague discourse particle: *like* (line 7) which completes the framework of hedges begun with *maybe*. The expression *gentleman's agreement* is a measure both of the speaker's real world knowledge and his knowledge of English, but it represents just one indicator amongst many of his fluency with English: his confidence with cultural allusions, the natural-sounding hedges, *maybe*, *sort of/sort of thing/like*; the vague marker *other things* and the deictic signal of familiarity *these*. Even a 'minor' grammatical detail such as the definite article *the* in *the Ph.D* gives a sense of commonality and shared experience to his discourse, which suggests rapport with his interlocutor (who happens to be his wife and colleague).

### 8.5.3 *Sort of* and vagueness in SUEC

In the 81 instances of the hedge *sort of* in my L2-user corpus, the semantic prosody of vagueness amounts to 10 tokens or 12% of the total number of semantic prosodies, compared to 16% in L2 data. We have already analysed the four examples of the vague chunk *sort of thing* in SUEC and we have seen how it contributes to the creation of commonality between the speakers. I will now describe examples of *sort*



*of* + vagueness which seem to me to add further insights to this important feature of *sort of* in conversational interaction.

(8.15)

The speakers are a Finnish and a German academic; they are in a hotel lounge; they are discussing language projects.

1. Helda: do you **sort of** from time to time check your email?
2. Heinz: Yes, I do.
3. Helda: because I know some German professors who don't.

In this extract, the indefinite frequency adverbial, *from time to time*, mitigates what might be taken to be a mild reprimand on the part of Helda who suspects her colleague does not check his email messages as often as he should. As colleagues, the two speakers enjoy an equal social status and so it is important for Helda not to give offense by provoking a loss of face on the part of her interlocutor; she therefore follows up her indirect recommendation with an explanatory clause (*because...*) which further reinforces the softening effect of *sort of*.

*Because* here has a pragmatic function rather than its prototypical role of conjunction with referential meaning; it does not have a logical connection with the speaker's preceding question but a pragmatic connection: it is a way of deflecting and attenuating the direct impact of the potentially intrusive interrogative (Schleppegrell, 1991; Stenström, 1998). This framing or bracketing effect, achieved by introducing a hedge to the left and right of the propositional constituent (here, *do you check your email*) is a frequent device for organizing information and for smoothing the rough edges of face-to-face discourse. Altenberg (1998) suggests that formulaic frames such as *you know*, *you see* and *I mean* 'serve various interactive, interpersonal and textual functions' (Altenberg, 1998: 113). In this thesis, I extend the use of the term 'frame' to include the co-occurrence of pairs of frames within the same co-text.

We see these framing effects in example 8.16, where Mario, a Uruguayan teacher trainer is explaining the problems of teaching pronunciation:

(8.16)

Mario: I find it enormously frustrating to teach pronunciation ‘cos I don’t see the results and yet I know there will be results but they will be **sort of** more in the long term than...I mean...you don’t teach one thing in grammar and whatever, vocabulary, one day and they come out with it the next...it’s...it’s...it’s...a **sort of** <process>

Here, *sort of* is coupled with *I mean*, in order to bring out the imprecision of the proposition *in the long term* and also to make the speaker’s argument less assertive. *I mean* then forms the first half of a new dyad, with the vague marker *whatever*, to hedge the opinion expressed by the speaker (‘that you don’t teach grammar and expect immediate acquisition’). The chain is then continued with *whatever* forming the first half of a new pair of hedges, completed by a second *sort of*, which serve to mitigate the idea that vocabulary can be acquired from one day to the next.

Looked at from the perspective of text analysis, this chain of vague markers performs a kind of ‘cohesive’ function (Moon, 1998) in holding the discourse together and facilitating co-operative interaction, where opinions are expressed in an unassertive manner, with openings for the interlocutor to become involved in the construction of the discourse, albeit only in thought.

#### 8.5.4 *Sort of* and negativity in SUEC

The data in L1 and the SUE corpora reveal a clear difference in frequency in the prosodic pattern of negativity associated with *sort of*. Contrary to the usual pattern, L2-users seem to choose to couple *sort of* with negativity more often than L1-users. While the collocation of *sort of* with lexical items having a negative meaning accounts for only 4% of the total prosodic patterns in the L1UC, in the SUEC negativity accounts for nearly 17% of the total semantic prosody.



A glance at the sample concordance for *sort of* and negativity reveals the close association of *sort of* and words with a negative meaning (Figure 8.9).

N	Concordance
1	
2	- the owner of the clinic was patrt of sort of a <b>gang</b> that were trading organs
16	he school pays 50% of the fees. So it's sort of <b>compulsive</b> here. Last year the s
19	e first I'll have a nervous I'll have a sort of <b>crisis</b> when my brother turns ...tu
20	you get is...and I don't mean this as a sort of <b>criticism</b> of the people who do f
23	e Cypriot kids started playing about we sort of <b>destroyed</b> everything in sight -
39	ud..alluding to that somehow but he was sort of he <b>didn't say it very well</b> he ju
45	that was a pretext a reason not to..to..sort of make <b>trouble</b> for her, so she did
51	d because it was so slow the car was so sort of <b>paceless</b> so slow : and it
57	ng something new and original and I was sort of <b>punished</b> for that .. for trying
61	out of frustration and anger so it's my sort of <b>revenge</b> ; a lot of the news that
65	mitate and I repeat his sentences aloud sort of showing them how <b>ridiculously</b> co
78	f having to -ing forms Yeah, -ing, sort of <b>too many complications</b> if you're
88	

**Table 8.9: Concordance of *sort of* and negative semantic prosody**

In the case of words like *crisis*, *destroy*, *punish* and *revenge* the hyperbole in the speaker's use of these words is toned down or mitigated, as if to say the speaker does not mean to use them literally. In this respect, this use of *sort of* with negativity overlaps with its use in connection with idiomatic and metaphorical language, which of course are not, by definition, interpretable on a literal level

Another motive for attenuating the impact of these words, including those where hyperbole is not a factor, is perhaps to maintain a low key tone in discussing unpleasant topics and to keep the discourse on a fairly agreeable level. In context, negative concepts such as *crisis*, *criticism* and *conflict* are hardly likely to threaten the 'fabric of social relationships' (Holmes, 1986: 10) but coupling them with *sort of* takes the sting out of them and may even add a humorous dimension to their use. In extract 8.17, two friends (one Swedish, one Finnish) are joking about growing old:

(8.17)

1. Christine: (*putting on a mock foreign accent*): <I will celebrate my thirtieth>...there now you know how old I am
2. Patty: (*sings*): You're not the first one
3. Christine: I'm not the first one; the first one was Alicia, yeah, but she lives in London
4. Patty: That's true. I think I'm gonna be first... I'll have a nervous... I'll have a **sort of** <crisis> when my brother

turns ...turns thirty

5. Christine: I think I will too.

The humour running throughout this exchange is reinforced by the ironic use of *crisis*. The speaker is aware of the normal semantic prosody of *crisis* (it is associated with serious problems, not one's brother becoming thirty years old) and manipulates this shared linguistic knowledge to humorous effect. *Sort of crisis* can be paraphrased as saying 'you know I am using 'crisis' in an untypical way, just for fun'). This strategy strengthens the speakers' sense of commonality or what Aston refers to as 'comity': the process of establishing 'friendly relations and achieve intimacy with others' (Aston: 1988: 21). 'Good relations' are the norm or default position in social interaction. The expression of negative propositions or attitudes can be seen as a deviation from the norms of interaction and linguistic action is usually taken to maintain an agreeable equilibrium. The fear of loss of face through 'disturbing the universe' of conversational convention is never far away. One way to 'prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet' is by deploying hedges; hedges give the speaker strength to force the moment to *a sort of crisis* or at least a deviation from the norm.

*Sort of* is merely one of many hedging devices for achieving this broad pragmatic aim.

A third, socio-interactive, motive for associating *sort of* with negative concepts is when the negative lexical item may reflect badly on the speaker, who wishes to promote a positive self-image:

(8.18)

Hans is talking to his wife Marta and about people studying for Ph.Ds.

Hans: Harold's stopped. That's what.... that's what I said, but then what **you** get is...and ... I don't mean this as a **sort of** criticism of the people who do finish but it's **just** a sad fact that people who are bound to be in professional relationships find it very much harder to do this work and they're not the ones who...who...**you know**, finish the Ph.D.



The potential ‘criticism’ of mutual acquaintances may reflect badly on the speaker and even come across as gossip. These threats to the speaker’s promotion of self are mitigated not only by the shielding device of *sort of* but also by framing the whole chunk *sort of criticism* within the mitigating network formed by *you* at the beginning of the utterance (line 2) and *you know* at the end (line 6); both *you* and *you know* are devices, as we have seen, for invoking shared background knowledge. The criticism is reworded as *a sad fact* but this reformulation is also softened by the addition of *just* (line 3). The recurrence of the same semantic prosody within the same short stretch of language functions in subtle ways to create textual cohesion and discourse coherence but there is also an underlying co-operative principle at work on the pragmatic level.

#### **8.6. *Sort of*: Clusters of semantic prosodies**

In analyzing the multiple functions of semantic prosodies in L2 uses of *sort of* we have seen how a semantic feature may be repeated. Repetition is one way in which convergence is made manifest through the orderly progression of the discourse. Convergence is a process which is most clearly felt when the repetition takes place across turns, but even within a turn, the repeated semantic prosodies are confirmation of the rule-governed nature of conversation. This is not a case of convergence based on propositional meanings but on conventions of discourse organization and interactional processes. Repetition of items belonging to the same semantic prosody is an important means of achieving cohesion, coherence and convergence in successful L1 discourse. An even richer and denser manifestation of all of these tendencies is the co-occurrence of *different* semantic prosodies in the same linguistic environment. If we uncover some of the co-text surrounding *sort of* we find clusters of two or more semantic prosodies.

(8.19)

Patty is telling Christine a joke.

1. Patty: <When you're **between fifteen and twenty** you're **like, whatever, you know**, quite unexplored **bla-bla-bla** and then it goes **you know** twenty to thirty (<Christine: : Aha>) you're **like, whatever**, and then by the time you get to **between eighty and a hundred or something** you're **like** Siberia: everyone knows where it is but no-one wants to go!> (*laughs*)
2. Christine: Oh, I haven't heard that one. I've heard the other one, **sort of** describe ...different types of ...in the woman ...the different types of orgasm
3. Patty: Ah, yes.
4. Christine: The religious one [Oh, my God]
5. Patty: [Oh, my God]

In this example, we have tokens of the following semantic prosodies: number (*between fifteen and twenty, between eighty and a hundred*) hedges (*like, you know*) vague language (*quite, bla, bla, bla, whatever, or something*) taboo (*different types of orgasm*). These clusters make the text hang together and flow on a textual, semantic and pragmatic level.

This exchange is a good example of English as a lingua franca deployed for more intimate purposes. The two speakers have been friends for many years; they have a lot in common both culturally and professionally. Patty is Swedish and Christine is Finnish; they are roughly the same age (30-ish); they have both lived in Spain for several years and both teach English. A measure of the 'comity' or positive rapport between them is the fact that they are swapping jokes about sex. The aim of the speech event, a narrative, is to entertain and create a sense of well-being and all the linguistic resources are mobilized towards the achievement of this aim.

In addition to the chain of semantic prosodies, the depth of the commonality in the discourse is evident in the backchanneling (*Aha, Ah, yes*) and the simultaneous way in



which they both utter the punchline of the second joke (*Oh, my God*). We also see the use of *sort of* and the other hedges in their quotative function: most of the words spoken by Patty are in fact re-constructions of someone else's words (in this case anonymous). *Sort of*, *like* and *you know* are like oral quotation marks and give the extracts of the joke prominence. The speaker is adopting another voice, the voice of the joke-teller and thus shifts the focus from her as an individual to the collective act of joke-telling, with all its familiar conventions; the move from individual to ritual allows the speaker to shift some of the weight of telling a risqué joke with its taboo elements onto society at large. If in Bakhtinian terms the speaker is 'double-voiced' the second voice is that of the stereotypical joke-teller, rooted in a socio-historic context with which the interlocutors are both familiar.

This activation of the speech genre of joke-telling in addition to the intensive hedging that accompanies it, increases the hearer's involvement in the story-telling; the hearer's participation is increased by the elements which are left unsaid, as one would expect of a risqué joke: the repeated *whatever* and the vague marker *bla-bla-bla* leave some of the details to the imagination of the listener: 'in retelling events...we are forced to sketch in these shadings a little...we rely on our audience to take the part of the whole and co-operatively catch our meaning' (Goffman, 1981: 2).

In sum, this is ELF at play and English, revelling in its own multi-voicedness and in the sheer pleasure of the text.

### **8.7. Pragmatic prosody and the construction of commonality**

The next example illustrates the way these linguistic and cultural cues work on different levels to form networks of semantic and pragmatic prosody:



(8.20)

Hans and Marta, are gossiping about their colleagues at the local University.

1. Hans: 1.: ...there's a very subtle way of deferring to the professors and to the...**you know, like** in different ways...**the way** people...there's Anton in **there**...<the big names> (<Marta>: Yeah) and in some ways I think people are quite...quite conscious of how they present themselves in **such** meetings. (<Marta>: Hm) They don't want to be seen as naïve or stupid (<Marta: Hm>) or...(<Marta>: Yeah) so they, **you know**, there's **this sort of mateying, kind of bonding** (<Marta>: Yeah) and colluding **type of thing** which is safe (<Marta>: Yeah) usually you check out who you can bond with and collude with. And then there's the **sort of eye-winking**, which I also picked up **like** with Anton and **the** guy next to him and Anton (<Marta: >Yeah, yeah) and **the** people at **the** back...
2. Marta: Yeah, and **the thing** is, that if you took it too seriously and if you asked a serious question they would either think you were naïve (<Hans>: Yeah, yeah)....or that you **like** I don't know
3. Hans: Yeah, yeah....and Edith, **you know**, what she went through; a whole range of roles when she... when she... came in she played **the kind of** meek little (<Marta>: Yeah) she sat down and she... she, **you know**, made eye contact with..(<Marta>: Yeah) important people; then she got up and then she was in her...
4. Marta : ... she was performing
5. Hans : she was in her 'Institute' role.
6. Marta : Yeah.

In Table 8.4 I summarise the pattern of prosodies we find in this extract (the frequencies are based on tokens not types):



Prosody	freq	examples
informality	23	You know, like, big, stupid, this, mateying, check out, you, guy, the thing is, yeah, little,
idiomaticity	11	The big names, type of thing, picked up, the thing is, check out, went through a whole range of meek little made eye contact with,
hedges	9	You know, I think, I don't know, quite, like
negative	8	Naïve, stupid, eye-winking, meek, little,
vagueness	4	In some ways, thing, the thing, a whole range of,
idiosyncrasy	4	Mateying, bonding, eye-winking,
formal	4	Deferring, colluding, conscious
taboo	1	piss

**Table 8.4: Semantic and pragmatic prosodies of *sort of* (Hans and Marta)**

It is evident from this chart that the environment in which the node phrase *sort of* *mateying* occurs is dense with repetition and clustering of the main semantic and pragmatic prosodies of *sort of*. The flow of semantically and pragmatically related items has become a cascade.

The depth of commonality in Hans' use of English is expressed in sundry ways, apart from *sort of* and its collocates and the pragmatic prosodies formed by those collocates. The following list from extract 8.20 gives an indication of the diverse means employed by Hans in his achievement of deep commonality:

1. The definite article: *The* professors/ *The* big names.
2. The lexical item *way*: *The way* people/In different *ways*/ In some *ways*.
3. Deictics: In *there/this/you/ The guy next to him/ The people at the back/ She* (x12)/*she* came in.
4. Cohesion: *Such* meetings/*This sort of* mateying.
5. Vagueness: *Kind of /type of thing/The sort of*.
6. Background knowledge: *Like with Anton/ You know*.
7. Quotative: signalled using a range of markers (*like, sort of, kind of, type of thing* and <tone of voice>).
8. Global allusions: Important *people*.
9. Local allusions: *her Institute* role.



10. Backchannels: *yeah*.
11. Informal lexis: *stupid, guy*.
12. Creativity: *mateying, eye-winking*.

This broad, context-driven view of commonality, may be a way forward in our understanding of similarities and differences in L1 and L2 discourse in the context of ELF. Johnson (1990) identifies the lack of deep commonality as one of the differences between ELF and ENL:

The sense of cultural identity amongst IE users, if it exists at all, is qualitatively different. IE has no territory, literally or metaphorically, to be defended. As a consequence, those markers which identify geographical origin or socio-political group membership are irrelevant to the purposes of users of this variety...

(Johnson, 1990: 304).

Though Johnson's analysis goes some way to explaining the differing socio-linguistic needs of users of ENL and ELF, the picture of ELF he draws in the above extract does not, in fact, capture the complexity of uses of ELF that emerges from my SUEC and extracts such as 8.19 and 8.20. Just as the 'native-speaker' is not an absolute, immanent concept, but variable in relation to socio-cultural context, so too, the concept of the L2 speaker is not a fixed, immanent entity but a variable *process*, shaped by the activities the speaker is called upon to negotiate and the presentation of self he or she chooses to foreground with particular interlocutors. Thus, while some L2 informants may speak as if they have no 'territory', others like Hans, who shares social and cultural territorial space with his wife, may well feel the need to conjure up the words to help him express that 'deep commonality'. Both of these tendencies require evidence from larger corpora which would hopefully capture more examples of *sort of* and other pragmatic phrases.



## 8.8 Semantic prosodies: L1 and L2 commonalities

In this chapter, I have focused on the most important semantic prosodies associated with *sort of* in L2-user discourse: idiomaticity, vagueness and negativity. These prosodies were chosen as representative of the way *sort of* operates in actual L2 spoken discourse, on a semantic, discoursal and pragmatic level. Idiomaticity is the most frequent semantic configuration with which *sort of* is associated and it coincides with the frequency of occurrence of idiomaticity as a prosody of *sort of* in L1UC. The modification of vague meaning through *sort of* tends to be less common in the L2 data than in the L1 data; this discrepancy is somewhat of a puzzle as one would expect that the L2-user, having less command over the lexical system on a cognitive level, would need to adopt a strategy of vagueness more often than the ‘native-speaker’. A larger corpus might present a different picture from my admittedly limited data.

On the other hand, the use of *sort of* by L1 speakers when they are in their own socio-cultural space makes good sense: if we look at the utterance as constrained by its socio-cultural context, then the fact that L1 speakers can assume a considerable degree of shared knowledge means they can resort to strategies of vagueness, safe in the knowledge that their interlocutor will ‘fill in the gaps’:

...(speakers) are drawing on assumptions and expectations  
about the givenness of the shared social and cultural knowledge  
and information of their co-participant...  
(O’Keeffe, 2003: 90).

If *sort of* and other hedges are indices of shared knowledge and ‘to be vague is to draw on what is given and shared within the participation framework...’ (O’Keeffe,



2003: 91) then one would expect users of English as a Lingua Franca, on the whole, to have recourse to *sort of* less frequently than members of the same cultural and linguistic community; thus *sort of* is a reflection of ‘the level of assumed knowledge anticipated in using vague linguistic shortcuts’ (O’Keeffe, 2003: 91). In this respect, it is significant that the SUE who deploys *sort of/kind of* more frequently than my other SUEs does so with his wife, with whom he forms a speech community of two, with a profound sense of shared social space, literally and metaphorically.

All this suggests that the relationship between context and language choice is complex and dynamic: there is no simple one-to-one relationship between hedges and situations: or between hedges and topic, tenor, relationship and role of speakers. It is rather a case of meaning being constructed in part ‘on the hoof’, while one is focusing on the message and the language is shaped by the needs of the communication as it unfolds in the here and now. The speakers may share commonality from the outset, as is the case with Hans and his wife; but one may create commonality, for all kinds of contextual reasons: the needs of the topic, one’s personal needs (presentation of self) or the personality of one’s interlocutor:

interaction (that is, face-to-face interaction) may be roughly defined as the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another’s actions.

(Goffman, 1959: 26).

Hedges such as *sort of* and *kind of* can be seen as one set of tools which can make the shaping of commonality easier. A reductive approach to commonality can be avoided if we identify a number of different indices of commonality: references to and invocations of shared knowledge; references to the shared social space; markers of informality and intimacy; devices for bringing the speakers closer; the need to mitigate and save face; ellipsis, ‘colourful’ and creative uses of idiomaticity, breaking



rules as a deliberate strategy, the use of taboo words, a command of a range of genres (formal, literary, technical) and ‘voices’ (‘quotative competence’) and so on.

### 8.9 General pragmatic prosodies in L1 and L2

One is struck by the sheer diversity of meanings, intentions and attitudes that a short phrase like *sort of* can express. This chapter has looked at this variety in some detail and for the purposes of the analysis I isolated those semantic prosodies that seemed to be fore-grounded in particular cases: idiomaticity, negativity, formality, hedging and so on.

But in, fact, it is impossible to see these as labels as discrete categories; they overlap and they function on different levels simultaneously. For example, by taking only the associations or connotations that seemed to be foregrounded by a particular semantic prosody of *sort of* in a particular context, I identified ‘idiomaticity’ as the most frequent area of meaning and ‘informality’ as one of the least frequent that co-occur in the immediate and wider vicinity of *sort of*. But ‘idiomaticity’ itself often expresses informality, as do many hedges, which I listed as a separate instance of semantic prosody for *sort of*.

I therefore considered it useful to try and identify general semantic prosodies that regularly cluster round *sort of* in order to be able to pin down the most general pragmatic uses of *sort of* in the wider context of communication.

**Informality**, for example seems to be a general umbrella category which subsumes aspects of idiomaticity, many hedging devices, and taboo items.

Another general category is **hedging**, which includes hedging devices such as *you know*, *like* and so on but also markers of vague meaning.

Speakers frequently sense that they are somehow deviating from the linguistic or socio-cultural norm and wish to register the fact through the use of *sort of*; this sense



of **idiosyncrasy** is also a broad category of feeling and is activated not only by the use of odd or unusual words (*cross-step*) or concepts (*funny, foreign, weird*) but by the use of formal or technical language or metaphor, all of which signal a break from the norm. The default mode of socio-interaction seems to be a conformist, conservative, convergent stance and anything that is centrifugal risks disturbing the interpersonal order.

Finally, **negativity** can be a sub-type of 'idiosyncrasy' but it is not coterminous with it; it includes swear words, taboo words, words which are critical in meaning or simply an expression of a problem or source of dissatisfaction in the speaker, which are not necessarily idiosyncratic (*bother, suspicious*)

In Figure 8.9 I summarise the frequency of these general semantic and pragmatic prosodic patterns as they co-occur with *sort of* in L1 and L2 discourse:

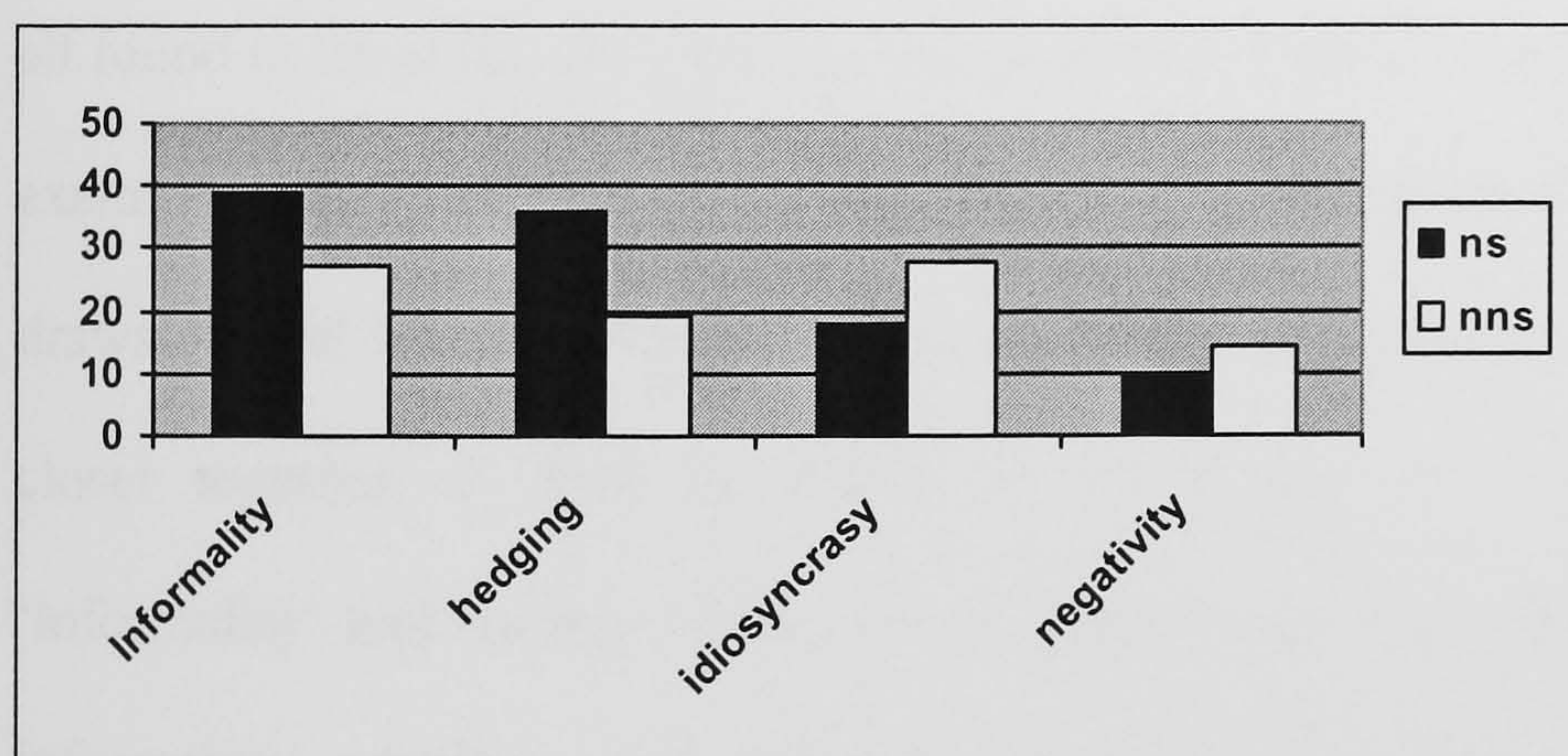


Figure 8. 9 General Semantico-pragmatic prosodies in L1 and L2 compared

The first impression one gets from this diagram is that L1 speakers and successful L2-users, in general, do similar things with *sort of*: they establish an informal atmosphere, they avoid directness, they make their awareness of idiosyncrasy clear and they mitigate expressions of negativity.

The following observations are made on the basis of the limited data available and should be seen in that light as provisional. A larger corpus would help us decide whether the features observed are regular patterns of L2 use or simply random



instances thrown up by the relatively small number of tokens of *sort of* used by individual speakers in this study.

I would suggest, on the basis of the data examined so far in chapters 7 and 8, that L1-users tend to use *sort of* to express greater informality and indulge in hedging more than L2-users. On the other hand, on the basis of the prosodies observed in this chapter, L2-users tend to activate *sort of* to signal an idiosyncratic or negative use of language.

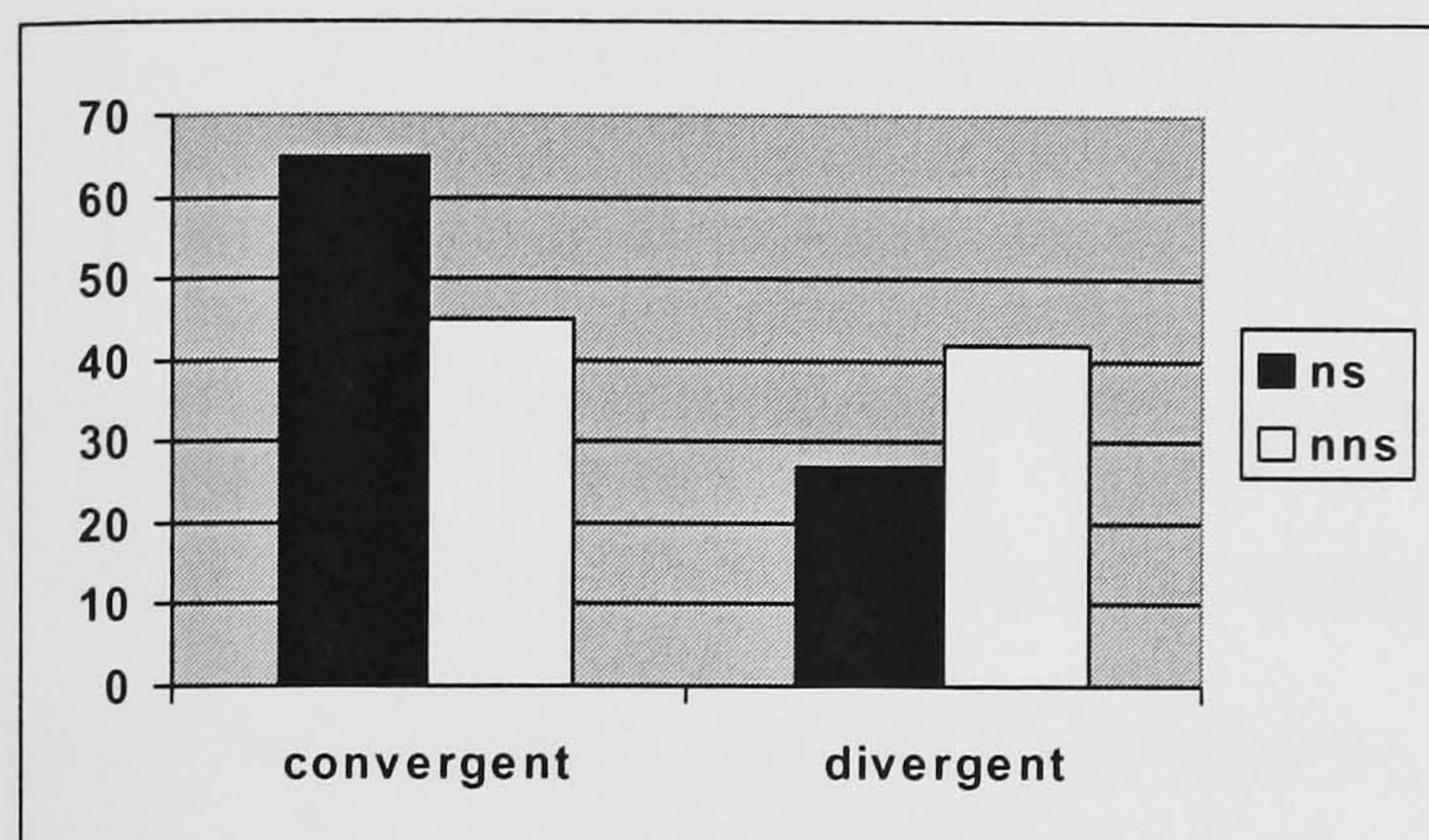
#### **8.10 Macro-prosodies: convergence and divergence**

These tendencies become clearer if we take an even more general view of the semantico-pragmatic prosodies occurring with *sort of*. It is possible to view many of the hedges we have been examining as correlative of informal contexts of communication, though clearly hedging and mitigation, downtoning and boosting, are all found in more formal contexts, too, as we have seen. In the corpora we have been examining, nevertheless, most hedges signal a casual, relaxed style of speech which draws on and invokes shared background knowledge; the speakers are thus brought closer together, at least in comity if not amity; we could thus combine the ‘informality’ and ‘hedges’ prosodies to produce one aggregate category of friendly informality, which I will call by the umbrella term **convergent**. This term accommodates instances where hedging via *sort of* is both a marker of informality and a device for protecting face in more formal contexts: in both cases, the hedge helps one maintain the common ground and a level of agreeable equilibrium with one’s interlocutor.

Similarly, we could combine the categories of ‘idiosyncrasy’ and ‘negativity’ insofar as they are both expressions of different kinds of deviation from an agreeable norm, from comity, positive relations, and so on. This we can call **divergent** as *sort of* is



used in conjunction with negativity and idiosyncrasy to mark the speaker's awareness of straying from the pleasantries of everyday conversation and social harmony, like Prufrock, disturbing the everyday universe. We thus have too 'mega' pragmatic prosodies for the two sets of data, L1 and L2-user (Figure 8.10).



**Figure 8.10: Convergent and divergent prosodies in L1 and L2.**

Schegloff et al (1977:366) and Fiksdal (2000: 130) show that speakers use expressions like *I mean* to repair errors or 'uncomfortable moments'. Fiksdal suggests that the face system determines the rapport system; when speakers feel their conversation is fluent, they are using the same rapport system. For example, positive face strategies include two types of strategies: seeking common ground and seeking agreement. Seeking common ground occurs most often when the discourse is flowing smoothly; speakers use the phrase *you know*, deictics or stories to show the other speaker that they share experience: 'you know what I know'

when there are disruptions or dysfluencies in the discourse,  
speakers using positive face rely on agreement strategies to  
repair the moment

(Fiksdal, 2000: 132):

We can compare what I have called 'convergence' with Fiksdal's 'rapport' and see 'agreement' as part of this strategy. Fiksdal also discusses the way 'uncomfortable moments' are managed through negative face strategies of deference rather than positive face strategies of rapport. Negative face strategies are dominant in US



spoken style where politeness is expressed through formulas such as ‘Excuse me’ and ‘Do you mind if?’ (Fiksdal, 2000: 136). Dysfluencies will be more marked when L2-users draw on negative face systems when addressing L1-users (when commonality is shallow), than when they are talking to speakers with similar rapport systems (Fiksdal, 2000: 138) The rapport systems create fluency in the discourse between L1 speakers by providing conventional strategies for speakers to repair uncomfortable moments and move to ‘agreed-upon topics’ (Fiksdal, 2000: 138). L1-users, for example, often begin to talk at the same moment, using the same bit of language or they often complete each other’s utterances, particularly when the utterance is constructed on formulae.

Clearly, L1-users and L2-users alike need to express both pragmatic tendencies, convergent and divergent. But if we look at the ‘big picture’ we find a greater tendency for L1 speakers to use *sort of* in contexts of casual, relaxed informality than the L2-user. Given the nature of the ‘intimate, social’ sub-corpus of CANCODE that I have largely been drawing on, the L1 speaker penchant for relaxed hedging is not surprising. The degree of relaxed convergence is built on the deep commonality of ENL in its informal manifestations. Conversely, given the nature of my corpus of L2 spoken English, where English is employed as a lingua franca between, as a rule, acquaintances rather than close friends, it is predictable that we are going to find fewer expressions of convergent informality clustering around the node phrase, *sort of*. The ‘divergence’ of L2 discourse seems a natural consequence of the more shallow commonality typical of ELF discourse: the tone is closer to the neutral end of the spectrum while there may be greater self-consciousness in deviating from a norm, either due to a lack of confidence with the language or being more cautious and conscious of face. In the L2 discourse examined for this study, we seem to find a



greater correlation of *sort of* with contexts where negative or idiosyncratic meanings creep into the discourse and a consequent tendency to try to return to the middle, common ground by marking the deviation and/or distancing oneself from it. Again, we must stress the need to explore these patterns in larger corpora, though Meierkord also finds tendencies for L2 users to stick to 'safe' and 'not taboo subjects' (Meierkord, 2002:127).

One could hypothesise that given that L2-users are operating within a foreign language, there will be more frequent occasions when they encounter 'unusual' 'strange' or 'problematic' items of vocabulary. There is more of a risk involved in straying from the safe common ground; the word or phrase chosen may be inaccurate or inappropriate; there is a greater danger of linguistic or socio-pragmatic failure in the selection of items such as: *revenge, crisis, criticism, destroy, conflict, make trouble, weird, show off, paceless*. The analysis of these data suggests that there may be greater diffidence in expressing, in English, the following divergent tendencies: complaints, dissatisfaction, unpleasantness, criticism, suspicion, disappointment, and so on. One may hesitate to rock the boat in one's mother tongue, let alone in a foreign language.

If negativity is 'marked', compared to positive rapport, which is unmarked, then one would expect the L2 speaker to require a hedging device like *sort of* more often to help manage the added challenge of marked forms; the process is a parallel one to that described by Kramsch as 'a permanent confrontation of divergent value systems' (Kramsch, 1993: 23) and the way learners engage in

inferencing procedures for making sense of foreign reality...the conflicts and the paradoxes that ensue from (cultural) differences.

(Kramsch, 1993: 24)

Marked forms and deviation from the norm are part of the privilege of ‘native’-like competence. Breaking the ‘rules’ is, paradoxically, an assertion of membership of the L1 speech community; divergence is made possible – and acceptable – by dint of ‘belonging’ and is therefore an indirect expression of interpersonal and socio-cultural ‘convergence’. The differing pragmatic potential available to L1 and L2-users is rooted in the different – and unique – contexts in which English is used moment by moment by each kind of speaker: : ‘such is the fleeting language of a day, of an epoch, of a social group’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 272).

### **8.11 *Sort of* in L1 and L2: Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have seen evidence in L2 conversation, as in L1, that the popular view of *sort of* and other everyday conversational expressions, such as *you know*, *I mean* and *like*, as symptoms of speaker-oriented linguistic sloppiness and inarticulacy is far from the truth (Watts, 1989; Fillmore, 1979). The ‘difficulty’ of the item must be seen in the context of its complex socio-interactive functions. Although *sort of* sometimes functions as a filler and holds the floor while the speaker searches for the next word, it has a much wider range of functions, which may help us throw light on the puzzle of idiomaticity in ELF. Taking due account of the relatively small number of instances of *sort of* contained in our L2 corpus we can surmise that *sort of*:

1. has a range of semantic meanings which expand on the core meaning of imprecision.
2. has relational and discoursal uses which are inseparable from its collocations; these uses are not random but driven by pragmatic need, especially the need speakers feel to hedge and mitigate the force of the utterance. *Sort of* collocates with ‘idiomaticity’ and is associated with informality and idiosyncrasy or deviation from a norm. It helps to regulate the speaker’s relationship with the listener, projecting and manipulating



feelings and attitudes in order to present an image of self which is appropriate to the context and the interpersonal aims of the discourse.

3. forms wider networks of meaning or semantic prosodies (including idiomaticity) which, on a discourse level, serve to hold the text together as a unified whole. In this sense it is an 'extended lexical unit' or 'extended idiomatic unit'.

4. forms links, frames and chains that facilitate the on-line, real-time improvisation of fluent, informal spoken discourse. *Sort of* and its constellation of associated meanings is an integral feature of L1 fluency and also seems to be available to L2-users, in varying degrees, depending on contextual need.

5. In L1 discourse, *sort of* foregrounds addressivity and the responsive nature of discourse: its use signals the expectation of hearer involvement.

6. *Sort of* and its constellation of associated meanings is an integral feature of L1 fluency and also seems to be available to L2-users, in varying degrees, depending on contextual need.

7. In the L1 discourse examined for this study, *sort of* seems to form a closed system of pragmatic markers that serve convergent relational needs: *you know, I mean, I think, sort of*, and deictics, all involve the listener in establishing commonality; in L1 discourse, these pragmatic phrases build rapport and define common space while in the L2 discourse examined they tend to signal 'uncomfortable moments' of diversion from a norm. When there are disruptions, uncomfortable moments or uses of marked language the speaker signals this with an appropriate discourse marker, e.g. the occurrence of taboo or idiosyncratic items, 'borrowed language', quotations, 'mention' rather than 'use'.

*Sort of*, then, seems to belong to a set of pragmatically central 'peripheral items' with a wide range of socio-interactive functions. It may be the case that the relative



infrequency of *sort of* and other pragmatic markers in L2 use can, in part, be explained in terms of the wider pragmatic and socio-cultural contexts with which *sort of* is associated and the difficulty L2 users may have getting direct access to these contexts. Finally, there are some suggestions (De Cock, et al 1998; McCarthy and Carter, 2002; chapter 7, p.152-154; and chapter 8, pp.191-192 of this thesis) that while competence in *sort of* and its constellations may correlate with highly successful users in a range of genres from the intimate to the more formal, L2-users can achieve communicative efficiency by drawing on all the available linguistic resources at their disposal (Pölzl, 2003). In the next chapters, we examine another pragmatic phrase – *you see* - in L1 and L2 conversation, to test some of the findings which have emerged so far.



## Chapter 9

### *You see, it's easy for the L1-user*

*Speak the speech I pray, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue.*

*Hamlet, III sc.1.*



## 9. *You see, it's easy for the L1-user.*

### 9.0 Introduction

Our starting point in this chapter is the difference in frequency of occurrence in L1 and L2 corpora of the two-word phrase, *you see*. The purpose of the comparison between L1 and L2-users will not be to measure the L2-user by a putative L1 'norm', within a deficit or interlanguage framework, but to scrutinize the different ways in which the two groups use the TWP *you see* and in cases where the L2 corpus shows a relative absence of a feature found in the L1 corpus, to examine the options employed by L2-users, on their own terms, linguistic and socio-cultural.

Unless otherwise stated, the data in this chapter is taken from the British National Corpus, conversational component, which amounts to approximately 5 million words (Aston and Burnard, 1998: 31). I reproduce the sample concordance lines for *you see* in Appendix 6.

### 9.1 Frequency of *you see*

The frequency of occurrence of *you see* in the spoken (conversation) component of the BNC is, like CANCODE, 0.08%. These figures suggest a reasonable consistency of occurrence for *you see* in L1 informal conversation. In contrast, *you see* occurs 387 times per million words in SUEC, a percentage of 0.04% for the whole corpus. *You see*, is, it seems, half as frequent in L2-user conversation than in L1 conversation.

This finding is corroborated by de Cock's research into 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' spoken corpora (De Cock, 1998a). In a comparison of L1 and L2 spoken corpora De Cock found that 'native-speakers' used *you see* five times more frequently than L2-users. She concludes: 'NNS underuse the formula *you see* (De Cock, 1998a: 73). *You see* occurs even less frequently in Meierkord's (1996) L2-user corpus: 0.008% (Meierkord, personal communication, June 2005).



While my thesis does not subscribe to the deficit implied in de Cock's 'underuse', it is nevertheless intriguing to discover why *you see* is less frequent amongst L2 speakers.

## 9.2 The importance of *you see*

*You see*, like *sort of*, is more frequent in spoken English than many common one-word lexical items, such as *give*, *tell* and *big* (Figure 9.1).

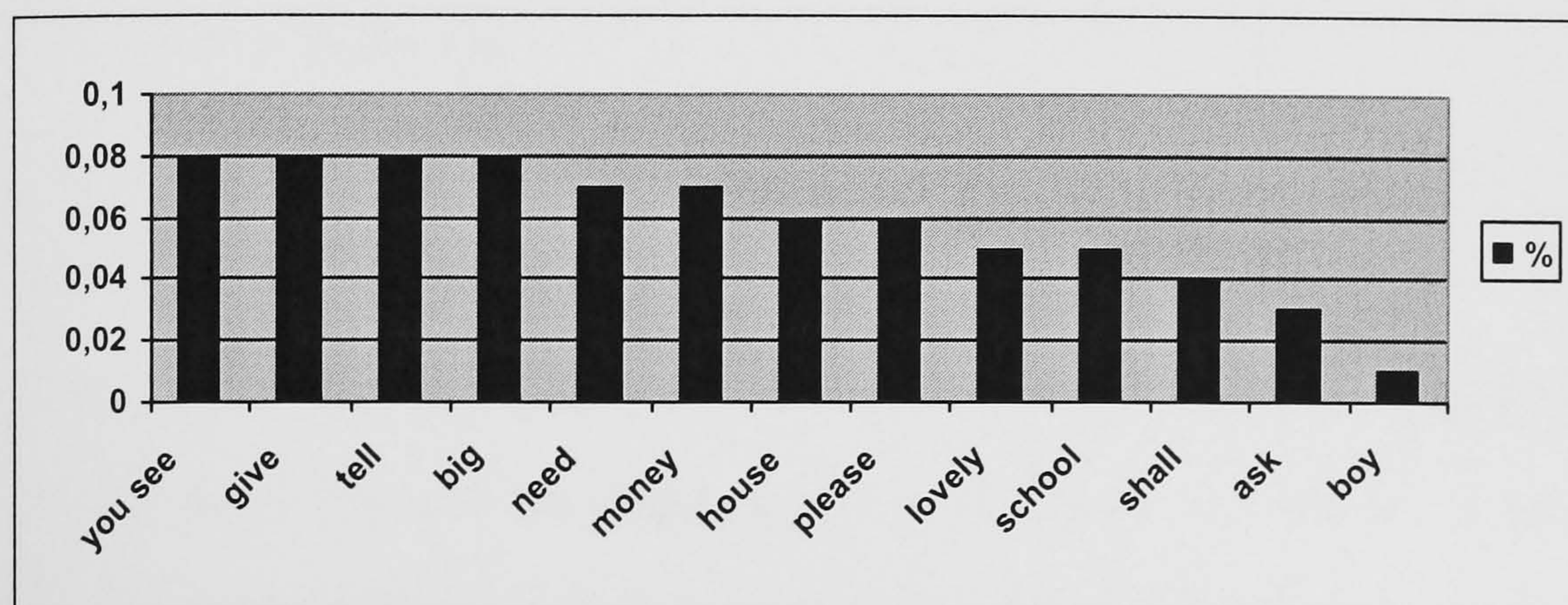


Figure 9.1 The frequency of *you see* (compared to single word items from BNC Conv).

*You see* is much more frequent in spoken than in written corpora (0.08% compared to 0.008%). This suggests that *you see* has specific spoken discourse functions, which are less relevant to written varieties.

Moreover, like *you know*, *sort of*, *like* and other markers of informal conversation, *you see* may be thought of as 'sloppy', a mark of lazy speech (O'Donnell and Todd, 1980). As in the case of *sort of*, such a view of *you see* is a simplification of its uses and usefulness in everyday speech (Erman, 1987; Watts, 1989).

## 9.3 *you see*: form

In the L1 and L2 corpora I am using for this study the following variations of *you see* occur, some ellipted and others expanded:

1 *See*

2 *See?*

3 *You see*

4 *You see?*



5 *Don't you see?*

6 *But you see*

7 *Can you see?*

8 *Did you see?*

9 *Do you see?*

10 *You see what I mean*

11 *You see what I mean?*

12 *If you see what I mean.*

The 'composite' nature of formulaic expressions such as *you see* has been noted by Altenberg (1998) and the frequency of combinations of formulae is an important feature of their behaviour which I shall return to later in this chapter.

#### **9.4 *You see*: meaning**

In most of these cases, the verb *see* is used non-literally and carries pragmatic rather than propositional meaning. Rundell et al (2002) give two entries related to the non-literal uses of *you see*. The first is the elliptical *see?* which is glossed as follows:

*See?* Spoken, used for making sure that someone is paying attention to what you are saying and that they understand it: you press this button first, *see?*

This instance of *see* is an ellipited form of *do you see?* and can, on a semantic level, be rephrased as *do you understand?* The 'are you paying attention?' aspect of the meaning of *you see* has more to do with the pragmatic interactional needs of the discourse rather than its propositional content. The interrogative *you see?* is probably not a question requiring a yes/no answer but a device linking the speaker's message with the hearer. Quirk (1955) includes *you see* in his category of 'recurrent modifiers' (along with *you know* and *I mean*) and stresses its importance in spoken discourse; although from the point of view of grammatical structure, like the other 'recurrent modifiers', it plays no



part in the transmission of information. Quirk identifies the main function of this class of ‘modifiers’ as the ‘fundamental’ one of ‘sharing’ between speaker and hearer and signalling and establishing intimacy in everyday talk (Quirk, 1955: 179). Sinclair and Renouf (1988) identify *you see* as ‘an indication of interactive concern in spoken discourse’ (Sinclair and Renouf, 1988: 151). Carter and McCarthy (1997a) point out that *you see* is used to signal ‘explanations and things the speaker assumes the listener does not know’ (Carter and McCarthy, 1997a: 35). For Biber et al (1999) *you see* is a ‘discourse marker’ whose function is that of an ‘utterance launcher’ (Biber et al: 1077). In her detailed study of *you see*, Erman (1987), focuses on the multi-functionality of this ‘pragmatic expression’: its connective role in organizing information in discourse, in marking boundaries between information units in explanatory discourse and its role in terminating discourse (Erman, 1987: 220).

### 9.5 *You see*: pragmatic use

Turning to our sample of L1 speaker conversation from the British National Corpus we find that the majority of occurrences of *you see* have a pragmatic rather than a propositional function. (73% v 27%):

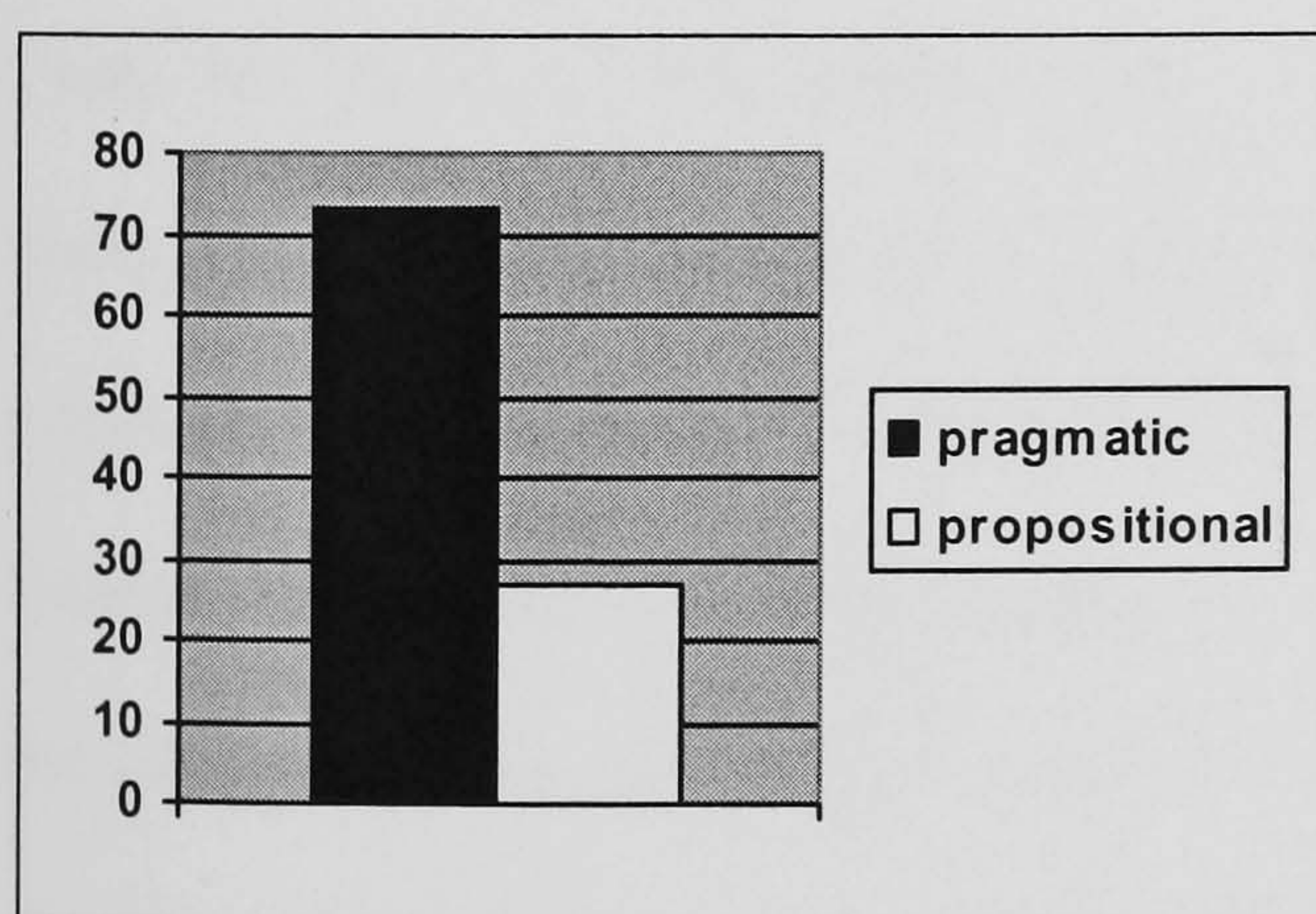


Figure 9.2: pragmatic v. propositional occurrences of *you see* in L1UC.

In discourse terms, *you see* signals that what follows is an explanation of what has gone before. This meaning can occur when *you see* is in initial, medial and final position:



(9.1)

**You see** the thing is I'm really busy right now.

(9.2)

The shop's open till eight **you see**, so I can pick up some stuff from work

(9.3)

So Joyce thinks he 's, he 's going in after, **you see**

## 9.6 A dialogic view

In conversational analytic terms, *you see* is part of a current utterance which relates to a prior utterance and anticipates the next utterance (Heritage, 1989: 25). This is consistent with a Bakhtinian view of *you see* as an utterance located in the 'chain of speech communication', an utterance which looks simultaneously backwards and forwards:

in addition to its own theme, (an utterance) always responds in the broad sense of the word in one form or another to others' utterances that precede it...giving rise within it to...responsive reactions and dialogic reverberations.

(Bakhtin, 1986: 94).

In Bakhtin's dialogic approach, the utterance also marks 'boundaries created by a change of speaking subjects' and signals 'the possibility of responding to it' (Bakhtin, 1986: 76). Thus, in terms of turn-taking conventions, the potential completion of an utterance is followed by a response 'in the broad sense'. The speaker uses *you see*, in effect, as a way of asking for permission to continue his or her turn, by providing the listener with an opportunity to interrupt or respond. A minimal response token from the listener such as *mm* or *yeah* signals to the speaker that the hearer is not claiming the floor and therefore the speaker can indeed continue:

(9.4)

<S1>: Yes, I just saw you at the crossroads **you see**

<S2>: **Mm**

<S1>: and I was sort of concentrating so...



### 9.7 *You see*: phonology

In all positions, the vowel of *you* tends to be reduced to /jə/ in rapid speech *you* may be omitted all together. It is spoken as a separate tone unit with a rising tone on *see* (Erman, 1987: 24) or it may simply be perceived as louder (Crystal and Davy, 1975: 95). This prosodic feature helps distinguish the formulaic, pragmatic *you see* from the literal uses of the same word string.

The stressed *see* + rising tone means ‘let me take you into my confidence’ and can’t be followed by the tag ‘don’t you’. In other words, it has a pragmatic function. In this respect, it is similar to *you know* as a pragmatic particle (Erman, 1987: 24). The rising tone also reinforces the function of *you see* as a signal of addressee involvement, suggesting that a response might be appropriate if not actually expected. When *you see* has a falling tone it signals agreement over background information or shared knowledge and it thus has a referring role in Brazil’s terms (Brazil, 1995: 182, 193).

The role of phonological features in distinguishing propositional from pragmatic uses of strings such as *you know*, *sort of* and *you see*, lends weight to Read and Nation’s argument that certain phonological features serve as possible indicators of formulaic sequences (Read and Nation, 2004: 32). Assuming this to be the case, the close link between phonology and idiomaticity may provide a further clue to the puzzle of L2 ‘difficulty’ in the use of such sequences.

### 9.8 Position of *you see* in the utterance

In L1 corpora, the most common position of *you see* in the utterance is medial (Erman, 1987: 50; Table 9.1):

Initial		Medial		Final	
N	%	N	%	N	%
11	9.6	98	76.6	19	14.8

Table 9.1 Position of *you see* in the utterance (Erman, 1987)



The position of *you see* as a medial discourse or pragmatic marker relates to its role as a bridge between one proposition and another:

(9.5)

the two boys they were born in Australia, **you see**, and they came here...

In final position, *you see* is often followed by the pragmatic marker *and*; in terms of the coherence of the text, *you see* again looks both back and forward:

(9.6)

Yeah, and Ann was on about it, **you see**, and I said oh well some noisy bloody neighbour and I said oh well it's like your telly in 'it?

The predominance of *you see* in medial position is significant in that it reflects its role as a discourse connector facilitating the flow of the interaction. It lends coherence to the speaker's utterance, connecting it with what has gone before and anticipating what is to come; it functions as a link in the chain of speech communication.

*You see* also signals a turn transition: it indicates to the listener that there is an opportunity to respond and initiate a turn, if they wish. Thus, not only is *you see* an utterance that is related to preceding and subsequent links in the 'chain of speech communion' but, as Bakhtin says of the utterance in general: 'it is constructed while taking into account possible responsive reactions' (1986: 94); *you see* is thus addressee-sensitive:

(9.7)

1. <S1>: You 're his next of kin, **you see**.
2. <S2>: Am I?
3. <S1>: Mm
4. <S1>: How about his father?

Beyond the mechanics of turn-taking, we can see discourse markers such as *you see* and the responses they provoke in terms of the cultural competences and the 'fundamental' function of *you see* in constructing 'shared worlds' and establishing 'intimacy' between speaker and hearer in everyday talk (Quirk, 1955: 179).



### 9.9 *You see*: colligation

Colligation, as we have seen in Chapter 1, is the collocation of a lexical item and a grammatical item. Biber et al point out that *you see* tends to occur in declarative utterances preceding backchannels (Biber et al, 1999: 1092). In interactive terms, this means that *you see*, like *you know* and *of course*, tends to monitor the reception of the discourse by the hearer, to check that they are still ‘tuned in’ (Biber et al, 1999: 1092). *You see*, therefore, tends to elicit backchannels from the addressee. This is reflected in the list of most frequent grammatical items occurring to the left and right of *you see* (Table 9.2):

It will be seen from the above findings that *you see* is, grammatically, accompanied by a combination of co-ordinating conjunctions and interjections. If we look at the function of these grammatical categories in actual texts we will observe their importance on the interactive, discourse, level rather than the referential or propositional level. Moreover, the activity generated by these interjections originates largely with the hearer, while the conjunctions tend to be part of the speaker turn. This highlights the co-operative, interactive role of *you see*.

	item	grammar
1	Yes/yeah	adverb, interjection
2	mm	interjection
3	well	interjection
4	but	conjunction
5	and	conjunction
6	because	conjunction
7	oh	interjection
8	erm	interjection
9	if	conjunction
10	then	adverb, conjunction
11	so	conjunction

**Table 9.2: Colligations of *you see*.**

Co-ordinating conjunctions (*and*, *but*) link words, phrases and clauses which do not involve subordination but have the same syntactic role (nouns, verbs, adjectives,



adverbs, clauses). The grammatical label provides a clue to the much wider discourse function performed by these lexical items in the environment of *you see*.

Interjections, on the other hand, are a class of words that typically express emotions such as surprise or anger. It is thus impossible to talk about interjections without referring to their function in interaction.

Thus, these two classes of words, conjunctions and interjections, point us in the direction of longer stretches of text, and the interpretation of their function on a discursal and pragmatic level, and requires that we take into account the active involvement of the hearer in what is going on. I believe it is in these terms that we can best explain the frequency of these conjunctions and interjections in spoken English and their co-occurrence with the pragmatic marker *you see*.

#### 9.10 *You see*: collocation

Figure 9.4 shows the most frequent collocates of *you see* occurring within 5 words to the left and right of the node phrase:

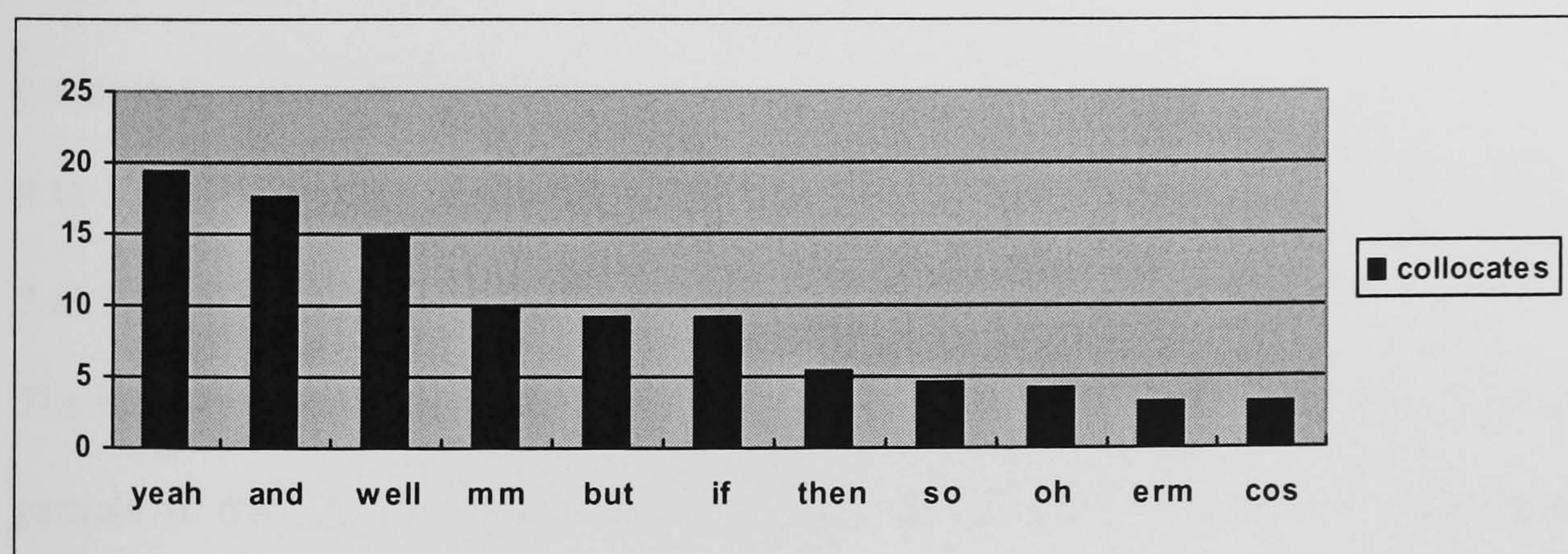


Figure 9.4: Collocates of *you see* in % (aggregate)

Table 9.3 shows the most frequent collocates of *you see* in BNC, divided into those occurring to the left and to the right of the node phrase:



Left	RF.	%	TWP	Right	RF	%
Yeah	28	24.0	You see	And	24	23.0
Well	22	19.6		Yeah	14	13.5
And	18	15.2		If	14	13.5
But	11	9.3		Mm	11	10.6
mm	10	9.5		Well	10	9.6
If	6	5.0		But	9	9.6
Then	6	5.0		So	7	6.7
Oh	6	5.0		Then	6	5.8
Erm	5	4.2		Erm	4	3.8
Cos	3	2.5		Cos	4	3.8
So	3	2.5		Oh	3	2.9
total	118	100			106	100

**Table 9.3: left and right collocates of *you see* in BNC**

These collocates of *you see*, taken from a small sample of concordance lines (250) are corroborated by the collocational profile of *you see*, based on the British National Corpus informal conversational sub-corpus of about 5 million words (Aston and Burnard, 1998: 31). All of the collocates identified in our sample, without exception, reappear in the larger spoken corpus as amongst the most frequent co-selections of the node phrase *you see*. Additional collocates appear such as *know*, *like*, *mean*, *just*, which suggests that some collocates (*you know*, *I mean*, *like* and *just*) may be common to *sort of* and *you see*.

## **9.11 Analysis of collocates of *you see*.**

### **9.11.1 Small words**

The first thing one notices about the most frequent collocates of *you see* as a pragmatic particle is that the collocates are themselves all potentially discourse markers and pragmatic particles. They are the kind of discourse marker focussed on by Schiffrin (1987) who looks mostly at small, almost subliminal words, like *but*, *so*, *well*, *oh*, *and*, *then*, *I mean*. Thus, a first impression of the collocational patterns of the pragmatic particle *you see* is that it attracts other pragmatic particles. We may recall that the hedge *sort of* attracted other hedges (Chapter 7).



The second observation one can make about the collocates of *you see* is that a great number of them are response tokens: *yeah, mm, well, erm, oh* (Schegloff, 1982; Gardner, 1997, 1998; McCarthy, 2002). The vast majority of the response tokens in the list are minimal response tokens or ‘backchannels’ (Yngve, 1970) which signal that the listener is paying attention but does not necessarily wish to claim the floor. Heritage (1989: 30) and Gardner (1998: 220-221) point out, however, that to treat these items only as backchannels or signals of continued attention may underestimate the variety of functions they are called upon to perform, for example: ‘continuers’, signals of acknowledgment, agreement, change of state of current knowledge and co-construction of meaning.

*You see* and its collocates, like *sort of* and its collocates, occur in environments where speakers are signalling not only the organisation of the discourse but where they are also expressing attitudes, feelings and points of view towards the propositions expressed. *You see* is not only oriented towards the speaker: it also relates to the hearer; it is a ‘living utterance’ and is ‘part of a social dialogue: it arises out of the dialogue as a continuation of it and as rejoinder to it’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 277). *You see* is ‘saturated’ with the meaning of its collocates; it enters into dialogic interaction with these meanings and thus forms its stylistic profile or semantic and pragmatic prosodies. Behind this verbal interaction are, of course, the social relationships and intentions of the interlocutors. This social interaction is realized, linguistically, across speaker turns by adjacency pairs, which are made up of *you see* and one of its collocates:

(9.8)

1. <S1>: It were open that much **you see**
2. <S2>: **Oh**, so that’s how they got in.

(9.9)

1. <S1>: They’re brick houses, you know; that’s why she had a grant.
2. <S2>: **Yeah**



3. <S1>: **You see**,...er...she can have one because...

### 9.12 Repetition of collocates

Repetition is a ubiquitous communicative device in everyday verbal interaction, much of it below the level of awareness; such is the case of many pragmatic markers: however subliminal they may be, their importance in forging commonality is enormous.

the humdrum of everyday events are appreciated subliminally.

(Sinclair and Renouf, 1988: 151).

The approaches to repetition surveyed in Chapter 7 can be seen in terms of the Bakhtinian notion of the ‘chain of communication’ and the way discourse is constructed cumulatively across successive utterances, a notion which fits well with Brazil’s incremental view of discourse grammar and what I have referred to as the ‘rhapsodic’ pattern of conversation. Bakhtin’s concept of dialogue can also help us dig deeper into the socio-cultural significance of repetition in conversation and indeed Carter (2004) draws on Bakhtin in his research into creative repetition in ordinary conversation.

First, we can look at the way *you see* itself is often repeated within the space of a few words and can thus be seen as a collocate of itself:

(9.10)

It seemed he didn’t know nothing about it what **you see** what happens **you see**

The repetition of the same collocate of *you see* is also common:

(9.11)

1. <S1>: **Yeah** but she uses it at night and (<S2: **yeah**>) and (<S2: **yeah**>) weekends, **you see**
2. <S2>: Oh, yeah.

(9.12)

1. <S1>: **you see**, again, and **then**, **you see**, if you’re out of a job, **you see**, if you happen to be out of a job, **then** you’re not eligible for a pension policy



2. <S2>: What happens **then, then**? If you get made redundant?
3. <S1>: Well...

A major pattern one notices in the collocates of *you see* is the frequency with which the occurrence of the collocate is adjacent to *you see*, either to the left or the right. Thus, *you see* and its collocates form formulaic chunks or strings such as:

*well, you see; and you see; but you see; erm you see; cos you see; so you see; you see cos; you see I mean,* and so on. The adjacency of *you see* and its collocates, tending towards the formation of formulaic sequences, was also a pattern we observed in the analysis of *sort of*: *sort of you know; like sort of; just sort of*. As with *sort of* and its collocates, to begin to impose some kind of order on the ‘mush’ of repetition associated with discourse markers, I will classify the repetition of *you see* and its collocates into: *collocational compounds, complexes, cascades* and *constellations*.

### 9.12.1 Collocational Compounds

‘Collocational compounds’ are made up of the node phrase (*you see*) plus one more item of the same type (i.e. a discourse marker) in adjacent position within the same turn or across turns, either to the left or the right. Some examples of collocational compounds are identified by Biber et al (1999), Altenberg (1998) and Schiffrin (1987). But this tendency of related discourse markers to form pairs, and even larger combinations, is a highly generalized phenomenon in conversation that deserves further study. Some of the collocational compounds composed of *you see* and another pragmatic marker in the BNC are illustrated in Table 9.4.

*You see* occurs so frequently with some of its collocates in adjacent position that we can reasonably see the resulting phrase as a unified whole, a kind of compound pragmatic marker with formulaic characteristics.



	Compound	Freq
1	But you see	87
2	You see and	47
3	well you see	45
4	and you see	26
5	you see if	22
6	You see er/erm	20
7	If you see	21
8	Er/erm you see	16
9	You see yeah	16
10	You see mm	16
11	cos you see	16
12	you see cos/because	15
13	You see so	15
14	Then you see	14
15	Yeah you see	13
16	You see oh	12
17	Cos you see	10
18	so you see	8
19	You see but	6
20	You see well	6

**Table 9.4: collocational compounds with *you see* (frequency per million words)**

### 9.12.2 Collocational complexes

I have used the term ‘collocational complexes’ to refer to the co-occurrence of three or more discourse markers together: the node phrase, with two or more of its collocates in adjacent position; within the same turn or across turns in adjacent position: *yeah but you see*; *but then you see*; *but you see if* (Table 9.5).

	Complex	RF
1	Yeah but you see	10
2	But then you see	7
3	But you see if	7
4	Yes but you see	4
5	You see and er	4
6	And then you see	4
7	Well you see mm	3
8	Yeah well you see	3
9	You see and so	3
10	You see and then	3

**Table 9.5 Examples of complexes of *you see* (Raw Frequency).**

### 9.12.3 Collocational cascades

I have used the term ‘collocational cascades’ to refer to the co-occurrence of collocates of the node phrase, in the company of the node phrase or in its absence, within the same



speaker turn or across turns, in the wider co-text. In other words, cascades involve discontinuous co-occurrences of collocates: they do not form holistic chunks of the compound or cluster variety, but are scattered throughout the text and are thus important features of discourse and pragmatic cohesion and coherence. In the full flow of conversational interaction, whether during monologues or dialogues, the discourse marker collocates of *you see* are woven in and out of the discourse, reinforcing explanations, expressing backchannels, agreement, addition, afterthoughts, surprise, disappointment, drawing inferences, giving reasons, stating causes, expressing hesitation, mitigating, boosting, making claims on the floor, conceding the floor and so on, in a non-stop cascade of pragmatic intentions and modulations. In Bakhtin's terms, these discourse markers, collectively, 'saturate' the discourse with attitudes, feelings and intentions.

There are five types of discourse markers scattered throughout the following stretch of conversation, and nine tokens altogether. In a running text of 16 words, that makes more than 50% of the whole extract.

(9.13)

1. <S1>: **Yeah but** she uses it at night **and** (<S1: **yeah**>) **and** (<S1: **yeah**>) weekends, **you see**
2. <S2>: **Oh, yeah**

In the next example, *you see* is surrounded by the quartet of collocates: *and*, *oh*, *mm* and *then*, some of which make up complete turns:

(9.14)

1. <S1>: You should have left your Goldilocks at home **and** just choosed (sic) mine.
2. <S2>: **Oh**
3. <S1>: **You see**
4. <S2>: **Mm**
5. <S1>: **and then** we wouldn't... you wouldn't forget



Related pragmatic markers often form larger strings or collocational clusters. In the following example, 9.15, *you see* is accompanied by no less than five of its most frequent collocates: *er*, *yeah*, *cos*, *if* and *mm..*

(9.15)

S1 is giving S2 advice on tax relief.

1. <S1>: **er**...you'd be handy for a... a tax relief on the whole lot,  
rather than just
2. <S2>: **yeah**
3. <S1>: part of it. **Cos** that ...**you see if** you **if** you could link up life  
insurance to your pension you could get tax relief on your  
life insurance, **you see?**
4. <S2>: **Mm.**

<S1> is in the process of explaining new information to <S2> in order to give advice on tax relief, a delicate operation, both in terms of its complexity and its personal implications. The process is made easier by the softeners *er/cos/you see* and more interactive by <S2>'s backchannels *yeah/mm*. <S1> does more than convey facts.

In the next example, *you see* occurs with seven of its collocates of which there are a total of eleven tokens: out of 52 words, 13 are discourse markers:

(9.16)

Two friends are discussing a burglary.

1. <S1>: How did they get in **then?**
2. <S2>: Broke the window open
3. <S1>: **Oh**
4. <S2>: It were open that much **you see**
5. <S1>: **Oh, so** that's how they got in
6. <S1>: **Mm**
7. <S2>: **But** she kept on saying how **er** stupid I was
8. <S1>: They're quick, aren't they?
9. <S2>: **Yeah**, weren't gone for two minutes
10. <S1>: **Yeah, but you see**, they reckon...



#### 9.12.4 Collocational constellations

One kind of collocational pattern of *you see* that I haven't mentioned is the way *you see* and *sort of* share some of the same collocates.

'Collocational constellation' will be used to describe the phenomenon whereby the collocates of *you see* and *sort of* co-occur with each other, in adjacent position or discontinuously, even when *you see* and *sort of* are not present in the co-text.

	Constellation	RF
1	But I mean	201
2	Well I mean	158
3	I mean if	135
3	Well you know	103
4	And stuff	96
5	But you know	84
6	So I mean	70
7	You know if	62
8	Well just	60
9	Like yeah	56
10	So I think	49
11	Yeah I mean	43
12	But just	41
13	So you know	40
14	I mean yeah	39
15	Yeah you know	39
16	But the thing	32
17	So like	22
18	Well the thing	21
19	Well like	21
20	But really	10

**Table 9.6: Constellations of *you see* and *sort of***

Svartvik's (1980) observes that *you know*, *I mean*, *then*, *so*, *yes* are collocates of *well*; what we notice is that these words also happen to co-occur with *you see* and/or *sort of* in our data.

In example 9.17, *you see* co-occurs with *I mean* and, in the wider co-text, with *you know*, which as we saw in Chapter 7 are two of the most frequent collocates of *sort of*. These patterns of co-occurrence illustrate the general tendency of pragmatic markers to appear in each other's company and thus to form a textual and discoursal set:



(9.17)

It seemed he didn't know nothing about it what **you see** what happens **you see, I mean**, all the transactions here are done through banker's orders, **you see, and** the banker's orders, they, they won't know who, who ever is going to be responsible, **you know** but you've got to put down the wife **and and** yourself, **you see**

### 9.13 The importance of collective clusters

In the discussion that follows, I shall use collective clusters (CCs) as the superordinate for all of the combinations of 'small' pragmatic markers we have discussed so far: collocational compounds, complexes, cascades and constellations.

The reason why these collocational compounds and clusters occur may be sought not only on the level of psycholinguistic processing in real-time interaction; indeed, they can be seen as extended verbal fillers, giving the speaker thinking time to plan his or her next move.

On a semantic and pragmatic level, the speaker achieves subtle shades of meaning and combinations of meanings, which have relational implications. For example, the first part of *but you see* may involve disagreement with prior talk which is softened by the addition of *you see*, with its appeal to shared understanding and hearer participation. The reasons, motives and justifications carried by *'cos/because* are reinforced by *you see* and any possible abruptness may also be mitigated by *you see* due to its hearer-involvement effect. A useful experiment is to remove *you see* and its clusters from the conversations quoted above and notice the effect on the interaction. One is left with the propositional bare bones of interaction. Thus, pragmatic markers have an important role to play in constructing commonality.

We have noted that most of the collocates of *you see* can function as minimal response tokens, so McCarthy's (2003) approach to 'clusters' is of particular relevance here. He uses the term 'clusters and extended sequences' and notes the occurrence of clusters



across turns and identifies some of the interactional and pragmatic functions of this feature of conversation:

Non-minimal response tokens may also occur in series across speakers, where co-ordinated actions produce clusters of relational signals during, for example, (pre-) closures, and often project parallel relational convergences.

(McCarthy, 2003: 58)

Such clustering functions are used to signal a boundary, to add agreement or simply to express friendly social support. The examples above show how, by broadening the context to include more text before and after the node phrase *you see*, we can see how these pragmatic particles occur throughout the discourse, across turns and create discourse coherence.

The function of collective clusters on the discourse and pragmatic level is what gives them their importance, not the frequency of any particular word string in isolation. It is the co-occurrence on a local and more extensive discourse level that makes them a valuable device for weaving texts together to form coherent wholes and for allowing speakers to express feelings, intentions and attitudes towards the propositional content of a particular stretch of speech. For the hearer, they act as framing devices or contextualisation cues which assist the pragmatic interpretation of the unfolding discourse. Finally, as ‘units of interaction’ they fulfill the need of speakers to preserve face, express politeness, signal common ground and express purposive vagueness (Powell, 1985; McCarthy and Carter, 2002); in short, they are realisations of, and ways of achieving, shared understanding: they reflect and help create ‘deep commonality’.

Sherzer (1987) refers to the ‘packing of a maximum of meaning into a minimum of form’ and he exemplifies his argument with grammatical categories such as tense-aspect or morphological features such as suffixes; Sherzer argues that the choices we make between one form or the other have significance in discourse context beyond the



merely semantic or referential uses of language. He also refers in this respect to the socio-cultural importance of small categories such as particles (*well, so, then* and *and*) in colloquial spoken narratives (Sherzer, 1987: 303). McCarthy and Carter (2002) looking at clusters within an interactional framework and drawing on the work of Hopper (1998) on emergent grammar, argue that many clusters have ‘pragmatic integrity’ and show the ‘all-pervasiveness of interactive meanings’ in everyday conversations; clusters are, therefore, ‘fundamental to successful interaction’. Of direct relevance to this thesis is the point made by McCarthy and Carter that clusters ‘support Sinclair’s notion of the idiom principle at work, with the clusters best viewed as being evidence of single choices rather than assembled at the moment of speaking’ (McCarthy and Carter, 2002).

It is a logical step then, given the work of Pawley and Syder (1983), Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) and others to see clusters as ‘(making) ‘fluency a reality’ (Carter and McCarthy, 2002). These markers of fluency are not opaque and colourful like the traditional ‘idiom’ beloved of textbooks; they lack salience and exist on a subliminal level- they are hard to detect in the everyday flow of discourse but they are largely what gives that discourse its flow. This use of related discourse markers within and across turns suggests that ‘native-like’ fluency in spoken interaction may well involve not only the ability to select idiomatic strings, including discourse makers, but to combine individual discourse markers into pragmatically appropriate strings and to produce these spontaneously in response to the needs of the ongoing dialogue.

#### **9.14 Semantic, Discourse and Pragmatic Prosody**

We have seen that, in grammatical terms, the collocates of *you see* are all either conjunctions or interjections; none of them are referential items attached to objects, events, ideas or feelings in the real world. Beyond this general non-propositional



nature of the collocates of *you see*, the two broad categories of conjunction and interjection would seem to have little in common at first sight. However, in discourse terms we have seen how they are found in contexts where linking of some kind is taking place: they are markers of discourse coherence (Stubbs: 2001: 65); they connect parts of the text or dialogue promoting flow of discourse, linguistically but especially on a pragmatic level. In Bakhtinian terms, they all have the capacity to look backwards and forwards in discourse. The collocates of *you see* form discourse prosodies over shorter and longer stretches of text: I have identified two prominent discourse prosodies in the co-text of *you see*: the first contributes to the creation of coherence within turns and across turns. The second relates to the processing of the discourse; this is expressed in turn-taking procedures and includes repetition phenomena.

Explanation and its negotiation is a speech function that extends over longer stretches of discourse, across speaker turns and involves reference back to things already said, as *yeah* does in the following expansion of extract 9.13:

(9.18)

1. <S1>: **Well**, don't Bill use it for work, **like**?
2. <S2>: No
3. <S1>: **Oh**
4. <S2>: **Yeah but** she uses it at night and (S1<**yeah**>) and  
(S1<**yeah**>) weekends, **you see**
5. <S1> **Oh, yeah.**
6. <S2>: **Yeah.** Weekends, **you see.**
7. <S1>: **Oh, yeah.**

Removing the highlighted pragmatic markers from the dialogue above will make their essential role in holding the text together evident. But these signals are also essential in maintaining the conversation on an amicable level and for asserting one's identity on a local level. These more complex functions relate to pragmatics and socio-cultural



dimensions of communication. It is to more general pragmatic patterns that we now turn.

#### **9.14.1 *You see*: pragmatic prosody**

Most of the instances of *you see* in the corpus data occur in contexts where the speaker is engaging in explanation of one kind or another. The onset of an explanation and its sub-functions can be signalled by discourse markers such as: *well*, *because/cos*, *and*, *but*, and so on. But explanation is a two way process. It involves knowledge (or attitudes and feelings) being conveyed from one person to another – explanation by definition involves a change of state in the information shared by the speakers. It is a function defined by the process of creating shared knowledge. In the linguistic environment of *you see* we find the speaker reacting or responding to the incoming information. The response may be marked lexically by items such as *but* or *well*, but more often it is found in the company of minimal response tokens such as *yeah*, *mm* and *oh*.

Explanation, then, and the replies and responses it provokes, is the predominant pragmatic prosody of *you see*. Within this framework, speakers will agree and disagree, express doubt and impatience; as hearers, they will respond, hesitate, provide backchannels, and so on. In addition to this core function of explaining, and facilitating its negotiation, we find pragmatic functions that modify the speakers' attitudes, and discourse markers that help manage the flow of the discourse (Table 9.7; Figure 9.5).

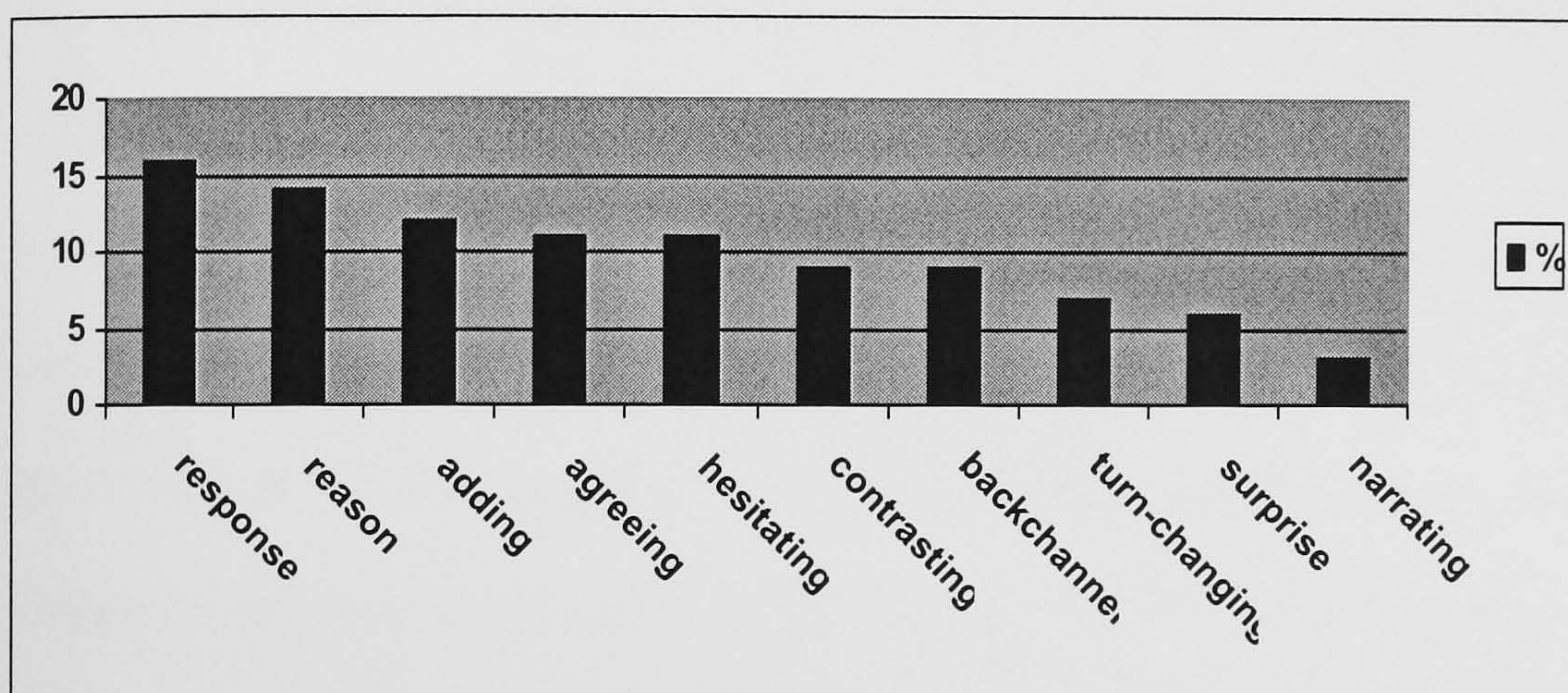
We can observe three general pragmatic prosodies behind these specific prosodies:

1. Explaining and its sub-functions: giving reasons, agreeing, contrasting.
2. Responding: agreeing, contrasting, backchanneling, expressing surprise, adding.
3. Narrating



	Prosody	realisations	%
1	response	well, oh, yes	16
2	giving reason	because/cos	14
3	adding	And but yeah	12
4	agreeing	Mm yeah	11
5	hesitating	Mm er/erm, well	11
6	contrasting	well, but	9
7	backchannel	yeah, mm	9
8	Turn-initiator	yeah, but, well, oh	7
9	surprise	oh, well	6
10	narrating	And but well	3

**Table 9.7: Pragmatic prosodies of *you see* (BNC)**



**Figure 9. 5: pragmatic prosodies of *you see*.**

### 9.15 Conclusion: *you see* and the power of small words

*Wherefore are these things hid?*

(*Twelfth Night*, I, iii: 135).

In this chapter, we have applied the analytic procedures and theoretical approach adopted in the case of *sort of* to the pragmatic marker/minimal idiomatic unit *you see*. In search of a possible answer to the puzzle of idiomaticity in ELF, we have explored the pragmatic and socio-cultural context in which *you see* occurs. The macro-function of this TWP is explanation; explanation is achieved through a process of mutual understanding, which is both referential and relational (Bremer et al, 1996) – it involves the transfer of facts or knowledge but explaining is also potentially a face threatening act: it can expose the hearer's ignorance; it is, therefore, a moment in the interaction which is potentially uncomfortable (Fiksdal, 2000). It needs careful management, if



rapport is to be maintained. The failure to manage rapport successfully can have serious consequences in the real world (see the volume edited by Spencer-Oatey on Japanese-American workplace misunderstandings and a 'problematic Chinese business visit to Britain'- Spencer Oatey, 2000, chapters 2 and 3). It may well be that small words like *you see* and its collocates have more power to create face-saving and face-threatening situations than we realise.

We have noticed the way in which the frequent occurrence of discourse marker collocates of *you see*, alone or in clusters, do not only serve the overall pragmatic function of 'explanation' but that of its associated prosodies. *You see* has an extended prosody of explanation, responsiveness and backchanneling; this means it is highly interactive. It is a link in a chain of situated communication and like *sort of* its uses cannot be learnt from reference materials. The idiomaticity of *you see* resides in its nonpropositional meanings but its difficulty for the L2-user is intensified by in the extended pragmatic networks to which it belongs

The clustering of collocations around this TWP also has a discourse function: it both holds the texts together and gives them their forward and backward looking dynamism:

Each individual utterance is a link in the chain of communication. It has clear-cut boundaries...but within these boundaries the utterance like Leibniz's monad, reflects the speech process, others' utterances, and above all, preceding links in the chain of communication - sometimes close and sometimes – in areas of cultural communication - very distant.

(Bakhtin, 1986: 93.

As one kind contextualisation cue, minimal pragmatic markers not only provide the hearer with recognizable signals for interpreting contextual presuppositions but they also signal minute changes of stance or footing which ensure an appropriate interpretation and response on the part of the hearer. All this operates more smoothly



between members of the same social group and/or speech community, who thus reproduce and modify their cultural identities moment-by-moment. One could say TWP are ‘mobilised’ in the service of presentation of self, but ‘mobilisation’ is too strong a word, with its connotations of conscious, deliberate choice, for the delicate emergence of these subliminal particles – hardly words in some cases - on the surface of discourse.

### 9.15.1 The ‘difficulty’ of *you see*

The corpus analysis of the TWP *you see* has helped uncover what is common but often passes unnoticed – it has made the subliminal salient to the researcher, but not necessarily for the learner. It should not be assumed that TWPs are necessarily easier to acquire than other forms of idiomaticity: TWPs belong to the ‘formulaic’ category of idiomaticity we have identified (Chapter 2) and this makes them more transparent and more accessible to understanding than opaque idioms; it is not, however, their syntactic or semantic aspects, seen in isolation, that may make them elusive for an L2-user. *You see* forms part of a regular network of meanings and like, *sort of* should be seen as an extended lexical unit (Sinclair, 2004: chapters 2 and 8.)

Moreover, TWPs serve to membership speakers within cultural communities and they are the external manifestations of a deep commonality, which is a socio-historical and socio-cultural concept. Leaving aside the desirability of acquiring or not acquiring these markers of L1 use, the complex socio-pragmatic functions of TWPs may throw some light on the puzzle of their relative infrequency in L2 use, even amongst successful users of English. These minimal words and the patterns they form are the external tokens of interaction at a deep level.

It might be too much to make little words like *you see* carry too much discoursal and socio-cultural weight but an important source of their power is their frequency and their



repeated co-occurrences with each other. The repetition in compounds, clusters and cascades gives them added intensity and significance in terms of coherence and content. Fleeting particles, often below the level of consciousness, acquire cultural significance in discourse: their frequent and regular occurrence and co-occurrence is an integral part of their meaning: this is the ‘packing of a maximum of meaning into a minimum of form’ that Sherzer refers to with reference to the role of particles such as *well, so, then* and *and* in colloquial spoken narratives (Sherzer, 1987: 303).

#### **9.15.2 *You see* and fluency**

We have seen that fluency is achieved and maintained by the choice of pragmatic strategies which are consistent with a collaborative view of discourse. *You see*, its collocates and prosodies are tools in the negotiation of meaning, meaning which is co-constructed by interlocutors who dynamically adapt their lexico-grammatical choices to the ongoing exchange. The fluid to-and-fro of speaker-hearer is obvious in minimal responses (*yeah, oh, mm*) making up adjacency pairs (Biber et al, 1999: 1045). These non-clausal elements; ‘are typically used to signal the pragmatic or discoursal role of the speaker’s utterance, dynamically shaping it to the ongoing exchange; these little words embody speaker’s attitudes; and they facilitate the transition between neighbouring parts of the discourse’ (Biber, et al, 1999: 1046).

*You see*, in its extended sense, draws on the *potential* background knowledge of the hearer, even if that knowledge is lacking; it is a verbal gesture of co-operation or an example of what McDermott and Taylor (1995 call ‘collusion’:

Collusion refers to how members of any social order must constantly help each other to posit a particular state of affairs...participation in social scenes requires that members play into each other’s hands, pushing and pulling each other toward a strong sense of what is possible or probable...proposition and reference pale before the task of



alignment, before the task of sequencing the conversation's participants into a widely spun social structure.  
(McDermott and Taylor, 1995: 219)

'Collusion' involves an element of play-acting which recalls Goffman's theatrical metaphor for interactive talk; the process, however, of creating the illusion of rapport, is more subtle than the words 'push, pull' and 'strong' suggest in the above account of collusion; the process of convergence and comity is a subtle, almost subliminal process. It is more like a spider's web of allusions and invitations to collobarate in the construction of discourse, through fine threads made up of discourse markers which are hard to detect in the everyday flow of discourse.

The small words which make up these strategies of co-operation and collusion are, to change the metaphor, like beats in music, making up a rhythm, which helps hold together the conversation, punctuating propositions with pragmatic and discourse markers of comity and rapid changes of 'footing'; these changing faces and voices that we present to our audience help project our identity on a moment by moment basis; the ability to modulate our voice and the roles we play allows us to resolve potential conflict or protect each other's face needs; if we always used the same voice and the same roles we'd been unable to cope with the unexpected thrown up by spontaneous discourse; discourse markers are so many strings to our social bow: they allow us to modulate the assertiveness of our message, to add degrees of politeness to the message (Brown and Levinson, 1987). We can appreciate their importance in spoken discourse by seeing the effect of removing them on the way the messages are produced and received: 'untune' those strings 'and hark what discord follows!' (Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, I, iii: 109).

To what extent is this analysis of *you see* in L1 discourse generalizable to successful L2 use in ELF contexts? This is the question we will explore in the next chapter.



## Chapter 10

***You see, it's not easy for the L2-user***

*...pronouncing of some doubtful phrase*

*Hamlet Act II sc.1.*



## 10. *You see*, it's not easy for the L2-user.

### 10.0 Introduction

We have seen that in L1 discourse the most common use of *you see* is as a formulaic string rather than as a referential or propositional item. In the SUEC corpus, the reverse is the case: there are more propositional uses of *you see* than formulaic. In total, there are 62 occurrences of *you see*: just over half of the instances of *you see* in my corpus have a propositional function ('seeing with the eyes') and just under 50% have a pragmatic function (52% v 48%, respectively- see Figure 10.1)

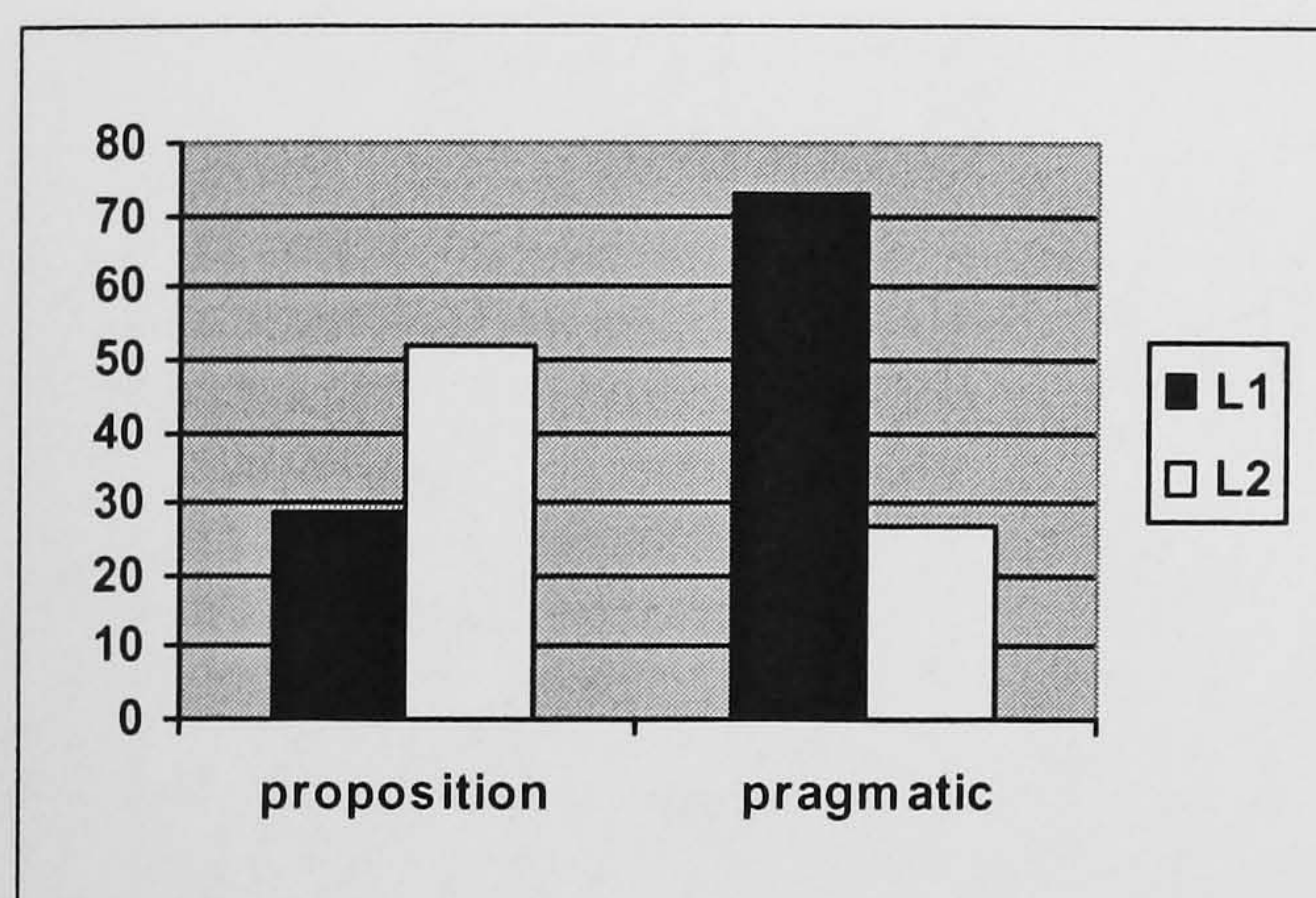


Figure 10.1: L1 and L2 propositional and pragmatic uses of *you see* (%)

The sample is too small to draw firm conclusions from this difference in frequency of specific uses of *you see* in the two corpora, but it may provide a stimulus for valuable qualitative research into the way the two groups use this particular minimal idiomatic unit.

There are, then, two differences in the L1 and L2 corpora to be addressed: the first is the relative infrequency of *you see* in L2 compared to L1 and, secondly, the relative infrequency of pragmatic uses of *you see* in L2 compared to L1. The best approach to solving these twin puzzles is by looking more closely at the co-text and context of *you see*.



10.1 Position of *you see* in SUEC

The vast majority of occurrences of *you see* as a pragmatic marker in SUEC appear in medial position (Table 10.1)

Position	frequency	%
Initial	7	23
Medial	20	66
Final	3	10

Table 10.1: position of *you see* in SUEC.

A glance at the concordance for *you see* confirms that it is a pragmatic marker surrounded by ongoing discourse (Figure 10.2)

1	<S2> 'Muck' A. <S2> Because because you see I'm trying you know, to explain.
2	'Landa' is a pla...a giant puddle because you see the difference in the height her
3	- I mean- you can talk to a poor boy, you see, but he at least have a walkman.
4	s incredible for a four year old child; you see, most parents are annoyed, watch
5	s to Spanish) this was like an epiphany you see and it's...it's ...wonderful because
6	' , er, 'I, I have to be going now,' er you see, that kind of stuff, 'Mind you'
7	students are going to sit for the FCE. You see, so that's one of our objectives
8	ithout email ..completely, <S2>Ha, ha. You see, I don't ask for grants in that
9	where I often leave it there and then I so...you see to me it happens very often I
10	you can, you've doubled your identity, you see, you are ...and I am a different i
11	I'll be very much interested to know if you see a possible application of this i
12	not very concrete. I think at least if you see it, at least examples or if you
13	a non-native and a native a native, if you see what I mean. So it's very diffic
14	nowadays try harder to look rougher if you see what I mean <S01> : I mean in...i
15	stic she's a charismatic woman <S1> If you see she's at the same conference whe

Figure 10.2: Concordance for *you see* in SUEC.

10.2 Collocations of *you see* in SUEC

Table 10.2 sums up the pattern of collocates to the left and right of *you see* in SUEC.

Left	RF	TWP	Right	RF
So	3	You see	yeah	3
Because	3		But	2
Yeah	3		I mean	1
Well	1		I think	1
Er	1		Like	1
I mean	1		So	1

Table 10.2: SUEC: Left/Right Collocates of *you see*

We may compare the frequency of these items with those in the L2 discourse of intermediate and advanced learners examined by Park (2003). The discourse markers used most frequently by Park's students were *but*, *so*, *because*, *well* and *therefore*.

It will be seen that there is a great deal of overlap in the patterns of frequency (one suspects that the occurrence of *therefore* in Park's data may be the result of pedagogic



practices in Korean classrooms and especially the influence of the written medium on the spoken English of learners), Park puts forward the interesting hypothesis that his L2 learners find textual connectives like *so* and *but* easier to use than pragmatic phrases such as *you know* and *I mean*. This is consonant with the view taken here that peripheral but pragmatically powerful items such as *you know* are elusive for the L2 speaker due to lack of exposure to them in natural contexts (Park, 2003: 58). A further point made by Park that chimes well with my own findings is that the more competent the user of English the more frequent the use of discourse and pragmatic markers. The SK factor may be part of a more general DPM (Discourse and Pragmatic Markers) factor in increasing fluency.

In the sections that follow, I will look at the use SUEs make of *you see*, in their own terms, whether that use be literal, metaphorical or pragmatic.

### 10.3 *You see* as a pragmatic marker in SUEC

In this section, we shall look at the way L2-users deploy *you see* as a formulaic string. In example 10.1, the SUE, Anna, a language expert, uses *you see* as pragmatic marker as part of her explanation for preferring faxes to email:

(10.1)

Two academics, Anna (Finnish) and Gunter (German) is German.

1. Anna: I prefer faxes still
2. Gunter: Do you?  
Anna: Yes. I mean...
3. Gunter: I really don't...
4. Anna: **you see**, the problem is ...er...I get the impression many of them...these things are very unstable.

*You see* collocates here with *problem* and the topic of this section could be described as the 'problem of choosing email or fax'. *You see* occurs in a context where minor divergence of points of view is being expressed; both speakers interrupt each other but the discourse never strays far from academic politeness. It is noteworthy that *you see*



co-occurs with other markers of mitigation of stance: *I mean, I really, I get the impression.*

In the next extract, *you see* occurs in the context of humorous banter; Elsa is a Hungarian publisher's representative; she is driving Luke, an author and his Greek wife, Kiveli, to the airport in Budapest. They are engaging in small chit-chat about this and that. Luke has just claimed he flew to Hungary in a jumbo jet.

(10.2)

1. Elsa: No, a jumbo? Are you sure?
2. Luke: Well, it was big (laughs). Jumbo-size.
3. Elsa: It was a Concorde, wasn't it?
4. Kive: (laughs) because there were just three seats on one side and two on the other
5. Elsa: Yeah, true
6. Kive: and usually there are three and three
7. Elsa: : ...er...in a jumbo there would be three-four-three
8. Kive: Yeah, **you see**, it was a jumbo, maybe
9. Luke: Perhaps I got confused by my last transatlantic flight.

Although the task the three participants are involved in is driving to the airport, it is by no means the only thing they talk about and indeed the need to talk while spending several hours together in an enclosed space can be easily understood. Silences that go on too long in such a context are unwelcome (Coupland, 2000; Jaworski, 2000); there is an 'imperative is to fill an inactive silence' (McCarthy, 2000: 103). The participants are filling in time but in another sense they are filling in space, too. It is more imperative to chat in a small space than a larger space. Prolonged silence in a car, a lift or a hairdresser's (McCarthy, 2000) can become uncomfortable for acquaintances, lacking in deep commonality (intimate acquaintances can maintain longer silences). These L2-users are participating, on this occasion, in temporally and spatially shared worlds, though this sharing is 'temporary'. Building rapport is one way of overcoming any potential unease in such close encounters and interactive markers such as *you see, well,*



*yeah, maybe, true* and tags are tools for helping to achieve rapport (Fiksdal, 1988:8). This is ELF in a relaxed and humorous mood, with participants engaged in talk that has little referential value but is important in building up a good relationship between colleagues and new acquaintances. It is interesting that the ironic humour and verbal play is initiated by the L1-user but that the two L2-users join in, without, however, displaying the kind of double-voicing of the L1-user's: *jumbo-size, my last transatlantic flight*.

It is important to stress that this kind of encounter (L1-user-L2-user, rapport building through phatic communion) is not unusual in ELF. I have described the L1-user in ELF as one of the strands in the fabric of ELF. A description of ELF cannot exclude the L1-user, but must take into account how their presence impacts on both more business-like transactional encounters, small talk encounters and encounters which are both transactional and relational (Candlin, 2000; Coupland, 2000). It would be a pity to add 'without humour' to Fishman's description of a putative ELF as 'without love, without sighs, without tears' (Fishman, 1982: 24). The pragmatic phrase *you see* has a part to play in building relations in ELF but it is reinforced in this role by other pragmatic markers, as we have seen, and this 'networking' of pragmatic markers is a crucial dimension of their role in discourse. In example 10.2 *you see* forms a chunk with *yeah* (*yeah, you see*) and it is to this tendency of formulaic TWPs to form compounds and other units that we now turn.

## **10.4 Collocational clusters in SUEC**

### **10.4.1 Collocational Compounds with *you see***

'Collocational compounds' are made up of the node phrase (*you see*) plus one more item of the same type (i.e. a discourse marker) in adjacent position within the same



turn or across turns, either to the left or the right. In the SUE corpus, only four pragmatic clusters occur more than once: (Table 10.3).

	Compound	Freq
1	If you see	43
2	Because you see	18
3	So you see	18
4	Yeah you see	12

**Table 10.3: Collocational compounds with *you see* in SUEC (per million words).**

#### 10.4.2 Complexes

We have used the term ‘collocational complexes’ to refer to the co-occurrence of three or more discourse markers together: the node phrase with two or more of its collocates in adjacent position, within the same turn or across turns, in adjacent position. There are no occurrences of this feature in SUEC.

#### 10.4.3 Cascades

We have used the term ‘collocational cascades’ to refer to the co-occurrence of collocates of the node phrase, in the company of the node phrase or in its absence, within the same speaker turn or across turns, in the wider co-text. In other words, cascades involve discontinuous co-occurrences of collocates. There are few examples of this feature in SUEC, most of which occur only once (Table 10.4):

	cascades
1	If you see so
2	You see so
3	Yes you see er
4	You see so yeah
5	So you see if
6	So you see er
7	You see but so
8	Er well you see yeah
9	Because you see yeah
10	Because you see so

**Table 10.4: collocational cascades in SUEC**

#### 10.4.4 Constellations

We have used the term ‘collocational constellation’ to describe the phenomenon whereby the collocates of *you see* and *sort of* co-occur with each other, in adjacent



position or discontinuously, with or without the presence of *you see* and *sort of* in the co-text. In SUEC this is not a frequent phenomenon; most of the following examples of constellations in SUEC occur only once (Table 10.5):

	constellations
1	You see I think
2	You see I mean
3	You see I mean so you know
4	Yes I mean you see er
5	If you see just
6	You see I mean but so
7	Er I mean you see
8	I think if you see
9	You see you know and er so
10	If you see I mean

**Table 10.5: constellations of *you see* and *sort of*.**

#### **10.4. 5 Collocational clusters in SUEC: conclusion**

It is evident that collocational clusters are far more common in L1 discourse than they are in L2.

The paucity of clusters of *you see* in the L2 corpus suggests that a description of pragmatic phrases such as *you see* and *sort of* which does not take into account the pragmatic and discourse networks of which these markers are a part, may be missing a lot in terms of how these TWP's work in interaction. Their lack of frequency may represent an avoidance strategy which may be related not only to the pragmatic marker as a single 'tricky' item, rich in pragmatic possibilities, but also one of set of kindred markers that are often found in each other's company and form cohesive and coherent wholes in discourse. An examination of the L1 data has revealed the tendency of these pragmatic markers, whether made up of one word or two words, to co-occur in contexts where interpersonal stance is signalled and affective rapport is co-constructed. It is not their referential meaning that gives them weight in discourse but their cumulative expression of affective common ground, epistemic stance, negative and positive politeness strategies, shared knowledge 'often used when speakers perform face-



threatening acts such as persuading or explaining (Cook, 2001: 177). The ‘smallness’ of the words and phrases in terms of semantic content and psychological saliency only adds to their elusiveness and complexity for the L2-user; the failure to see individual items as part of a larger whole adds to the difficulty of seeing them in their true communicative dimensions.

However, rather than hypothesise about the potential significance of the linguistic ‘absences’ in L2 discourse compared to L1 discourse, I will examine what L2-users actually do with the resources at their disposal.

### 10.5 *You see* as ‘understand’

The use of *you see* to mean something like ‘you understand’ stands somewhere between the literal and the pragmatic uses of *you see*. The extended/metaphorical uses of *you see* perform both a propositional function and a pragmatic function. On the one hand, it has something in common with the literal use of *see* in the sense of ‘see with the eyes’ but it also shares the role of creating understanding and rapport with the pragmatic *you see*.

In SUEC, the extended/metaphorical use of *you see* in the sense of ‘understand’ is used seven times altogether by five different speakers. These seven occurrences of the formula *(If/Do) you see what I mean?* suggest it is a useful resource for L2 discourse.

The forms taken by the string in the L2 corpus are set out in Table 10.6 below.

Form	RF
If you see what I mean	4
Do you see what I mean	1
You see what I mean	2
See what I mean	-

**Table 10. 6:** *You see* as ‘understand’ in SUEC

As we can see from the table, the formulaic string *you see* as ‘understand’ takes four different forms, two full forms and two ellipted forms.



In the L1-user sample I discussed in the previous chapter, *you see* in the sense of 'understand' occurred only once and that in an ellipted form. Bearing in mind the smallness of my L2-user sample, the possibility that L1-users show a preference for the ellipted form of *If/Do/Can you see what I mean* was intriguing so I checked the occurrences of the string *see what I mean* in the BNC informal conversation subcorpus (Conv) and the more formal context-governed (CG) spoken corpus. The results are set out in table 10.7 below.

Form	Conv	CG
If you see what I mean	5	3
Do you see what I mean	2	4
Can you see what I mean	-	1
You see what I mean	5	4
See what I mean	10	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>

**Table 10.7:** *You see* as 'understand' in BNC Spoken.

The combined totals for the ellipted forms of the string *If/Do/Can you see what I mean* suggests that L1-users at least prefer this to the full form.

### 10.5.1 *You see* and the difficulty of achieving understanding

In the first three examples below, the L2 speaker is addressing another L2 speaker and it is noteworthy that in all three cases *you see* co-occurs with its collocate *so*, both before and after the node phrase. In example 10.3 below the clustering of *you see* + *so* occurs in a context where the speaker is trying to 'describe' as he says, a 'difficult' concept. The prosody of 'difficulty' is reinforced by the occurrence earlier in the extract of the hesitator *er* which occurs before two formulations of a phrasal verb (*point out/pin down*):

(10.3)

Frank is a Hungarian teacher trainer.

Frank: it would be very difficult for me or for anyone else for that matter to...**er** point out ...to pin down, that particular difference that makes a non-native a non-native and a native



a native, if **you see** what I mean. **So** it's very difficult to describe that difference.

In example 10.4, the same speaker is developing another 'difficult' topic, anti-semitism; this time he signals the explanation/reasoning process by in the cluster of discourse markers around *you see: so* (twice), *you know* (twice). The 'difficulty' of the propositional content of his speech is reinforced by the highly formal lexical item *cognitive dissonance* and the negative *hate*. All in all, this is an awkward moment in the discussion and it is smoothened by the flurry of discourse markers of shared knowledge and careful reasoning.

(10.4)

Frank: it's always the emotions that will get the upper hand – so that more arguments you put forward against anti-semitism the more anti-semite he will become. Do **you see** what I mean? So this cognitive dissonance, you know, that you are too, you know, your arguments are so strong that I can do nothing but hate.

It is interesting that in the next extract, 10.5, a different speaker this time, also occurs in the context of a 'difficult' topic, pronunciation and the 'non'-native speaker, a topic which the speaker approaches, from a somewhat formal, semi-technical perspective indicated in the lexical item *norm*.

(10.5)

José: I want them to put their tongue between their two sets of teeth to pronounce the 'th' sound if **you see** what I mean – so there is a norm however undefined that norm is.

### 10.5.2 *You see* and the sense of divergence

In example 10.6 we move to a fuller picture of the sociolinguistic and interactive context in which *you see/understand* is used. The situation is a young couple engaged to be married (Nick and Helen); they are chatting at home, as they leaf through a fashion magazine together. Nick's L1 is Greek and Helen is English.



(10.6)

1 Nick: I'm not sure, I mean, the thing like that is most women nowadays try harder to look rougher, if **you see** what I mean (Helen: Yeah) I mean in...in the past you would know that you've got you know three or four suits and a couple of good clothes, you know, etc you go to work and all this kind of stuff and nowadays just because, you know, we're all into this freer mentality we try to look....I don't know do you remember I mean last year in England when I felt that they all looked the same in the office

2 Helen: Yeah. That's what you were saying.

Nick is being rather critical of the clothes people wear at work; he bemoans that fact that as he sees it women all have a similar 'rough' appearance at work. As his partner belongs to the group being criticized, in terms of gender, profession and ethnic background, Nick hedges his criticisms with *I'm not sure, I mean* before the node phrase *you see* and follows it up with *I mean, you know, I don't know*, which cluster around the potentially sensitive point he is raising. He conveys the sense of searching for the right words in his use of vague language: *the thing/etc/and all this kind of stuff* and he throws in a couple of extra informal vague markers which help create a relaxed relationship (*three or four/a couple*) and the pragmatic marker *just because*. We can never be sure what speakers really mean and the researcher's interests may pick up features that the participants' are neither conscious of nor orient towards (Schegloff, in Wong and Olsher, 2000). However, Nick's strategy (albeit subliminal) seems to be pragmatically successful, judging from Helen's consensual backchannel *yeah*; the backchannel which turns out to be a signal of incipient 'speakership' (Drummond and Hopper, 1993) which Helen uses to agree with her partner.

Nick's use of pragmatic markers as mitigators and hedges is addressed to an L1-user, his future wife. The sheer number of these pragmatic markers may well be explicable in terms either of the rapport he is building with his fiancé or his status as an L2-user of



English as a Lingua Franca, where he takes more time to formulate what he wants to say than an L1-user would (Schegloff, in Wong and Olsher, 2000: 114; Wong, 2000). Either way, he is accomplishing normal and successful discourse by using the resources at his disposal in a way that is appropriate (judging from his interlocutor's response).

### 10.5.3 *You see, creativity and the self*

We see this process of 'appropriation' of ELF by an L2-user, in example (10.7) below, where Nick bends the language to fit the linguistic and cultural norms of his own L1 speech community: Greek. We see the same clustering of discourse markers, this time accompanying divergent use of language (the unusual collocation of *loud* with *way*) and the almost formulaic, routine juxtaposition of birth, death, work, pregnancy:

(10.7)

1. Nick: Eva says life here in Greece is happening because we mourn that really loudly in a way, everybody takes part in that. It becomes a social event and...er...so is for births, because we get friendly couples who have had babies lately and we experience life in a very loud way, if **you see** what I mean....
2. Luke: Cycle of birth, death
3. Nick: Yeah, it's part of getting jobs, losing jobs, staying pregnant, you know ...er...people love, split up, I mean

Nick is here quoting a Greek friend (Eva) who has suggested that, in Greek culture, people mourn in a very open, expressive way (*loudly*); Nick carries this lexical item, an adverb, into his conversation and refashions it into an adjective (*loud*) collocating rather idiosyncratically (to an L1 ear) with *way*. There are no occurrences of the collocation *loud way* or *mourn loudly* in the BNC.

Nick is caught between the norm and innovation: he is aware the he is using ELF in a novel way and signals his 'divergence' from L1 use through the formulaic check on understanding : *if you see what I mean*. In Schegloff's terms, this L2-user does orient



towards the ‘non-native’ status of the collocation (Schegloff, Wong and Olsher, 2000: 114).

Luke, who is bilingual in Greek and English, seems to have got the message as he embellishes on the idea that, in Greece, death is mourned with the same intensity as birth. This receives a token of agreement from Nick (*yeah*) who in turn expands on the previous speaker’s metaphor of the cycle of birth and death. He draws on the implicit shared knowledge of his interlocutor (*you know*); he hesitates and produces a final pair of parallel constructions: *people love, split up*. The whole stretch of addressee- sensitive speech is rounded off with the speaker-oriented *I mean*, which brings this phase of the discourse to a smooth close, with a final suggestion of his personal involvement in the explanation he has been expounding.

In this extract, Nick has produced more non-canonical examples of English than in the previous extracts we have seen, but the level of accomplished communication is just as high and in a sense deeper than anything we have seen so far, in that he demonstrates a greater boldness in experimenting with the language and makes it his own by drawing on his own L1 culture, as is natural, given the setting (Greece) and his interlocutor (a bilingual Anglo-Greek). He orients towards his own socio-cultural identity through the following linguistic choices: *life here in Greece/we/everybody/we experience life/it’s part of/people*. All of this indexes the cultural context to which both speakers, in varying degrees, belong.

The ‘unusual collocation’ *loud way/mourn loudly* should be seen as one manifestation of this cultural context, an important part of Greek identity it would seem, this view of birth and death, which is inserted into this particular ELF encounter. In other words, the ‘deviation’ of the Anglicised Greek concept (*loud mourning*) serves the expression of



Nick's identity in a foreign language. It is not L1 standard usage, but it is appropriate and even creative in this instance of L2 use (Bamgbose, 1998).

Scanning the whole extract of Nick's conversation with his partner Helen we find further examples of 'deviations' from the L1 norm which function as assertions of Nick's individual and social identity. Example (10.8) below has him using *analogy* in its Greek sense of 'proportion' rather than the ENL meaning of comparison. Helen, who understands Greek, lets the innovation 'pass' (Firth, 1990; 1996) and indeed responds to the pragmatic force of Nick's utterance: *you reckon?*

(10.8)

1. Nick: No, you've got to wear shorts **or something** you're not at all pear-shaped
2. Helen: **Yeah, but** I've got wide hips, haven't I?
3. Nick: **Yeah, but the analogy** is alright
4. Helen: You reckon?
5. Nick: **Yeah**, you would go for that one, tall...

In the next example, the expression *that's my element* is a word-for-word translation from the Greek 'afto einai to stoicheio mou' (meaning, 'that's the kind of style I like'). Nick follows up this positive assessment of the clothes in question with *that's nice*. Again, his interlocutor – and intimate acquaintance- does not orient to the 'unorthodox' form of his utterance, but to the content of what he says: *jump suit*.

(10.9)

1. Nick: That's beautiful. Oh, my God, reindeer horns
2. Helen: Oh, my God, no. I don't think so. It's very beautiful, though, all of it.
3. Nick: A bit kinky
4. Helen: White magic. Striking.
5. Nick: At last. That's my element.
6. Helen: Jump suit
7. Nick: That's nice



In this and the previous extract, we see the rapport-reinforcing role of repetition of phrases across speaker turns, with exact repetition (*yeah, but*) and expansion of the original string: *Oh, my God* becomes *Oh, my God, no*.

Nick uses a number of devices which make his speech fresh and personal: formal patterning and re-forming, metaphor, repetition. This creative use of language, in both social contexts, the political discussion and the informal chat between close friends, has an important pragmatic function, in the specific social context in which it is produced; it helps maintain interpersonal relations and its helps in the construction of personal and social identities. (Carter, 2004: 148). The accomplishment of fluent speech in the interests of interpersonal harmony is seen, in these speech events, to be an ordinary but important practice.

## **10. 6 *You see* and ellipsis**

### **10.6.1 Ellipsis and commonality in L2-L1 discourse**

In the extracts examined above we have seen a wide range of devices by which commonality is built into conversation, especially in the case of the couple Nick and Helen: backchannels (*yeah*) deictics (*this*) second person *you*, hedges (*a bit*) fixed expressions (*that's my element*), taboo expressions (*Oh my God*) vague language (*or something*). In this section, we look at another commonality-constructing device: situational ellipsis.

The string *do you see what I mean* also occurs twice in an ellipted form in the L2 corpus as *see what I mean?* Ellipsis in spoken English is mainly situational (Carter and McCarthy, 1997: 14). Unlike grammatical ellipsis, the missing items cannot be recovered from the text itself but are the result of the immediate situational environment.



Ellipsis is a characteristic feature of informal conversation and, indirectly, highlights the common ground between speakers; situational ellipsis occurs ‘where meaning can relatively easily be reconstructed from the context’ (Carter and McCarthy, 1997: 14). It is a good example of the *etcetera* principle in action and the assumed knowledge which makes the co-construction of messages possible (Garfinkel, 1972: 312). The ability to ‘take the part for the whole’ (Goffman, 1981: 20) suggests a comfortable familiarity between speakers and it may not be a coincidence that the L1-users in the BNC informal conversational corpus show a preference for the ellipted realisation of the string (*If/Do/Can you*) *see what I mean*. In this respect, it is interesting to see that the only two instances of the semi-ellipted form *you see what I mean* in my mini-corpus of L2-users occur between colleagues who happen to be friends and colleagues. In contrast, while Nick doesn’t use the ellipted form of *if/do/can you see what I mean*, his L1-user partner, Helen does:

(10.10)

Helen: I’ll go all day to the studio and do the singing which is why I  
think I might need another day – **see what I mean?**

This is an intriguing single instance and may form one of many entries into the exploration of spoken grammar and its norms in L1 and L2 use with a specific focus on the relative occurrence and use of ellipsis in contexts and of deep and shallow commonality.

For now, we turn to example 10.11, where, Dina, the Lebanese speaker of ELF, uses the ellipted form of the string containing *you see*.

*You see* occurs with two of its most frequent collocates – *but* and *so* – in close proximity. If we uncover more of the co-text we get a better impression of the pragmatic function of these discourse markers and the way they help the speaker to



project a particular personal identity, not by virtue of their isolated occurrence, but in conjunction with other pragmatic particles (highlighted in the text):

(10.11)

Dina is talking to a colleague in publishing; they are in an aeroplane, talking about a dinner they are going to that evening with clients of the company they both work for.

1. Dina: Marco is coming, his brother-in-law, partner, **I think...er...with the thing...with the summer thing ...er...I mean**, I was very enthusiastic **I think** it's brilliant **I think** it's really... **I think** it's really nice. **I think** it's something that nobody else has brought out...he doesn't want it now, he says ...even he says...**erm** ...we'll get feedback from the kids this year on it, **so** we might have some changes.
2. Luke: That's fair.
3. Dina: **You see** what I mean? **But** it's nice, it's very colourful, **so** they can't photocopy **it...it's ...it's really** bright, very colourful

*You see* comes as the climax of a series of hedges accompanying an attempt to express her evaluation of a particular book proposal for use by children on summer courses (*the thing; the summer thing*); this is an interesting option – why doesn't Dina say the 'book' or the 'manuscript'?

Then there is cluster of hedges (*I think*, five times) and hesitators (*er/erm*; the triple *it's*). The expression of her opinion of the book is, in lexical terms, positive: *enthusiastic; brilliant; nice; really; bright; colourful*. But this propositional content seems to be contradicted by the pragmatic signals being sent out by the series of hedges; the conscious and the unconscious seem to be in conflict. The difficulty of reconciling these tendencies in her discourse seem to be reinforced by the node phrase *you see what I mean*, which appears to be a check on her interlocutor's understanding of the argument, and by the contrastive *but*, which is odd as *nice* doesn't contrast with all the positive lexical items she has just used. Dina's cluster of discourse markers



(*you see, but, so, really*) come at the point where she attempts to sum up the topic, but instead she suggests some ill-defined doubt about the product under discussion.

The vague marker *thing* captures the ambiguity of her position very nicely. There is no logical or objective reason why she uses the word- it is purely interpersonal; she is allowing her interlocutor, with whom she shares knowledge of the topic and cultural context, to infer either a positive or negative evaluation of the *thing* referred to. The interpretation of the word *thing* will depend on the pressure of the discourse context, which, as we have seen, is strewn with ambiguity. *Thing* is full of meaning; although apparently ‘empty’ of meaning (Fronek, 1982); speakers always fill it with their own meanings and intentions (Canale, 1983; Bakhtin, 1981). Here *thing* is emblematic of the shared knowledge she expects her interlocutor to draw on to ‘read between the lines’ of her discourse; the word is only half Dina’s – the other half is her interlocutors; it is a supremely dialogic lexical item. *Thing* is, with *stuff*, the Bakhtinian word par excellence. The hearer is given ample contextualisation cues which guide him in the ambiguous status of *thing*: Dina’s positive adjectives – *enthusiastic, brilliant, colourful* – in combination with her quintuple expression of opinion - *I think* - which after so many repetitions begins to sound ironic – a bit like Mark Antony’s ‘Brutus is an honourable man’.

Luke, drawing on the socio-cultural knowledge he shares with Dina, may be expected to infer that the final decision to publish the book does not rest with her, but with the publishers – she is a mere publisher’s ‘rep’; secondly, the book under discussion has been written by someone – a ‘non-native’ speaker – who has not written any books before. Finally, the would-be author in question is an important client of the company. There is more to this discourse than meets the eye, when we look beyond surface structures, at the ‘inside story’. My position as an insider in the discourse context



offers an opportunity to fill in some of the situational and cultural ellipses and in my capacity as participant/observer in the encounter, I would say Dina is hedging her bets on whether the company will publish the proposal or not.

The insertion of *you see what I mean* at what is a turning point in Dina's discourse allows her to do several things at once – to change topic, to check understanding, to elicit Luke's agreement, to express the delicate position she is in, to assume an easy familiarity with her interlocutor, all of which gives Luke multiple cues for piecing out Dina's deliberate rhetorical imperfections with his thoughts.

Thus, *you see*, even if it is, in this context, an example of the referential use of the verb *see* to mean 'understand', acquires, in its co-text and social context echoes of the pragmatic meanings with which it is surrounded. It acquires interactional and relational meaning, and helps compose the face Dina wishes to present to her interlocutor: someone who tries hard to explain a difficult decision, which entails professional and financial commitment not only on her part but on the part of her occupational superiors.

*You see* here is the tip of a pragmatic iceberg; it is only one of many ways speakers use to achieve 'understanding'.

#### **10.6.2 Ellipsis and deep commonality in L2-L2 discourse**

The second example of an ellipted formula containing *you see* involves two L2-users with different linguistic backgrounds using English as a Lingua Franca. The speakers both work for the same company in Mexico in a marketing capacity. English and Spanish are both lingua francas of the company. They are discussing a delicate topic. They are complaining about work conditions and the unfair treatment by the company of another colleague, Maria.



(10.12)

1. Isabel: **So** I never think it was a great talk I never did **but** that pisses me off  
You see what I mean?
2. Peter: **But** Maria's nervous **because** she hasn't done it for a while **and**
3. Isabel: **and of course** she [was]
4. Peter: [**But**] did you tell that Maria was the one who... who created that talk?

Once again, we see, as in L1 use, the occurrence of *you see* in the company of its collocates; the seven tokens of the discourse markers form clusters of coherence throughout the exchange: *so*, *but* (three times) *because* and *and* (twice). Peter repeats Isabel's *but* and uses it as a turn initiator; Isabel, in turn, picks up on Peter's *and* and uses it to continue and expand on the proposition begun by her interlocutor. Both *but* and *and* here function as connectives which weave the discourse together. Isabel's discourse marker *you see what I mean* comes after an expression of dissatisfaction with the situation under discussion: the informal taboo item *pisses me off* marks both the negativity and the informality of the discourse. *You see what I mean* is therefore an appeal for understanding and agreement and it is, at the same time, a way of sharing the speaker's dissatisfaction with Peter, who in fact agrees, though he doesn't give a straight reply to the interrogative *you see what I mean*?

Peter responds with a contrastive *but*, which is, in fact, an amplification of the point Isabel is making. Peter has clearly and correctly interpreted Isabel's interrogative form as pragmatic in effect, so he responds accordingly with a pragmatic use of *but* and pragmatic (paratactic) *because*, both of which add fuel to the complaints and align him with his interlocutor.

Peter is about to add another example to his gripes when Isabel takes the word *and* out of his mouth and uses to tack on her own emphatic agreement with her colleague's complaint. The final *but* is, paradoxically, not a signal of divergence but the initiation



of another cause for complaint about the unfair treatment of Maria. Thus is convergence constructed.

Colleagues griping about management is a common genre in the workplace, with its own typical forms of expression, familiar to insiders and an integral part of their discourse competence. Piling on one complaint after another through the use of connectives like *so*, *but*, *and*, boosters like *of course* and the taboo formulae such as *X pisses me off*, are recurrent features of this particular ‘community of practice’ (Holmes and Meyerhoff, 1999).

We have seen that *you see* is prototypically used to signal an explanation and, pragmatically, to monitor the interaction (is the hearer paying attention, does the hearer understand and agree, are the speakers on common ground?). In the example above, however, the main function of *you see what I mean* seems to be to establish and reinforce the mutuality of the speakers, their membership of a group of employees who, as a ‘community of practice’ tend to indulge in the discourse of moaning about management mismanagement.

If we uncover the whole of the discourse (6,000 words) and look at the opening utterances we find the speakers, in the middle of another bout of complaining about a professional job (a conference talk) that went wrong, but we also see them carving out shared knowledge through a humorous and creative use of vague language (*Peekaboo* is the name of an ELT coursebook):

(10.13)

1. Isabel: She sent me her abstracts and I sent the abstracts...Cristina's. **So**, no problem, Cristi... was gonna do a talk on – based on....*Peekaboo* while Joanna was doing one on songs and another one on ballet, **whatever**.
2. Peter: **Blah, blah, blah=**



3 Isabel: =**yeah, blah, blah, blah**. So, then they go to the event,  
and it seems, this is what he says: **Sorry, but** this is all  
gossip.

The informal vague marker and signal of common ground *whatever* (= ‘you know what I mean’+ ‘it doesn’t matter much anyway’) provokes another even more informal vague marker, the humorous string *blah, blah, blah*; both are eloquent signs of the closeness felt by these two colleagues and the taken-for-granted nature of shared background knowledge. Both markers, in this context, also carry disparaging connotations of ‘who cares?’ which intensifies the conspiratorial closeness of the speakers.

Isabel repeats her interlocutor’s vagueness in amplified form. She uses *yeah* to acknowledge the unspoken meanings behind the vague language; she repeats the formulaic triplet *blah blah blah*. Isabel picks up her narrative thread with the her second use of *so*, which marks another stage in the story she is relating. In this context, *so* has a similar additive function to *and* (which occurs a few words later in the same utterance). Isabel’s *Sorry but this is all gossip* suggests she is conscious that the narrative is another episode in the chronicle of complaints about the job. Although, *but* here has a contrastive, apologetic function, but elsewhere, as we have seen, it also functions like *and* and *so* to add bits to the story one is telling.

Isabel’s use of the elliptical *you see what I mean* with which we began the analysis of this encounter (*but that pisses me off. You see what I mean?*) is, in its full discourse context, just one of many signals of conversational mutuality between two speakers who are defining their shared social space in contradistinction to that of their employer (‘us and them’); both Isabel and Peter are members of an insider-group, which at this point are expressing negative, divergent feelings and concepts. The achievement of understanding regarding the problems expressed is more than interpersonal ‘comity’ – it is a tool in the defence and promotion of their professional interests. Interestingly,



they are both L2-users in the employ of a UK based company, using ELF in an EFL context (Mexico); this cultural and geographical distance may intensify the feeling of ‘us and them’.

This activation of social identity through language, including minimal discourse markers and vague language, is built up cumulatively throughout the discourse, which is why it is important to go beyond the minute scrutiny of small extracts of conversation to the wider discourse and socio-cultural context.

### 10.6.3 *Bla-bla-bla, etcetera* and deep commonality

The following extract, which occurs towards the end of this 6,000 word extract between Isabel and Peter, makes the social conflict involved explicit and it also shows the role of vague language in expressing group solidarity:

(10.14)

Isabel. in front of 700 people – who wouldn’t be nervous **I mean just** nervous even if you’re used to giving talks- and **that kind of thing pisses me off** because – everything went just fine – teachers congratulated us at 4. the end – it was even better than last year’s **blah, blah, blah, blah, blah**. So why did they have to find **that kind of things**? That’s what de-motivates me. That and that that they want to deduct money from my salary for using a stupid cell phone; I don’t want a stupid cell phone anymore.

Isabel uses the vague string *that kind of thing* twice (in a non-canonical form) and the creatively amplified vague formula *blah blah blah* which from a triplet becomes a quintet. The lexical item *stupid* (used metaphorically) adds force to her anger and reinforces the use of *pisses me off*. The talk moves on to buying a cassette recorder for professional purposes and Peter comments jokingly: *Next time I have a whiskey with my boss I’m gonna record it*. This sparks off another round of complaining, woven



together with discourse markers and vague language, collocates which cut across the two node phrases we have been examining in this thesis, *sort of* and *you see*:

(10.15)

1. Isabel: **Oh God! These** people! I was **so pissed off** on Friday with... **er**...when I , on Thursday when I got the, when I got the e-mail – the phone **thing**. **The thing** is that by the time I sat down with him I was I had gotten over it. **But** I was **like** ready to kill somebody. Are you gonna take my money? **But** it's not the money, it's the, the whole **thing**
2. Peter: **The way they do it**
3. Isabel: **and the way they do it**

In this extract, we see Isabel repeating her use of taboo language (*pissed off*) but also introducing figurative language and hyperbole (*kill, stupid*) to intensify her affective involvement in the message conveyed. Finally, we may note the example of repetition as a convergence builder in the way the speakers echo *the way they do it*. *The way*, of course, is also a vague marker of shared knowledge (which leaves the hearer to fill in the details) and shared knowledge is implicit in the way in which the pronoun *they* refers to the unmentioned (but well known to both speakers) agents of their dissatisfaction.

If we look at the occurrence of all of the markers of commonality from the three Isabel and Peter extracts as a whole, we find more evidence of a range of vague markers and minimal pragmatic particles which cut across the node phrases *sort of* and *you see*.

	Feature	examples
1	Vague markers of shared knowledge	<i>These people, thing, the whole thing, The way, like, they, that kind of things, blah, blah, blah, whatever.</i>
2	Minimal discourse markers	<i>and, but, so, er , I mean, just, of course, like</i>

**Table 10.8: markers of commonality in Isabel and Peter texts.**

The frequency of vague markers of shared knowledge is a measure of the commonality these two colleagues feel. It is perhaps significant that the personal and professional



revelations the two speakers make are framed by such a plethora of signals of affective commonality.

#### 10.6.4 Deep commonality and frequency counts

Finally, turning to the most frequent lexical items in the Isabel-Peter encounter, as a whole (6,000 words), we find empirical indications, if not confirmation, of the pragmatic description we have made of the speaker's feelings and intentions:

Nearly half (13) of the most frequent lexical items in the Isabel-Peter encounter are all either collocates of *sort of* or *you see* (Table 10. 9):

	Lexical item	RF
1	but	96
2	we	61
3	Er/erm	55
4	no	54
5	They	51
6	because	49
7	Don't	44
8	Talk	39
9	like	39
10	You know	39
11	Thing(s)	30
12	well	30
13	just	38
14	Yeah	26
15	Really	25
16	If	25
17	People	23
18	time	21
19	I think	19
20	need	19
21	see	18
22	I mean	16
23	Yes	16
24	Didn't	13
25	sorry	11
26	us	10
27	problem	7
28	piss off	5
29	freaking	5
30	Freak out	3

**Table 10.9: Most frequent lexical items in Isabel-Peter encounter**



These items are all either interactive discourse markers or vague markers of shared knowledge (*like, thing*). They are all small words that create deep commonality between two speakers who are expressing their feelings towards members outside their in-group. The basic categories in which the discourse is framed are captured in the frequency of 'them and us' words: *we/they/us*. Closer scrutiny confirms the conflictual nature of this discourse encounter.

The most frequent item is *but*, which as we have seen has a range of functions, which build on and extend its core function of expressing contrast; here, the element of disagreement or divergence that *but* carries is foregrounded by the strong presence of other adversarial elements such as negatives (*no, don't*) full lexical items expressing dissatisfaction (*piss off, freak out*) with an uncomfortable situation (*problem*) and items orienting towards the boat-rocking or divergent nature of the discourse (*sorry*). Other items reinforce the intensity of the emotional involvement in the topic (*really*) or its evaluative thrust (*I think, piss off, freak out.*)

Isabel and Peter belong to a community of professional practice; one of the subdiscourses of this community of employees is to evaluate (negatively, as a rule) those in authority. Deep commonality and group solidarity are essential if the risk of such critical discourse is to be kept to a minimum:

Individuals' social behaviour is a joint function of (a) their affiliation to a particular group identity that is salient at that moment in the interaction and (b) their interpretation of the relationship of one's ingroup to salient outgroups.

(Holmes and Meyerhoff, 1999: 177).

The close scrutiny of the details of the Isabel-Peter interaction underlines the manifold ways in which speakers make the conflictual function of griping 'normal'



through strategies of intimacy, mutuality and the allusion to shared knowledge. The more global view of the discourse through the lexical profile of most frequent items confirms the way lexico-grammatical patterns reflect and construct a socio-cultural framework. There are conflicting convergent and divergent tendencies in the discourse, consonant with the basic division between ‘them and us’ that the dialogue sets up and by which it is driven.

## **10.7 The literal use of *you see***

### **10.7.1 Greeks and Turks: the context**

One might imagine the literal use of *you see* (‘see with the eyes’) would present little of interest to the researcher interested in socio-cultural factors in language use (identity, socio-political conflict and so on). Great interest, however, can be found both in its use and in its absence.

If we take the example of the discussion between Greeks and Turks in our corpus we find only two occurrences of *you see* in 10,000 words. It is important to stress that the kind of talk is a context-governed discussion, controlled by a chairperson. There is some direct interaction between the participants but most of the discussion is filtered through the role of referee assumed by the Turkish TV presenter. There is a specific topic to be explored (the Cyprus problem) and the turn-taking is largely controlled by the chair.

On the one hand, this control of the interaction and length of turns is designed to preempt conflict between the speakers, in a socio-political context notorious for the passions it arouses (this was the first public meeting of Greeks and Turks to discuss the problem that divides them in 30 years). On the other hand, the opportunities afforded by direct interaction for dialogic exchange and mitigation and softening of hard feelings is reduced to a minimum. A glance at the word frequency list for this speech event will



provide a context which may explain the absence of pragmatic *you see* and the potential significance of that absence (Table 10.10). This wordlist is an interesting profile of the drift of the discussion between Greeks and Turks: we can infer from the most frequent lexical items in the encounter that the two sides are doing a lot of explaining of their point of view (*I mean, because*) and from the point of view of their respective communities: the plural *Greeks* and *Turks*, not singular; the occurrence of the singular *Greek* or *Turk* is used overwhelmingly to modify plural or collective nouns: *society, community, side, government, Cypriots, Republic, junta, bankers*.

	Lexical item	RF
1	I mean	28
2	because	28
3	Cypriots	17
4	Turkish	16
5	Cyprus	15
6	problem	15
7	other	15
8	both	14
9	federal	14
10	Greeks	14
11	let	14
12	solution	14

**Table 10.10: most frequent lexical items in Greeks and Turks speech event**

The ‘problem’ they are discussing clearly has a lot to do with social or cultural identity. Individuals as agents do not play a big part in the solution of the problem, which being ‘federal’ is another variation on collective definitions of identity. The awareness of the other side and the need to come together is captured in the frequency of *other* and *both* and finally the word *let* indicates the role of constraint and freedom in the whole debate.

### **10.7.2 *You see* between Greeks and Turks**

In this context, it is interesting to see how the two occurrences of the literal *you see* are deployed in the Greek-Turkish encounter. Both instances of *you see* are spoken by a Greek male, Alekos, and both are embedded in the context of conflict. Example 10.16,



refers to one side not ‘seeing’ (literally, because of the green line separating the two sides) the wealth and property of the other side, and thereby feeling an envy which would motivate them to get together to partake of this wealth:

(10.16)

Alekos:      when **you see** what your neighbour has you want the same thing

Alekos explains what he means by this in the next part where he switches from the sense of ‘sight’ to the sense of ‘hearing’:

(10.17)

Alekos:      the problem with the majority of the Turkish Cypriots is that  
                 they don’t get a chance to **hear** about the benefits of a  
                 settlement.

We notice here the complete absence of any mitigating devices or signals of shared knowledge. Well-meaning though the speaker seems to be, he expresses his desire to carve out common ground in the abrupt and deficit-laden: *the problem with the majority of Turkish Cypriots is...* This is potentially a pragmatolinguistic problem – the intention to define the problem is appropriate in this context, but Alekos has chosen a lexico-grammatical way of putting it that is open to misinterpretation. The lexico-grammatical sentence stem *the problem with...is* in L1 use usually collocates with something inanimate, not people: in the concordance for *the problem with* from the BNC (spoken) only 5 of the 24 instances involve people, the rest are objects or situations: whenever *the problem with... is* is used with people, it is used to complain or criticize.

It is noteworthy that the speaker introduces his/her gripe with the pragmatic compound *you know, I mean*, which forms a cluster with *cos* a few words later.

The absence from Alekos’ critique of the Cyprus situation of an utterance launcher or contextualisation cue such as *you know, you see, sort of*, an explanatory *cos/because* or *I mean* may or may not affect his capacity to soften the impact of the negative propositions he is enunciating, but it does raise the question of how English as a Lingua



Franca manages and is going to manage its contextualisation cues if it is to serve the wider cause of international understanding. However, the fact that the pattern *problem with + person + is* has a negative pragmatic prosody in L1 use does not mean it will also be perceived as negative in ELF, unless there's an L1-user present. Attempts to explain one's position to an interlocutor from a different socio-cultural background may end up exacerbating international conflicts rather than assuaging them (Dovring, 1997). Indeed, Alekos' attempt to explain the problem and argue for more exchanges between the two sides provokes a riposte from one of the Turkish participants (out of order, as he is not nominated by the chair) who explains why talking together has been a waste of time:

(10.18)

Ali: **Because...because...because...**all those process proved to be counter-productive.

The finality of the lexical items *all* and *proved* and the negativity of *counter-productive* suggest a strong propositional divergence from the previous speaker who had argued for the importance of the two communities coming together. But the discourse marker *because* adds its own affective weight to the speaker's message. The repetition of *because* (the most common one-word lexical item in the Greek-Turkish speech event, see Table 10.10) foregrounds the speaker's emotional involvement in his explanation for the failure of the long years of bicomunal negotiations between Greeks and Turks. It is a response (rather than a mere reply, Goffman, 1981: chapter 1) to Alekos's contribution, as it not only claims and holds the floor (out of turn) but also invokes shared knowledge (the sad failures of the past) to justify the continued lack of dialogue between the two sides. Finally, *because* is here a response to the surprising twist the discussion has taken (Schiffrin, 1987). *Because* does more than give a logical



explanation for the failures of the past, it is an assertion, fraught with tension, of the rightness of one's position.

The second use of *you see* in its literal sense is again used by the Greek male, Alekos:

(10.19)

Alekos: the majority is not happy with the situation...the...**I mean**...walking down Ledra Street...at...one afternoon with your family and suddenly **you see** a wall over there and you have to stop.

In this case, too, the speaker uses the literal *you see* to refer to aspects of the Cyprus conflict. This time, he refers to 'seeing' the real wall that divides the island along the metaphorical 'green line'. In contrast to his previous utterance containing the literal *you see*, Alekos on this occasion, launches the utterance with the speaker-oriented *I mean*. This softens the bluntness of his expression of disappointment at the division of the island; if we uncover more of the co-text we find additional evidence of Alekos' attempt to mitigate his message in the clustering of the hedges *I mean*, *I think* and *I would argue*:

(10.20)

Alekos: On the Greek side, I **don't think** everybody's happy with the situation. I **would** argue that the majority is not happy with the situation...the...**I mean**...walking down Ledra Street...at...one afternoon with your family and suddenly **you see** a wall over there and you have to stop. This is unnatural; this is...**er**...**er**...going to the 21<sup>st</sup> century...**er**...with rest of the world going on with the...**er**...internet, with the...what's going on with the technology. **I mean**, the world is moving on.

I would argue (to take a modal leaf out of Alekos' book) that the number of hedging devices and other pragmatic markers (including *er*) with which Alekos sprinkles his discourse makes a difference to how his interlocutors receive his message. It allows him to vary the degree of intensity of his message. Certainly, if we apply the 'Troilus



and Cressida' test ('take but degree away, untune that string') we can imagine how discourse might turn to discord. Instead, we have one of the Turkish speakers taking the floor - taking it from the Turk who spoke out of turn - and we notice the uncanny echoing of both Alekos' sentiments as well his lexical repertoire and discourse signals:

(10.21)

1. Ali: Because...because...because...all those process proved to be counter-productive.
2. Hasan: : **May** I also ...I also want to ...I **mean**, I also agree with you that **really** we're not **happy** on **both sides**. I **mean**, let me start counting by those who are not **unhappy**...**er**...**yes, unhappy**. I am **unhappy**; my brother's father-in-law, who is about to die, he wants to see his place in the south; he's **unhappy**.

Hasan launches his support for his Greek counterpart with the polite modal chunk *May I...?* and before he picks up on Alekos' key word *happy* he introduces two further mitigators: *I mean* and *really*; then he picks up on the word *happy*, which he echoes from the previous speaker's utterance and proceeds to play variations on it. He amplifies the key word *side* into the key chunk: *both sides*, which makes a potentially divisive concept (two separate sides) a vehicle for group solidarity (the problem involves both parties). He also repeats Alekos' speaker-oriented discourse marker *I mean* (for the second time). We could also mention the almost subliminal hesitator *er*, which helps project a personality who searches for the right word, having made a slip (*\*not unhappy*) which he repairs immediately, signalling the repair with *yes*. (On this specific L2 use of *yes* see Wong, 2000a and on 'non-native' speaker repair, see Wong, 2000b) In other words, Hasan is a fluent user of English but he is the opposite of the smooth talker.

Even if he had not stated his agreement with his Greek interlocutor as an explicit performative (*I also agree with you*) we would sense that he was converging with



Alekos and that there was reasonably good rapport between them from the clustering of discourse markers in his speech, which mirror a similar process in the speech of his interlocutor and potential opponent.

Some of the dangers of misunderstanding in intercultural talk pointed out by House (1999, 2000) and the contributors to Spencer-Oatey (2000) and Bremer et al (1996) can be pre-empted or repaired by a judicious use of collaborative and addressee-sensitive discourse markers. These little words, as we have seen repeatedly in our scrutiny of their role in L1 use, and now in L2 use, are so many bridges to the 'other' in discourse and especially in potentially conflictual discourse.

In the context of communal conflict in Cyprus, language has been a loaded weapon; thus one may see the role of pragmatic *you see* as potentially useful in building bridges to reduce the gap between the two sides. We have seen how the dialogic behaviour of *you see* gives it a function in discourse of linking different parts of the discourse; but we have also seen it as the hub of a whole complex of pragmatic markers whose role is to achieve and regulate understanding and build rapport between speakers. The Greek and the Turks, like the Chinese in the Spencer-Oatey and Xing study (2000) are locked into their own sense of their separate self-contained communities and tend to resist the perceived threat to their social identities. Both actions and words contribute to the conflict; both sides are afraid to lose not only face but power and property, too, so they barricade themselves behind their imagined communities. Sadly, in the case of Cyprus, the linguistic and cultural barricades became real (Bryant, 2004).

#### **10.8. *You see*: the prosody of convergence and divergence**

In the data we have been looking at, *you see*, whether in its literal, metaphorical or pragmatic uses, has occurred in the context of divergence from a norm and in some cases conflict on an interpersonal or social level. L2-users select *you see* to show an



awareness of diverging from a social or linguistic consensus and as a tool for negotiating ‘uncomfortable’ moments.

In all cases, the ‘expert’ L2-users in my corpus get their message across; we have no cases of pragmatic failure and there are few occasions where the speakers need to ‘let things pass’ (Firth, 1996). The relative infrequency with which L2-users in my corpus choose the pragmatic marker *you see* to express convergence with their interlocutor contrasts with the L1 data we have examined in chapter 9 and matches previous research into L2 conversation (Meierkord, 1998, 2000). Can this infrequency be interpreted as a linguistic and communicative deficit in L2 discourse?

Crystal and Davy warn that overuse or misuse of *you see* may be interpreted, in effect, as failure to understand the speaker and, as a result, the ‘non-native speaker’ should take care when using *you see* in this manner: ‘the foreigner (sic) must be careful not to use the phrase too casually’, for it is very easy to give the impression of being condescending in this pragmatic use of *you see* (Crystal and Davy, 1975: 96). Erman, similarly, refers to views of *you see* and other pragmatic expressions such as *you know* and *I mean* which consider that if the number of pragmatic expressions drops below a certain level in spoken English a speaker’s language will be considered ‘non-authentic’ and will be identified as part of the typical ‘foreignness’ of a ‘non-native speaker’ of that language (Erman, 1987: 6).

Both of these views are ‘native’-centric and do not take into account how L2-users achieve rapport and understanding in their own terms, which may indeed involve the use of *you see* but also other devices for accomplishing the same effects and affects.

### **10.9 *You see* in SUEC: Conclusion**

The evidence from this excursion into L2 uses of *you see* and the examination of discourse on a moment-by-moment basis reinforces the complex nature of the



relationship between pragmatic aims and linguistic resources. Here I will review the new insights we gained in our attempt to elucidate the puzzle of idiomaticity in ELF.

#### **10.9.1. The ‘difficulty’ of idiomaticity**

What is clear across both registers we have been looking at, L1 and L2, is the tendency of formulaic sequences to occur not only as individual lexical items but as sets that form discourse networks that have a powerful effect on pragmatic outcomes. This may throw light on their ‘difficulty’ for L2-users: we are not dealing with formulaic strings in isolation but networks of semantic, discourse and pragmatic prosodies that reflect complex interpersonal relationships and differing degree of commonality. The assumption that it is only ‘colourful idioms’ that are ‘tricky’ for learners may need to be revised in the light of this broader discursal and pragmatic view of minimal idiomatic units and the items with which they regularly combine.

#### **10.9.2 Is L2 fluency different from L1 fluency?**

There is no sense in my data that the speakers lack fluency. In the case of the Greek-Turkish dialogue, it may be hypothesised that greater use of devices such as *you see* and its associated pragmatic markers may contribute to achieving greater rapport and understanding, which, as we have seen, may run the risk of breaking down, with serious political consequences; but this is not a problem of smooth, monologic speech.

The relative infrequency of the range of pragmatic meanings made available by *you see* may thus be seen as a lack of linguistic and communicative resources, within the framework of ELF and the interpersonal relations ELF is called upon to play. On the whole, however, the Greeks and Turks in my corpus are accomplished lingua franca users: they construct normality from a politically abnormal situation using the means at their disposal. These means may not include the whole range of discourse markers and the rich repertoire of pragmatic, interpersonal and cultural uses that we find in L1 use,



but as expert users of English they achieve their own kind of rapport. Although they do not, in the extracts we have looked at, use *you see* as a pragmatic marker at all, they have enough resources to establish and maintain communication if not understanding in a context which is fraught with potential pitfalls and conflicts. If ELF can meet the challenge of successfully building bridges in such politically fraught situations it should be able to cope with more consensual and therefore more easily negotiable communicative contexts

### **10.9.3 The role of idiomaticity in an emerging ELF**

There is no evidence from the analysis of *you see* for taking a prescriptive view either of L1 norms or the ‘reduced’ nature of ELF pragmalinguistic needs. The ELF contexts we have exemplified in this chapter range from the socially intimate (married couples) to the relatively formal (intercommunal political discussion) but in all cases the relational meanings created by small idiomatic units such as pragmatic phrases are as integral to the establishing and maintaining of communication and understanding as are the more obviously transactional items. L2-users are not to be identified in a reductive way with situations of ‘shallow commonality’. There are discourse contexts and even moments in discourse which require the speakers to resort to linguistic means for increasing or decreasing the distance between them. There may be a norm in international uses of ELF which tends towards the transactional or impersonal use of language but this is by no means always the case. The relative depth of commonality will reflect communicative needs.

The question is: do L2-users have available the linguistic resources to move up and down the scale of commonality or do they fall, tongue-tied, into misunderstanding and/or pragmatic failure? How important to this stylistic flexibility are minimal and more extended idiomatic units? It is to the more extended and metaphorical type of



multi-word unit that we now turn, by way of concluding our investigation into the puzzle of idiomaticity in ELF.

.



# Chapter 11

## Creative idiomaticity

*How every fool doth play upon the word*  
*The Merchant of Venice* III, v.

*I wanted to blend the two idioms and come up with something new and original and I*  
*was sort of punished for that!*  
Polish SUE.



## 11. Creative Idiomaticity

### 1. Introduction

In previous chapters, we have been looking at minimal idiomatic units, not only in the sense that these units are made up of just two words (*sort of, you see*) but in the limited degree to which these two-word phrases display the prototypical feature of ‘idiomaticity’: the mismatch between form and meaning: i.e. ‘meanings that cannot be predicted from the meanings of the parts’ (Biber and Conrad, 1999: 183). In this chapter, we move on from the relatively formulaic end of the idiomatic spectrum and focus our attention on other types of multi-word unit, including the traditional idiom, where we find a maximum opacity between form and meaning (*kick the bucket, spill the beans* etc). Taking my cue from the position that sees everyday conversation as essentially creative in an ordinary, dialogic way, I focus on the manipulation of multi-word units, including opaque idioms, by L1 and L2-users of English in order to throw light on the nature of idiomaticity as a whole and the nature of the difficulty idiomaticity presents for even fluent L2 speakers. Drawing on my corpus of L2 spoken discourse, I illustrate the way successful L2 speakers of English share common features with their L1 speaker counterparts but also diverge from them in significant ways, especially in the way they use ‘creative idiomaticity’ for pragmatic purposes. The ‘difficulty’ of idiomaticity for L2-users speakers is identified as a product of the contradictory linguistic nature of lexico-grammar and of its deep roots in the socio-cultural context of particular speech communities.

#### 11.1 The idiomatic puzzle

In the first 100,000 words of my L2-user corpus there are virtually no grammatical errors. There are, however, 40 non-canonical versions of idiomatic phraseology (Table 11.1)



Type	L1 version	L2 variation
Prepositional phrases	for some stupid reason by heart it's a hassle at the back of my mind funnily enough at the weekend in the long-run for the time being in my (personal) opinion	for one stupid reason from my heart it's a bustle back in my head funny enough in the weekend on the long-run by the time being on my personal opinion
Conversational gambits	what do we call how should I know?	how do we call how could I know?
Collocations	raise an eyebrow the ordinary user of English a standard, regular question got to the point/made a point leaking oil pre-empt problems do such a thing a great advance on in a just manner	lift an eyebrow the pedestrian user of English a staple question got into a point missing oil waylay problems make such a thing a great advancement on in a justice manner
Binomials, trinomials	in such and such a town wining and dining	In this and this town Dining and wining
Colourful Idioms	I couldn't make head or tail of it a stroke of good luck	I couldn't make heads or tails of it a streak of good luck
Proverbs and sayings	none	
Quotations and allusions	none	
Discourse Markers	for my part on the other hand	in my part on the contrary
Phrasal verbs	make their own mind up hand in	make their own mind hand
Colligations	I couldn't care less making mince-meat of there's no going back on take a chance oriented towards I'm not bothering you established (that) rapport discuss stick in their memory (=I didn't think twice about it) a few tops that look like that	I could care less making a mince-meat of there is no return from take chance oriented for I don't bother you made those rapports discuss about stick to their memory I didn't think about it twice a few tops looking like that
Compounds	back-up copies side-effect	security copies a side-product

**Table 11.1: Non-canonical idiomaticity in SUEC**



Why is creative idiomaticity such a rare occurrence in L2 and why are colourful idioms and other multi-word units error-prone in L2 discourse? To begin to answer this question, I will define the sense in which I am using ‘creative idiomaticity’ in this chapter.

## **11.2 Definitions**

One can distinguish four types of creativity in the literature on phraseology:

### **Type 1: TG creativity**

Chomsky (1965), building on the work of Humboldt (1836/1999), developed a concept of ‘creativity’ which refers to the ability of the ‘ideal native-speaker’ to generate an infinitive number of correct sentences from a finite set of rules. The idiomatic component of the lexicon was considered to be the ‘uncreative’ (and hence ‘anomalous’) part of the system, as idiomatic phrases were not analyzable according to the model of transformational-generative grammar (Chafe, 1968). The irony of the Chomskyan ‘idealised native speaker’ is that L2-users, in the real world, frequently achieve declarative knowledge of the grammatical system and are able to produce an infinitive number of correct sentences. L2-users, seem to differ from L1-users in the real world in that area of language considered peripheral by the generative model: idiomaticity. ‘Generative’ creativity is not the type of creativity I focus on in this chapter.

### **Type 2: Regular variation**

In contrast to the Chomskyan paradigm, it is precisely in the area of idiomaticity where linguists working within performance models of description see the greatest creativity. For Fernando, idioms ‘attract wordplay’ (Fernando, 1996: 2) and ‘native-speaker’ competence involves knowing when creative idiomaticity permits some modifications but not others (Kjellmer, 1991).



Fernando (1996) and Moon (1998) describe regular forms of creativity in the use of pre-fabricated language, forms of creativity which are built into the linguistic system and are therefore, to a large extent, predictable (e.g. we can say *on and off / off and on; built-in/in-built; drag your feet/heels; take the biscuit/take the cake*). These variations on fixed phrases are integral parts of the linguistic system and are well established members of the idiomatic canon. 'Regular variation' of idiomatic phrases is not the focus of attention in this chapter.

#### Type 3: Literary creativity

The way poets and prose writers exploit rhetorical and figurative devices (repetition, hyperbole, metonymy, metaphor etc) has been thoroughly researched by literary critics. Many writers from 'non-native' English backgrounds have demonstrated virtuosity in this kind of creativity and have been awarded Nobel and Booker prizes for their work (Davies, 2003:90). This is not what I mean by 'creativity' in this chapter, though it overlaps with the 'art of common talk' (Carter, 2004).

#### Type 4: The creativity of everyday speech

The fourth type of creativity is the opposite of Type 1, more personal and idiosyncratic than type 2 and less deliberate and artful than Type 3; the 'poetry of everyday speech' (Gibbs, 1994: 265; Hall, 2001: 69) is the individual's capacity to be inventive, often on a one-off basis, by coming up with a unique re-fashioning of a fixed phrase for pragmatic purposes. Zili He (1989) defines 'creative idiomaticity' in the following terms:

the ingenious manipulation of idiomatic expressions normally taken as fixed, which requires cultural or literary awareness and which effects all sorts of subtle variations and surprises.

(He, 1989: 150).



Thus, while it is true that much of phraseology is routine and repetitive (Coulmas, 1981, Aijmer, 1996) there are significant areas of phraseology that are constantly re-formed in original ways in everyday discourse:

scrutiny of naturally occurring, informal conversational data...appears to refute the notion that speakers are not normally creative in their daily uses of language and that certain fixed linguistic structures, idioms in particular, cannot be unfixed.

(Carter, 1997: 162)

Conversational creativity extends beyond the ability to manipulate idiomatic language in inventive ways: creativity is an inherent quality in everyday speech, not the preserve of linguistically gifted individuals:

it is not a capacity of special people but a special capacity of all people.

(Carter and McCarthy, 2004: 83).

This ordinary, conversational creativity is manifested in the use of figures of speech and imagery (similes, metaphors), hyperbole, slang expressions, idioms, punning and repetition and is the outcome of contextualised interaction and the co-construction of discourse, not a performance by a gifted individual (Tannen, 1989; Partington, 1996; Moon, 1998; Hall, 2001; Norrick, 2001; Carter, 2004).

Creativity in this broad sense is usually indicative of affective convergence and commonality of viewpoint on the part of the interlocutors, though it can also be a symptom of affective divergence from common ground. Carter and McCarthy make a useful distinction between the more overt manifestations of spoken creativity (metaphorical language, wordplay) on the one hand and the more covert or subliminal creativity of repetition (parallelisms, echoes).

While the creativity of everyday speech, including 'creative idiomaticity', extends the rhetorical capacity of the L1-user, it adds yet another layer of difficulty for the



learner: there are variations on idioms, sayings and proverbs which are created on the spur of the moment and are quite unpredictable. Such moments of idiomatic creativity are invariably the product of interaction between the speakers and what is felt to be appropriate in a particular context; though some individuals may be more inventive in producing such wordplay than others, the creative utterance is a kind of co-construction between speaker and hearer. In Bakhtin's terms, the creative utterance anticipates the response of the addressee (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986); it is a dialogic process constrained by social context, not a lone cognitive activity inside the head of the gifted individual: 'All understanding is constrained by borders' (Holquist, in Bakhtin, 1986: xix) and the L2-user must learn where the borders begin and end.

Examples 11.1-11.3, all uttered by L1-users, depend on shared knowledge (both substantive and procedural, situated and general) and are thus the outcome of co-operation between speaker and hearer, where the conventional boundaries of phraseology are stretched or redefined:

(11.1)

It's raining kitten and puppies

(11.2)

What seems to have got twisted is somebody's knickers

(11.3)

It's like putting the cat before the horse

(author's data)

Language play and creativity often take the form of verbal duels, informal contests of wit and repartee, jokes, riddles, puns, repetitions and variations of previous language, and a whole range of ways of playing with formulaic language and especially idioms which I refer to as creative idiomaticity. Sperber and Wilson (1981) have seen this in terms of echoic speech and irony while others see it an essential feature of common talk (Carter, 2004; see also Tannen, 1987, 1989).



Language play is full of contradictions. It can serve collaboration and convergence between interlocutors and it can be aggressive and disruptive (Beltz, 2001). It involves the flouting of expectations of conventional regularities in language but depends on an intimate familiarity with those conventions. The disruptive function of language play is often humorous but is often seen as deflating official solemnity and even subverting authority (Bakhtin, 1984). Indeed, Beltz argues that the inversion of the established order whether grammatical, semantic or pragmatic may be an appropriate interpretive frame for investigations of learner identity and agency in post-‘native speaker’ approaches to SLA where learners are not necessarily conceptualized as ‘defective communicators in pursuit of an idealized target language native speaker norm’ (Beltz, 2001: 131).

### 11.3 Creativity and in-group membership

*For I am proverb'd with a grandsire phrase;*

*I'll be a candle-holder, and look on.*

*Romeo and Juliet*, Act 1, scene 4.

In Example (11.4) the participants are at an international conference in Brazil. It is the coffee break. Bill is a professor of applied linguistics and Ignatio, a Brazilian teacher, would like to ask him about postgraduate study in the UK.

(11.4)

1. Bill: Well, I'll have to be going now
2. Luke: Yes, <we'll arise and go now>
3. Bill: I should have gone some time ago
4. Jane: This is still working this is still running,  
this is running ...the tape is...
5. Luke: <What's the use of running>?
6. Rob: <Your conversation may be recorded;  
quality control>
7. Ignatio: When will I know the outcome?



8. Bill: I'll just go and have a look at the book  
stand
9. Luke: <Make your stand there OK, jolly good>
11. Rob: he's just got a suspicious mind
11. Bill: Yes
12. Luke: (*sings*) [<caught in a trap>]
13. Ignatio: [Are you, are you]
14. Rob: when he sings...there are some words he  
doesn't quite know and he glosses over them  
(*sings*) ...<we can't go on together with  
suspicious minds>.

Ignatio is present at a speech event where the L1 speakers co-construct the dialogue by drawing on a number of cultural allusions and then playing on the literal and metaphorical meanings of these lexical items. He looks on, like Romeo at the Capulets' ball, while the L1-users delight in echoic mention of poetry, pop-music, fixed expressions, quotations and fragments from other genres.

The L1-users confirm the depth of the commonality that binds them by drawing on the common store of idiomatic allusions and by deploying a range of devices for reinforcing convergence. I will focus here on the 'dialogic' elements in the conversation, which are interwoven throughout the discourse, across different speaker turns, and thus act as a device for building discourse coherence.

The dialogue includes 'echoic mention' of:

-a poem by Yeats: *The Lake Isle of Innisfree: I will arise and go now...*

-fixed expressions: *to make a stand, what's the use of running?*

-A pop-song: *Suspicious Minds*

-an allusion to a more formal genre: *your conversation may be recorded.*

-An ironic echo of an informal and socially distinct genre: *jolly good.*

The discourse between the L1-users is pieced together incrementally and is held together from turn to turn through the manipulation of fixed expressions. Luke's poetic



statement of intention, *we will arise and go now* initiates the sequence of dialogic wordplay; the allusion is taken up by Bill, who uses it to bring the conversation back to the prosaic here-and-now: *I should have gone some time ago*. A second stretch of conversation is also given unity by creative wordplay across turns. Jane makes a literal, declarative statement about the fact that the tape-recorder is still *running* (lines 3-4). Luke picks up this lexical item *running* and ‘metaphoricises’ it; the speaker transforms a literal expression, *running*, to an idiomatic allusion: *what’s the use of running?* We see a similar process a few utterances later when the literal lexical item *stand* (as in *book-stand*) is idiomaticised into *make a stand* (to resist). Rob takes Luke’s play on *stand* as ironic and replies *with he’s just got a suspicious mind*. Luke extends the allusion of *suspicious minds* to the song by Elvis Presley by quoting a catchphrase from the song: *(we’re) caught in a trap*. Rob synthesises the mock-conflict of the first two speakers by quoting a longer chunk from the same song: *we can’t go on together with suspicious minds*.

The normal conversation has been taken over by a playful dialogue largely strung together with echoes of generic varieties, in which the ‘native-speakers’ dominate; the L2-user, Ignatio, hardly gets a word in edgeways; he does not get involved in the dialogic wordplay. The reason for this peripheralisation of the L2-user in such contexts might be that creativity with institutionalized phrases can only be indulged in given exposure to a set of culturally familiar scenarios (Tannen, 1989: 43) or as Moon puts it:

interpretation relies on knowledge of the schemas underlying the canonical forms; the existence of this phenomenon of variation increases the decoding and recognition problems which face ‘non-native speakers’ - or indeed anyone unfamiliar with a particular expression; encoding is even more of a problem, since any parameters of the realizations of such schemas are unmapped and may be unmappable.

(Moon: 1998: 168)



The echoes of diverse generic forms in conversation can be seen as a kind of dialogue between the expected uses and connotations of a word or phrase and the use actually selected (or invented) by the speaker in a specific instance (Louw, 1993); the ironic humour is also the result of the difference between previous 'use' and present 'mention' (Sperber and Wilson, 1981) and the ironic effect of prosodic features such as stress, loudness, tone of voice and snatches of melody from old, familiar tunes (Kreuz and Roberts, 1995). L1 informal conversation is dialogic in that the words the speakers use are 'saturated' by previous use, the speakers engage in a 'verbal masquerade'; the words are 'shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents' (Bakhtin, 1981: 276/293). The speakers have been 'born into an environment in which the air is already aswarm with names', they are 'constantly expressing a plenitude of meanings, some intended, others of which (they) are not aware' (Holquist, 1981: xx).

Another intriguing suggestion here is that 'idiomaticity attracts idiomaticity' – an idiomatic allusion does not occur in isolation but in bunches: the idiomatic wordplay of one speaker stimulates a response in kind by other speakers. If the L2-user is to take part in this diffuse interplay of idiomatic language he or she must be able to sustain this kind of interaction across turns and across idiomatic types. This dialogic interplay of forms, meanings and intentions and punning echoes of previous use, construct a kind of interplay between constraint and creativity:

Speech genres provide a good example of this relative degree of freedom: the better we know possible variants of the genres that are appropriate to a given situation, the more choice we have among them. Up to a point we may play with speech genres, but we cannot avoid being generic. There is no pure spontaneity, for breaking frames depends on the existence of frames.

(Holquist, 1986: xix)



Thus, creativity presupposes an important role for the speech community, the knowledge of speech genres and the subliminal memory of frequent encounters with idiomatic strings in pragmatic contexts; the linguistic configuration of pragmatic meanings or genres is the result of recurrent experience from an early age or in adulthood. The knowledge of informal conversation and the place of idiomaticity in the sub-genre of ‘banter’ between friends is similarly the fruit of long socio-historical processes and repeated encounters with the members of the speech community who express themselves through this repertoire of genres (Titone and Connine, 1999: 1664; Wray, 2002: 101-102). The re-construction of this recurrent life-long experience by EFL students in the uncluttered space of classroom learning for short spurts of time, in a context poor in human interaction, is a formidable task indeed, requiring ‘immense talent and dedication’ (Sinclair, 1992: 496). In the next section, we look at a SUE who seems to have achieved the ‘formidable task’ of idiomatic competence.

#### **11.4. Re-enter the L2-user**

In Example 11.5, Simon, whose L1s are Greek and Spanish, is in conversation with a ‘native-speaker’ of English; both speakers manipulate a shared knowledge of idioms to create humour and speaker convergence.

(11.5)

Dimitri: There is this concept of work ethic, to do something because you want to do it and if you want to do it well; there’s the old English saying <if a job’s worth doing it’s worth doing well>...er...er...

Luke: Now it seems the...er...motto is more like <if you’re going to do something, do it as profitably as possible>

Dimitri: which usually tends to be well

Luke : it...it...it can help

Dimitri : because of competition; competition makes it that if you don’t do it well, <forget about it>

Luke : You see, another saying which I think the Americans have



is [<if it ain't broke...>]

Dimitri: [<..don't fix it!>]

It is noteworthy that in this exchange, it is the L2 speaker who initiates the sequence of idiomatic expressions and indeed demonstrates a meta-idiomatic awareness in referring explicitly to the fact that he is resurrecting a somewhat 'musty' expression: *there's the old English saying...* The L1-user takes up the conscious 'mention' of idioms in his use of the word *motto* and thus initiates an example of the process McCarthy (1998) refers to as 're-lexicalisation'; in contrast to the idiomatic stereotype, it is the L1-user who responds to the L2-user's variation on a canonical formula: the saying *if a job's worth doing, it's worth doing well* (lines 5-6), which, untypically (in L1 use, at least), is produced in its complete form and referred to metalinguistically: *the old English saying*.

Convergence is clearly established between the two interlocutors, through these idiomatic devices. The convergence is intensified by Dimitri's relative clause: *which usually tends to be well*, which dovetails neatly across turns with his interlocutor's utterance. At the same time, Dimitri's completion of Luke's variation on a well-known saying (line 7, '*which...*') constitutes a variation on a variation; (on non-defining relative clauses in conversation as a discourse-building device, see Tao and McCarthy, 2001).

The idiomatic thread is taken up again in Dimitri's contributing yet another verbal echo of the original saying in *if you don't do it well* followed by a syntactic variation: *forget about it*. The round of idiomatic one-upmanship is taken in another direction by the L1-user, who introduces an echoic and elliptical mention of another saying: *If it ain't broke (don't fix it)* – the rest of the fragment is completed by his L2 speaker interlocutor. Thus, the two speakers weave in and out of each other's utterances, co-constructing the



dialogue, through their shared knowledge of both grammatical and idiomatic devices. It is ELF in full flight, with the interlocutors in perfect dialogic counterpoint.

### 11.5 The idiomatic deficit again.

However, the course of verbal play does not always run so smooth for proficient L2-users. The persistence of the ‘deficit’ view of L2-user phraseology may cause the kind of fluent, creative idiomaticity displayed by Simon to boomerang in pragmatic terms.

The kind of resistance from ‘native-speakers’ that ‘non-native’ creative use of English may encounter is captured in the following description by a Polish SUE:

(11.6)

Greg: when you try and play with idioms, like those fixed ones...er...you know there was this ...this party we had, you know, <dine and wine> excessive, I would say, the...erm...next day I said that...something like ...er... <I was drinking like a horse> and ...er...then I was told that you say <drink like a fish> but <eat like a horse> and ...er...my intention was that there was so much to drink and to eat that I wanted to ...I wanted to blend the two idioms and come up with something new and original and I was sort of <punished> for that (*laughs*)

The speaker bemoans the fact that his fabrication of what he refers to as a ‘blend’ – *drinking like a horse*, backfired (Tannen, 1989: 41; see also Bauer, 1983, on ‘blends’ as a regular type of word-formation). It was perceived as an error by his ‘native-speaker’ interlocutor. But as Tannen points out, the blending of two or more set expressions is normal and meaningful in ‘native-speaker’ discourse: ‘the language is mistake-proof’ says Tannen (1989: 42) but I would add that it is ‘mistake-proof’ *for the L1-user* but it is clearly not ‘mistake proof’ for the L2-user of ELF, as the experience of the Polish bilingual user testifies This may have something to do with the fact that L1-users make the pragmatics of ‘mentioning’ clear (through phonological features, gesture as well as the lexical choices made in the co-text as a whole) while the L2-



users may fail to signal the fact that they are ‘mentioning’ and are thus heard as ‘using’ an expression.

It is also possible, of course, that the speaker’s attempt at being witty with idioms was infelicitous because the blend is simply not funny: it might be that it was not received by the ‘native-speaker’ interlocutor as either ‘ingenious’ or ‘subtle’ and the only ‘surprise’ element involved was that the speaker thought it was witty in the first place. As Carter (1997, 1999) and Norrick (1984) point out there is an element of risk in displays of wit in informal conversation and the embarrassing spectre of an attempted witticism falling flat is ever-present, for both L1- and L2-users (Carter, 1999: 209).

It may well be that the risks involved when an L2-user undertakes to be playfully metaphorical in English are greater than when an L2-user does so, simply because of limited linguistic resources; there may also be socio-cultural factors at work which influence the attitude of the interlocutor in terms of ownership of the language and questions of identity (Joseph, 2004: 76ff). When a proficient user of ELF attempts to play this game of humorous unpacking of idiomatic expressions the result is often pragmatic failure – the subliminal becomes conscious, the implicit becomes explicit and the transgression is not seen as ‘creative play’ but as an error:

(11.7)

Nick: as a ‘non-native speaker’ I am not as free as native speakers to use the language creatively and idiomatically. For instance, yesterday I said something to a group of teachers and one of them commented <you can say that again!> Humorously, I said <OK, I’ll say it again> and repeated myself more emphatically - embarrassingly, she said, <no, I actually meant that I agreed with you>. The assumption was, of course, that the meaning of the idiom had been lost on me!  
(Greek SUE).



It is ironic that the speaker's attempts at verbal play are misconstrued as linguistic incompetence, given a similar rhetorical ploy in the following excerpt from the popular British comedy series, *Fawlty Towers*. In Example 11.8, Basil Fawlty, 'unpacks' or literalises the set expression *you can say that again* in an identical fashion to the proficient user of ELF in the extract above, but Fawlty, as is his wont, manipulates the idiom with aplomb:

(11.8)

1. Sybil: No, Polly doesn't forget things
2. Basil: Doesn't she ?
3. Sybil: Can you remember the last time she did ?
4. Basil: No, I can't but then my memory isn't very good
5. Sybil: <You can say that again>
6. Basil: <Can I dear> ? <Oh, thank you>...I've forgotten what it was.

(Cleese and Booth, 1975)

Basil's playful literalising of *you can say that again* does not establish commonality with his wife Sybil but creates ironic distance. Irony, sarcasm and humour are some of the attitudinal effects available through the creative use of idiomaticity. This example from *Fawlty Towers* illustrates the way idiomatic creativity and phonological manipulation reinforce each other to create these effects: Basil's ironic response to Sybil depends on his ignoring the stress on *that* which the conventional, idiomatic meaning of *you can say that again* requires; instead, Basil responds as if Sybil had stressed *again*, which would be the expected nuclear stress if the string *you can say that again* were being selected on the open choice principle. Basil also breaks a rule that fixed expressions are not normally followed by tags (Fernando and Flavell, 1981):

A: You can take a horse to water...

B: Oh, \* can you?



Both players in this game of verbal ping-pong also know the semantic and pragmatic effect of such bending of the rules; they also share an awareness of the (especially British) ironic tone of voice (Kreuz and Roberts, 1995): Basil's 'Can I dear? Oh, thank you...' is in phonological quotation marks:

Every word used 'with conditions attached', every word enclosed in intonational quotation marks, is likewise an intentional hybrid.

(Bakhtin, 1981: 76).

Basil's response is 'double-accented' and the whole exchange is a good example of the dialogic nature of the utterance and even of individual lexical items (Bakhtin, 1981: 304). The to-and-fro of meanings embodied in words, idiomatic phrases and phonology is a constitutive feature of L1 speaker discourse; competence in manipulating the mesh of collocational and phonological potential for ironic or echoic effect is intimately bound up with what it means to be a fluent member of a speech community. In my corpus, in contrast to the L1-user's subliminal phraseological competence, highly proficient L2-users often demonstrate a self-consciousness when producing collocations, which is not apparent on the grammatical level:

(11.9)

1. Tomas: I wouldn't lift - what is it, an eyebrow? What is it that you do?
2. Luke: <Raise an eyebrow>
3. Tomas: <Raise an eyebrow>. I wouldn't <raise an eyebrow>

Example 11.10 shows another SUE expressing hesitation and doubt in the context of creative collocations:

(11.10)

1. Tania: They just brought the whole conference down ...er...the <whole house>, you would say, is that the right idiom?
2. Luke: <Brought the house down>.
3. Tania: Yeah, yeah, that's right



These examples suggest that the process of constructing idiomatic collocation, for the L2-user, may be more analytic than holistic (Wray, 2002: 205-211).

### 11.6 Sauce for the goose

*Nursery rhymes and songs are very much the basis of my own English and allow me to understand and share things cultural that to a great extent surprise some natives: 'You're not supposed to know things like Little Jack Horner and Little Miss Muffet, José!'. (José, SUE, teacher trainer, Uruguay)*

What is considered creative in the mouth of the L1-user is often seen as a deviation in the mouth of even the most advanced successful bilingual user of the language. Thus, the acceptability or otherwise of creative collocations has very much to do with the perceived 'authenticity' of the utterance and the authority bestowed upon those who embody such 'authenticity' (Widdowson, 1998). It is ironic that the L2 speaker's attempts at verbal play are misconstrued as linguistic incompetence. The L2-user speaker, as Thomas (1982), points out does not seem to have the same rights to break the rules as does the 'native-speaker':

teachers and linguists fail to admit the possibility of a foreign student's flouting conventions in the same way as they fail to allow him/her to innovate linguistically – in fact, the foreign learner is usually expected to be hypercorrect, both grammatically and pragmatically.

(Thomas, 1982: 96; see also: Davies, 2003: 90, 109).

Prabhu (1995) makes a similar point: while the learner has the power to learn collocations (however laborious the task) he or she does not have the power to 'transgress the shared system':

but insofar as one sees oneself as (or is seen to be) a learner, not a participant of the shared system, one's transgressions count as deviations from the shared system (failure to achieve replication) not contributions to / influence on it.

(Prabhu, 1995 : 288).



This ability to transgress the shared system is a kind of creative versatility that marks out the speaker as a member of a cultural club to which access is limited.

### 11.7 Does the ‘native-speaker’ exist?

These assumptions about creativity in L1 and L2 speaker discourse were explored in a survey which I conducted with 400 teachers of English. In this final section I will report one more instance of collocational creativity by successful users of ELF and report the results of the survey into how this creativity was received by L1 and L2-users from around the world

Here are two examples of unusual collocations with the prepositional verb, *bump into* produced by two different L2 speakers:

(11.11)

I’m always very glad when for example I **bump into**  
a new expression ...

(11.12)

this means that he or she is going to **bump into**  
‘although’ at least thirteen times.

Sensing that something was not quite as one would have expected with these collocations, I looked up *bump into* in a corpus-based dictionary (Rundell, 2002). According to this dictionary, *bump into* does not normally collocate with abstract nouns such as *a new expression* or a word like *although*. Here is part of the dictionary entry for this verb:

#### **Bump into (sb)**

To meet someone unexpectedly

I bumped into your mother at the supermarket

#### **Bump into (sth)**

To accidentally hit against something

As I turned round, I bumped into a filing cabinet

(Rundell : 2002)



Turning, however, to the concordance lines for *bump into* in the British National Corpus, which is an L1-user corpus, I found these attested examples of *bump into*:

(11.13)

The way sound and vision copulate is what makes their music and ideas always a thrill to bump into.

(11.14)

Something tells me you may bump into a little politics on the way.

(BNC).

On the face of it, it seemed that what was possible for L1-users was ‘out of bounds’ for L2-users.

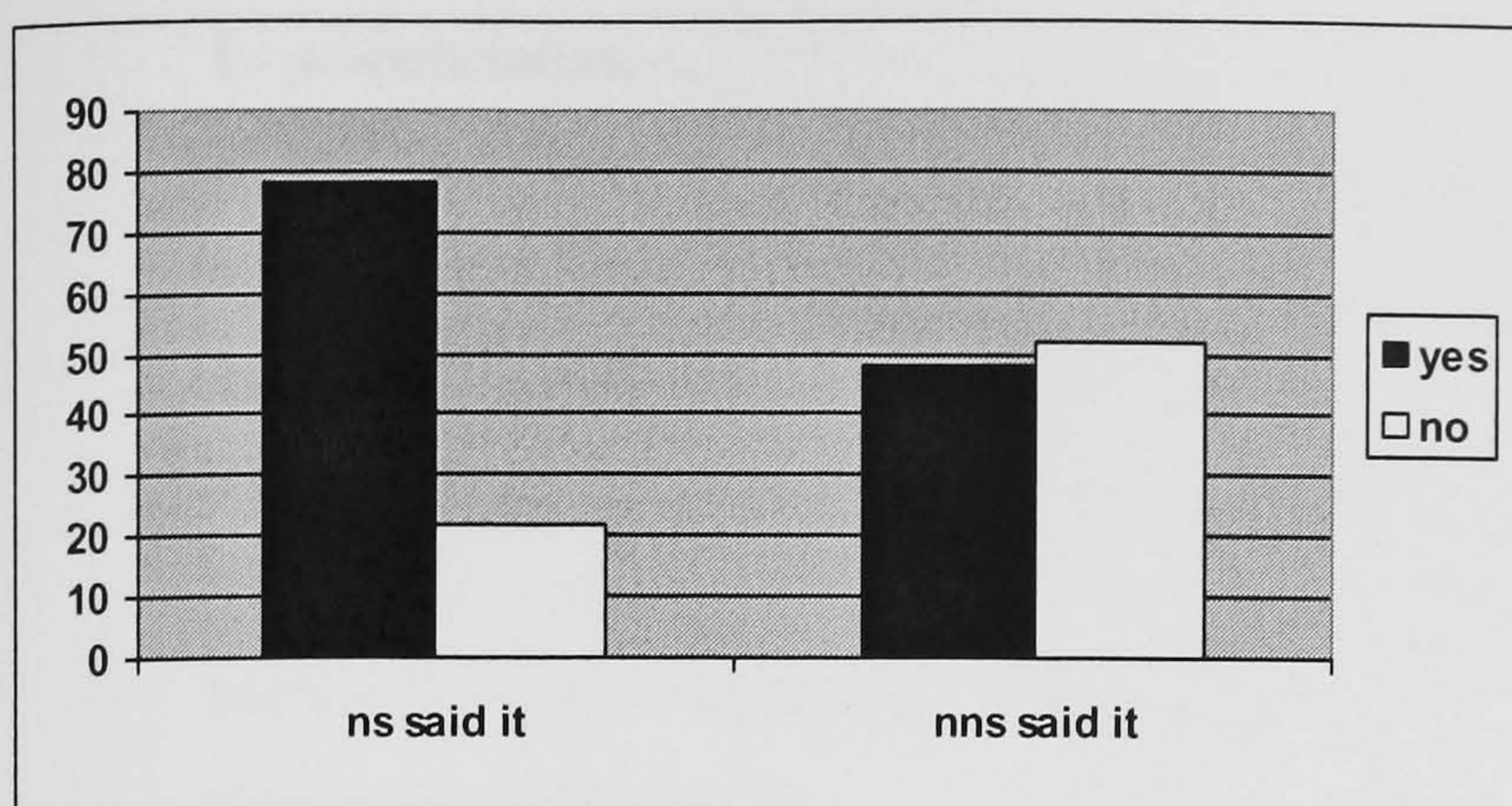
In order to investigate this hypothesis, I conducted an e-mail survey of 400 teachers and other ELT professionals, L1 and L2-users, from a wide range of countries, to gauge attitudes towards creativity in ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ speakers. The question I set was very simple (Figure 11.1):

Would you say this sentence, produced by a <b>native speaker</b> , is 'acceptable' English?	
<i>I'm always very glad when for example I bump into a new expression ...</i>	
Yes _____	No _____
Underline: I am a native/non-speaker of English	

Figure 11.1: *bump into* questionnaire.

I sent out the question in two versions: 200 teachers were informed that the sentence had been produced by a ‘native-speaker’ and the other 200 were told it had been produced by a ‘non-native speaker’. The aggregate responses to these questions are summed up in Figure 11.2:





**Figure 11.2: ‘native/non-native speakers’ response to acceptability of *bump into a new expression* (% (400 responses))**

This survey seems to confirm the existence of a contradiction in what is considered legitimate for ‘native-speakers’ and ‘non-native speakers’ to do with collocation. When my respondents thought the sample utterance belonged to a ‘native-speaker’ they were overwhelmingly positive in their attitude; the opposite was true in the case where the speaker was assumed to be a ‘non-native speaker’. Many respondents added comments explaining their choice of answer; some of these explicitly articulate a different attitude to creativity in English when the language is L1 and when it is L2; the following comment from an L1-user is typical: ‘I must admit I’d be happier with this from a NS than a NNS!’

It seems the tiny negative particle ‘non’ can make a big difference to people’s attitudes towards creativity in language use. The results of the questionnaire suggest that the construct of the ‘native-speaker’ is alive and well, at least in the minds of 400 L1- and L2-users.

The simultaneous existence of collocational norms and the potential for violating these norms is a defining feature of L1 competence and, at the same time – and paradoxically – it seems to be, as Medgyes (1994) has argued, one of the defining features of the limits of ‘non-native’ competence, even at advanced levels. Medgyes suggests that the proficient bilingual speaker is distinguishable from the ‘native-speaker’ in the following areas:



1. pronunciation.
2. lack of idiomaticity, colloquialisms and catch-phrases.
3. gaps in conceptual knowledge from childhood (stories, games, nursery rhymes, basic school subjects)
4. less efficient use of repetition and routine language
5. lack of awareness of cultural context – referential gaps in knowledge of prevailing cultural ins and outs.

(Medgyes, 1994: 14-15)

Although the points listed by Medgyes seem to be discrete items, they are in fact closely related. Many writers, for example, have identified the way idiomaticity is embedded in culture (e.g. Alexander, 1983; 1989; 1992; He, 1989); this culture carries the conceptual knowledge which a child begins to acquire at school and at bedtime, through playground games and nursery rhymes. It is on this kind of knowledge that the later, more sophisticated creative play is built. The L1 speaker possesses idiomatic competence, of which creative idiomaticity is the most sophisticated expression, after years of immersion, from childhood to adulthood, in the cultural context in which the language is embedded. Expressions of irony, sarcasm or humour, packaged in their appropriate phonology and repeated countless times, become routinized conventions in everyday discourse (Coulmas, 1979, 1981a).

## **11.8 Conclusion**

### **11.8.1 The ‘difficulty of idiomaticity**

In this chapter, I have identified what I see as a paradox at work in the relationship between ENL and ELF, whereby the same linguistic features produce opposite effects in L1 and L2 speakers. Medgyes’ list of ‘problem areas’ for proficient users of ELF is a measure of the distance ‘non-native’ speakers (as Medgyes calls them) would have to travel to achieve the authority to bend the rules of the language, in a spirit of carnivalesque creativity, without ‘raising an eyebrow’ in their interlocutor.



The difficulty of acquiring and implementing idiomatic shared knowledge is both linguistic and socio-linguistic – it has as much to do with attitudes and culture as it has to do with language forms and meanings. Some of the reasons, why creative idiomaticity is not easily available to even proficient L2-users are the following:

L2 speakers of English:

1. are not cultural insiders; they do not belong to the same speech community as L1-users and so do not have shared knowledge of idiom and culture
2. were not exposed to idioms and cultural scenarios in childhood; they do not share the rhymes, stories, games, myths and legends of childhood (Tannen, 1989: 43)
3. do not use idiomatic language to ‘network’ and create networks with their interlocutor (Dörnyei et al, 2004: 90).
4. do not automatically fill the conceptual gaps left by situational ellipsis
5. engage less frequently in intimate interpersonal relations through English than L1-users do
6. do not possess the faultless phonological competence required in order to bring off creative idiomaticity ‘with aplomb’; they often sound unnatural when they use colourful idioms
7. are slower and less fluent when they try to use colourful idioms: they do not produce idioms spontaneously as holistic chunks but piece them together bit by bit (Wray, 2002: 211); they have conscious rather than subliminal knowledge of colourful idioms
8. are not sure of the limits of canonical idioms and their regular variations
9. are perceived as lacking the authority to break the rules of English
10. are self-conscious about the likelihood of making errors in phraseology and therefore adopt an avoidance strategy.



### 11.8.2 Is L2 fluency different from L1 fluency?

If one reverses the propositions (1-10) above one has a fairly good description of the foundations of ‘native-like fluency’, defined linguistically and socio-culturally. L1-user fluency is built on the four kinds of ‘shared knowledge’ put forward by Sinclair (1992: 496-498): 1. a subliminal mastery of phraseology. 2. knowledge of grammar and lexis. 3. linguistic inference (activated by cohesive devices such as ellipsis and substitution). 4. aspects of the culture, signaled nowhere in the text, but which just have to be known. To Sinclair’s list, we could add (1) ‘situational ellipsis’, where items not signaled in the text are recoverable not from the co-text but from the wider context of situation (Carter and McCarthy, 1995b) and (2) a tendency for idiomatic phenomena to appear in networks rather than in single one-off occurrences. The subliminal command of thousands of phrases or lexical sentences stems (Pawley and Syder, 1983) is only the tip of the iceberg of ‘native-like fluency’: linguistic and cultural inference, lexical cohesion, an intuitive awareness of connotation, skillful use of repetition, quotative competence and, finally, the weaving together of all these features in the co-production of on-line speech, are all part of the big picture of L1 fluency. Fluency in this framework involves an incremental co-construction of discourse by speakers who, rather than fulfilling a grand grammatical design, seem to be stitching together chunks of language as and when the need arises. This rhapsodic discourse is based on a dialogic orientation towards language and the other speaker and is thus:

based on a here-and-now view of what the speaker is doing;  
and this perception co-operatively takes into account the  
listener’s here-and-now point of view  
(Brazil, 1995: 222-223).

The challenge of on-line processing of creative language in spontaneous speech and the ‘here-and-now intersubjectivity of dialogue’ (Rommetweit, 1979: 94) may explain why



wordplay is not everybody's conversational cup-of-tea; the processing effort invested in interpreting the unusual combination of words and meanings is not always rewarded with a successful pragmatic outcome e.g. the pleasure in the achievement of a humorous effect, an economical expression of complex ideas or the yoking together of heterogeneous ideas (Norrick, 1984). Disappointment and frustration are more likely in the case of L2-users looking in on L1 language games from the outside. In terms of Hoey's theory of 'lexical priming' (Hoey, 2005), the role of memory and the cumulative effect of repeated exposure to phraseology in specific instances of pragmatic use that this model presupposes goes some way to explaining the L1-users' competence but raises questions regarding the access of L2-users to the conditions that make this fluency possible. Speech routines, incremental construction of discourse, collocations and semantic prosody are the very stuff of fast and fluent 'native'-discourse but the paradox is that these are the areas which pre-suppose sustained immersion in a speech community which, for most L2-users of English in EFL contexts, is easier said than done.

### **11.8.3 The role of idiomaticity in an emerging ELF**

Of course, the task of acquiring idiomaticity is only a problem if one sets up L1 forms as the norm for ELF. The question is whether L1-like idiomaticity is a valid strand in the rich tapestry of English as a Lingua Franca. Let me return to commonality: L1-users tend to deploy English from a position of deep commonality, though they can shift to shallow commonality, depending on the context; L2-users also have access to deep and shallow commonalities but it is in the nature of the typical ELF encounter that shallow commonality will be more frequent (Johnson, 1990: 306; McKay, 2003: 18). It is important to stress, however, that this is not a hard-and-fast rule and that it is one of the aims of this thesis to deconstruct preconceptions about the limits of ELF:



married couples and close friends with different L1s use ELF to express deep commonality and there may be moments of deep commonality in a predominantly shallow encounter at any time, in any place. The point is that L1 users express deep commonality by drawing on features of idiomaticity which can be elusive for many (but not all) L2 users (see Chapter 2 on research into the ‘Idiomatic Deficit’). In sum, this means that, as far as idiomaticity is concerned, L1-users are playing at home, with rules that they can bend according to need; L2-users are playing away and if they break the rules they may be penalized (see Thomas, 1982: 96; Davies, 2003: 90, 109; Prabhu, 1995:288; the comments made by SUEs on pages 311, 312, 315 of this thesis and the results of the *bump into* survey). One begins to wonder just how fixed the rules of language play are. Yet, several of my SUEs (Hans, José, Simon, Greg, Patty, Christine, Dimitri) display undoubted skill in the manipulation of idioms, if not in the kind of freewheeling creativity that is the very stuff of common talk in L1 informal conversation. It is possible that the relative absence of certain kinds of idiomaticity in SUEs is the result not of lack of ‘competence’ but an intuition, on the level of performance, as to where the limits are, as far as idiomaticity is concerned. They keep away from the ‘minefields’ referred to by McCarthy and Carter (1994: 109); in other words, SUEs display an avoidance of language which is prone to pragmatic failure (see literature review, page 37-38 of this thesis). We must bear in mind that these statements are based on a particular data set, which is small, and though some of these views find an echo in the literature of idiomaticity and conversation analysis (see Chapters 2 and 3) they need to be checked against a much larger and more representative corpus of ELF users. We can say, at this stage, that the insights of the present corpus point to a number of possible implications for the L2-user and it is to these implications of my thesis that we now turn.



## Chapter 12

### Conclusion

*'So, right, yer buggers, then! We'll occupy/ your lousy leasehold Poetry'.*

Tony Harrison, 1984: 123.



## 12.1 Introduction

This thesis has examined a corpus of successful users of spoken English in order to throw light on the puzzle of idiomaticity in ELF. The core research questions are reconsidered here.

### 12.1.1 Why do even advanced users of English as a Lingua Franca avoid or have difficulty with idiomaticity?

The difficulty of idiomaticity for L2-users can be summed as the result of the following factors:

1. Idiomatic units do not occur in isolation but form extended pragmatic networks, consisting of semantic, discourse and pragmatic prosodies.
2. Idiomaticity involves multiple meanings and facilitates the many-voicedness of spoken discourse.
3. The use of minimal idiomatic units is usually unconscious and lacking in salience in the flow of conversation.
4. Both minimal and extended idiomatic units are closely tied to the here-and-now: they are profoundly context-embedded. They cannot simply be ‘looked up’.
5. Idiomaticity often involves a contradiction between the core, literal meanings and the contextualised, pragmatic meanings of the phrase.
6. Idiomaticity evokes shared knowledge and evinces private thoughts at the same time.
7. Idiomaticity derives from and reinforces particular cultures.
8. Idiomatic phrases of all kinds are phonologically sensitive.

The converse of these reasons for idiomatic difficulty is that L2-learners find ‘Universal Grammar’ ‘easy’ because it is approached in a ‘quintessentially monologic’ manner ‘without reference to material acts of communication’ (Hopper, 1999: 161) *in vacuo*, in classrooms lacking in ‘contexts of human interaction’



(Rommetveit, 1979: 93). The paradox is that the UG at which SUEs are so adept sounds 'odd' to the ENL ear for all the reasons listed in 1-7 above, but it does not sound odd to the average ELF user and it is a perfectly adequate instrument for conducting transactional communication in ELF, if not for achieving understanding in a fuller, more human sense.

The preceding chapters have placed the puzzle of idiomaticity and the L2-user within a pragmatic and socio-cultural context. We have seen how phraseology, in varying degrees, is the product of repeated encounters with institutionalized uses of form-meaning partnerships; L1-users are thus 'primed' (Hoey, 2005: 9,187-188) from an early age to use words or utterances in specific ways and in specific networks of associated meanings. L2-users simply do not, as a rule, have access to this kind of repeated exposure.

I have tried to explain the 'idiomatic paradox' in terms of the difference between deep and shallow commonality. What comes easily to the L1-user only comes with great effort for the L2-user; what makes the L1-user sound natural may make the L2-user sound odd; what helps the L1-user sound fast and fluent may slow down the L2-user. The L2-user encounters an idiomaticity which comes from the depths of L1 cultural and interpersonal experience: it comes saturated with the insitutionalised and individual uses to which it has been put over the years, at successive socio-cultural moments of face-to-face interaction and in a whole network of highways and byways. The socio-cultural competence required of an L2 learner in order to use 'multi-word units' includes both 'knowledge' of social and historical 'facts' but also competence in the shared 'process' of conversational norms. L2-users are not 'primed' for these norms and conventions, which is what makes their acquisition later in life such an arduous process.



The difficulty located in linguistic resources such as pragmatic markers, hedging devices and vague language, is a function of the dialogic resonances residing in the interactive uses of these resources, and these, in turn, result from the sociohistorical forces surrounding their development. The paradox is that all this makes of idiomaticity an essential tool in the construction of a fluent repertoire of identities for the L1 speaker but renders idiomaticity elusive for L2-users. However, an important principle to have emerged from this research is that not all varieties of idiomaticity are equally difficult for the L2-user.

#### **12.1.2 Which kinds of idiomaticity do advanced L2-users have difficulty with?**

*These are small words...but they have big meanings*

(McCarthy: 2003: 60).

The pragmatic phrases, multi-word units and colourful idioms we have been examining represent two very different varieties of idiomaticity; they occupy, in a sense, two opposite poles in the continuum that is idiomaticity, broadly defined. One type of idiomaticity is realised through a kind of minimal formula and is relatively transparent in semantic terms; the other can be a full-length clause (or longer) and tends to be opaque. The latter would seem to be more difficult for the L2-user and is, therefore, noticeable by its relative absence from our data (see also Meierkord, 2005: 98). My hypothesis on embarking on this research was that L2 speakers avoid using ‘colourful idioms’ and, even more so, avoid manipulating traditional idiomaticity in creative ways. These two assumptions have been largely borne out by my L2 corpus, but the exceptions are noteworthy and may have implications for how we define ‘expert’ use of English.

An important observation in this context is that competence in the use of ‘colourful idioms’ entails a parallel competence in the creative manipulation of such idioms



(ellipsis, variations on idiomatic themes) and this kind of idiomatic competence is probably the most elusive aspect of L2 acquisition, along with phonological competence, after a certain age (Davies, 2003:84). Thus, knowing one or two idioms is not enough: ‘colorful idioms’ combine to form both ellipted and larger idiomatic networks.

It would be a neat conclusion to this thesis to say that formulaic phrases are ‘easier’ than colorful idioms, but it would be a mistake to assume that because something in language is small, ‘humdrum’ and almost invisible – or inaudible- it is therefore easy to acquire:

A very large amount of our apparently humdrum conversations are actually deploying co-selections of a much less obvious or colourful nature; these are not expressions that speakers are aware of and examine, and their variations are not creative in the artistic sense.

(Sinclair, 2003, personal email communication).

Paradoxically, the ‘ordinariness’ of much idiomaticity of the minimal kind, its intimate connection with everyday situated interaction, is one of the reasons why it is so difficult to acquire for those who have limited exposure to idiomaticity in here-and-now contexts. The importance of minimal idiomaticity is so ‘ordinary’ that we cease to notice it and indeed it has been a relatively neglected area in research (but see McCarthy, 2003). Thus, clusters of highly interactive small words flying past quickly can be as frustrating to a language learner as big, multi-syllabic words or colourful idioms. The word *aposiopesis* is an easy word: one simply looks it up and it has a stable propositional meaning; while *get* or *little* are difficult words, which depend on social context and pragmatics for their multiple, shifting meanings. Small words can be as much of a ‘minefield’ for L2-users as traditional idioms.



Though *sort of* and *you see* are minimal idiomatic units, they enter into subtle relationships that augment their affective and relational impact and consequently the difficulty they represent for the learner. The essential nature of *sort of* and *you see* is to be found in their collocational relationships, their semantic prosodies and the pragmatic contexts in which these are deployed; *sort of* and *you see* form pragmatic networks of like phrases or ‘webs of significance’ (Geertz, 1973: 5) which add both to their importance as a group and their elusiveness for the L2-user. The elusiveness is not merely linguistic or textual, it is cultural and is, moreover, compounded by the lack of saliency of such items both individually and as parts of pervasive pragmatic networks, ‘where every phrase takes its place to support the others...the complete consort dancing together’ (Eliot, 1979: 197).

### **12.1.3 Is L2 fluency different from L1 fluency?**

In this thesis, we have deconstructed popular and conventional notions of fluency: we have moved away from a view of fluency that considers the ideal model to be ‘fast talkers’ giving a virtuoso solo performance (Wood, 2004); we have argued instead for a more varied process of ‘successful’ use, which is socially situated and jointly constructed by the participants in the speech event (McCarthy, 2005). We have also moved away from the concept of fluency as the rapid production of complete grammatical sentences and complete thoughts to fluency as built on utterances which are linked to other utterances and the active involvement of the hearer. Utterances made up of small idiomatic phrases promote this two-way flow of L1 speech.

We have extended the role of idiomaticity in this dialogic view of L1 fluency to include the socio-cultural and creative roles of idiomaticity. Thus, idiomaticity is important in L1 fluency because it:



1. facilitates on-line processing of speech.
2. makes L1 speech faster, smoother, easier.
3. expresses cultural and social solidarity.
4. facilitates affective convergence.
5. lends itself to the co-construction of dialogue.
6. reinforces the informality of encounters between friends.
7. embodies shared socio-cultural knowledge.
8. is characterized by both fixedness and flexibility, and thus:
9. lends itself to wordplay and creativity, including humorous manipulation.
10. forms idiomatic and pragmatic networks which help maintain an interactive flow between speakers

The view of L1 fluency which takes in the ability to manipulate small pragmatic phrases and to manipulate idiomaticity in creative ways, is a modification of that put forward by Pawley and Syder (1983) and can help us to throw light on why even proficient L2 speakers find L1-like fluency so elusive.

Conversation involves the co-operative manipulation of a wide range of linguistic resources, pragmatic markers, fixed phrases, cultural conventions, discourse schemata depending on the speech event, which may be unique and unrepeatable. Fluent speakers are sensitive to the dialogic nature of language and are constantly ‘quoting’ others, whether consciously or unconsciously. This ‘quotative competence’ involves an intuitive awareness of the dialogic nature of language and the ability to signal the ‘echoic’ mention of other’s words through linguistic and paralinguistic means. Whether one is an L1 or L2-user of English, words will always come with the traces of previous use, they will arrive in transit between past and present, and will have to be deployed afresh in every new encounter. Thus the accomplishment of fluency



involves moving within existing constraints, drawing on existing resources, but also creating new meanings and new ways of expressing these meanings, in fresh raids on English in all its varieties.

Our focus on two-word phrases suggests that fluency is made up of more ordinary and less salient features than traditional grammatical structures or colourful idioms; what we have been describing is consistent with the work of Pawley and Syder (1983) and Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) on phraseology and fluency but our emphasis on the networks formed by lexical or pragmatic chunks such as *you see* and *sort of* adds a more explicitly discoursal and interactive dimension to our notions of spoken fluency (Carter and McCarthy, 2002: 50). We have provided evidence from both L1 and L2 corpora that these two-word pragmatic phrases and the other members of the set (*you know, I mean* etc) are much more than fillers or fumbles and, as has been pointed out, are one way that L2-users can improve their fluency; but whether this is a ‘quick way’ (Stenström and Svartvik, 1994: 252) to achieve proficiency in a foreign language is doubtful.

While the processing of online talk provided by the availability of thousands of lexical phrases of all kinds will remain an important option on the road to fluency, whether in L1 or L2, ‘successful users’, do much more than select and manipulate phrases: they negotiate social situations in culturally acceptable ways and establish affective common ground with their interlocutors. This can be done in ways that resemble the phraseological and cultural fluency of L1-users, as is the case with some speakers in my SUE corpus (Hans, Simon, Christine, Patty) but it can also be done by drawing on one’s bilingual or multilingual status, through language which draws on all available resources to produce a synthesis which is different from typical monolingual models (Howarth, 1998: 36; De Cock et al, 1998: 78; Seidlhofer, 2005:



162). This is the case with the Greek Nick and the Turk Hasan, and the majority of SUEs, who do not produce a high level of idiomaticity, either of the small words or big words variety, but do achieve mutual understanding and rapport. Paradoxically, SUEs can, in part, be defined by what they do *not* do as well as by what the things they do, linguistically and pragmatically. They deploy avoidance strategies which accommodate both to their interlocutor and their own intuitive competence. They have a kind of ‘negative capability’: their sensitivity to their addressee tells them what *not* to say in order to achieve communication and understanding; in other words, they do not indulge in ‘unilateral idiomaticity’ or risk sociopragmatic failure. What has been considered an idiomatic ‘deficit’ can be seen as a constructive response to the limits of one’s own competence and the needs of one’s addressee (in this latter sense, L1-users of ELF can also be classed as SUEs).

Thus, accomplishing fluency is an open-ended process, not a fixed product. It includes the constant striving for rapport and co-operative construction of dialogue with one’s interlocutor. The prefix in ‘con-versation’ reminds us of the joint, rather than individual, dimension of informal speech. This co-operative, aspect of fluency is captured in Aston’s metaphor of the ‘jointly-performed dance’ (Aston, 1993: 228) while for Duranti (1997) dialogic fluency is ‘not too different from the way a skilled jazz musician can enter someone else’s composition, by embellishing it, playing around with its main motif, emphasizing some elements of the melody over others, quoting other renditions of the same piece by other musicians...’ (Duranti, 1997: 17). This is a long way from the black boxes and computers of container views of meaning. Fluency is not a material entity or essential quality distinct from the individual who embodies it in the ongoing transfer of transactional meanings or the



expression of identity: we cannot tell the dance from the dancer or the music from the musician.

In answer to the question: is ELF fluency ‘de-idiomatized?’ we can therefore answer ‘it can be’, but the option of being fluent in idiomatic ways is there, though the likelihood is that it will be unique refashioning of idiomaticity in the case of most ELF users to reflect the pressures of the specific speech event and individual strategies for the promotion of self in partnership with one’s interlocutor.

#### **12.1.4 What is the role of idiomaticity in an emerging ELF?**

Jenkins considers idiomatic language in ELF as irrelevant cultural baggage and suggests not teaching L1 ‘idioms’ at all (Jenkins, 2004b: 38; 2000: 220). De Cock on the other hand, suggests that ‘the chunks’ advance learners use are ‘not necessarily the same as those used by ‘native-speakers’ and ‘are not used with the same frequency and may have different syntactic and pragmatic functions’ (De Cock et al, 1998: 78).

With the infinitely rich roles English is nowadays called upon to play, very often in tandem with other languages, it is hard to know where to draw the idiomatic line and whether there should be an idiomatic line at all. Crossing cultural and geographic frontiers is becoming the norm in today’s globalised world. Multi-culturalism and multi-lingualism, even if only on receptive levels, are the order of the day. It would seem to be going against this trend to be erecting linguistic frontiers and setting up fixed norms. The global and diverse nature of ELF suggests, on the one hand, that there is no place for undisputed L1 authority over the English language(s) (Seidlhofer, 2005: 164); on the other hand, it seems to be going against the grain to seal off whole stretches of linguistic territory and stick up a sign that says ‘no trespassing’ (on L1 idiomaticity) when we are unable to restrain the free contact of languages and cultures in today’s world. ELF cannot be insulated from ENL. An L2-L2 conversation can



become an L2-L1 exchange from one moment to the next; it can evolve from shallow to deep commonality within the same speech event; a business deal can grow into friendship or marriage: 'English is all-pervasive, from casual small talk to corporate business negotiation' (Seidlhofer, 2005: 160). ELF can go from 'big talk' to 'small talk' and vice versa.

Idiomaticity, whether reciprocal or unilateral, will be present in the speech encounter to a lesser or greater degree. Part of this hybrid linguistic code will be made up of the L2-user's own idiomaticity, and there will always be varying degrees of negotiation of the other's idiomaticity. 'L2-users create their own formulas which are not necessarily TL formulas' (Weinert, 1995: 194, referring to research by Raupach, 1984) and 'retain linguistic traits of their distinct identity' (Seidlhofer, 2005: 161).

The research conducted in this thesis, suggests that ELF speakers will poach on L1 linguistic territory when it suits them and when they are able to do so. Their use of phraseology will be different from, but on an equal footing with, their L1-user counterparts. 'We don't want to live in the basement of the flat of the apartment and you live on the upper floors', as the Turkish diplomat said to his Greek interlocutor. ELF - and the role of idiomaticity within it - can be seen as a manifestation of Bakhtin's carnivalesque: it has the power to transgress the norms and transform them, as the Turkish speaker has done in the above example.

The point about ELF is that it is *emerging* and *emergent*. It is emerging because it may be moving towards its own norms, but we do not know yet what these norms look like, and it would be premature to try and capture it once and for all, to pluck the heart of its mystery. On the other hand, I doubt whether ELF is caught in an inexorable progress towards Standard World English (see James, 2005: 140, for a similar view, based on corpus evidence); my data suggests rather that ELF is



emergent because: 'its structure is always deferred, always in a process but never arriving' (Hopper, 1998: 156).

We know idiomaticity is saturated with the culture of the speech community, and yet the borders between communities are coming down and people are entering more and more diverse discourse communities and communities of practice, and assuming multiple, fluid identities. To impose linguistic homogeneity based on the authority of L1 use is an ideological exercise of power, but so is any restriction of linguistic diversity, ignoring as it does the heteroglossia which is in all language. In attempting to shake off the shackles of native-centric norms, we should be wary of encouraging the illusion that we can reduce ELF to new, L2-generated norms (Seidlhofer, 2005: 165). ELF has more to do with functions of English within diverse communities of practice than with the relatively homogeneous concept of the 'speech community' and its codified and often reified varieties.

We seem to be caught between the clashing rocks of homogeneity and heterogeneity, the local and the global; the need to express English in formal and non-formal domains of use and the human need to express the full range of registers, transactions and emotions, from peace and business negotiations, to tears and laughter.

Is there a way forward? A first step is to acknowledge that ELF is not a fixed entity; it is a dynamic response to the local interactional needs of the people involved. Thus, what we have been describing in this thesis is not a monologic 'product' but a co-operative, dialogic 'process', which shapes language choice and language use.

ELF involves crossing from one linguistic community and cultural space to another; it provides the learner and the user with a third space (Kramsch, 1993; Bhabha, 1994; Maalouf, 2000). The encounter of ELF and L1 English produces a hybrid which is



neither the one nor the other but reflects the multiple identities which people promote through language.

As ELF emerges from its home territories into the international sphere, it is likely that it will be shorn of most of its colourful idioms in their canonical L1 form, but it will bring with it the traces of local idiom; when idioms do appear, they will appear in modified form, taking on the shape of the mother-tongue of the speaker and the pluralistic nature of the speech encounter.

This research confirms Wray's view that 'formulaic language' is the 'key to idiomaticity' (Wray, 1999: 213) but that idiomaticity 'is used differently, and to different extents, by different types of learner' - and user (Wray, 1999: 226). One can only throw light on these diverse forms and functions of idiomaticity by drawing on a variety of criteria, ranging from frequency to socio-cultural context. We have been describing these contexts, in concrete terms, and we have seen that the suggestion that ELF users of English may be bending English to 'carry the weight of their experience' (Achebe, 1975: 62) is becoming a reality.

## **12.2 Wider implications of this research**

### **12.2.1 Language description**

*'the utterance, like Leibniz's monad, reflects the speech process'*  
(Bakhtin, 1986: 93).

*'Not every monad carries a microcosm of the universe inside'*  
(Bolinger, 1976: 1).

In terms of language description, I have taken a broad view of idiomaticity, which begins from minimal formulaic clusters to full-scale idiomatic clauses. I have stressed the important differences in the two poles of idiomaticity but have also suggested that there is a quintessential idiomatic quality that all realisations of the idiom principle have in common. This element of minimal idiomaticity may be found in the string



itself (*you see* does not mean ‘see with the eyes’ and *sort of* is much more than a semantic classifier) but it may be found in the way the string collocates with other, comparable, items in the immediate textual vicinity or in the wider co-text to form extended lexical or idiomatic units. These units display a tendency to cluster and form larger patterns on a discourse and pragmatic level. In Hoey’s terms (2005) both minimal and extended idiomatic strings are ‘primed’ for certain kinds of pragmatic meanings, but they are also ‘primed’ to occur in each other’s company in larger idiomatic webs. Henceforth, it would be more productive to examine idiomaticity in this extended, diffuse sense rather than as a phrase or sentence-level phenomenon.

We have seen that the frequency of *sort of* and *you see* is echoed in the richness of their pragmatic uses and this frequency and flexibility makes two-word phrases like these a good place to begin to describe the way spoken English works across speech varieties. The rich layers of meaning underlying the ‘little words’ of English, when uncovered, may give us an insight into the nature of the differences between L1 and L2 as a whole. In Chapter 5, I compared the TWP’s to a pebble in a pool generating multiple circles of meaning; here I would like to suggest they are microcosm of the linguistic world of L1 and L2-users. The little words, especially when they are taken together, are so many windows onto the world of the speakers.

### **12.2.2 SLA**

This thesis, though it was not designed as a study of acquisition, may have implications for SLA. In terms of competence, the implications of this study are that it is not grammar as a generative system that makes L2-users different from L1-users nor is it the acquisition of the lexicon in terms of single items. On the contrary, my SUEs provide ample evidence of being able to produce an infinite number of the kind



of structures that have been associated with the ‘idealised native speaker’ and they display an ability to use the words and the meanings we find in dictionaries.

In Wray’s (2002) terms, L1 and L2-users both draw on a dual system for processing language, one rule-based and one holistic, corresponding to Chomskyan generative grammar, on the one hand, and the idiom principle, on the other. The insights I have gained from the analysis of L1 and L2 discourse on different levels suggests that L2-users, in the never-ending wrestle with meaning and fluency, may draw on the two systems in different degrees from their L1 counterparts: their preferred mode of producing and even understanding utterances may be analytic, rule-based and generative rather than holistic and idiomatic, which is the preferred mode of processing for the L1-user (Wray, 2002: 211-212). This hypothesis would explain the high level of competence displayed by L2-users in the grammatical domain and their persistent insecurity with performance-based idiomaticity (Hopper, 1998: 161).

Though Hoey argues that the L2 learner can take ‘shortcuts’ to priming by use of corpus data and materials based on corpus data (Hoey, 2005: 186), this would seem to apply more to written texts rather than genres which emerge over a long periods of time in face-to-face interaction. It may be easier to get relatively ‘accelerated’ or even ‘instant’ priming (Hoey, 2005: 186) in transactional, referential lexical systems (e.g. food, accommodation, stamp collecting) than it is in the complex socio-cultural pragmatic systems of on-line interaction that we have been looking at. Acquiring the constellation of pragmatic uses of TWPs involves much more than looking up the meanings in corpus-based dictionaries or even taking the shortcuts provided by corpus-informed textbooks (Hoey, 2005: 186).

The profound paradox in the acquisition of idiomatic units is that ‘words and phrases are acquired through encounters in speech’ (Hoey, 2005: 8) and these ‘can only be



learnt if they are encountered' (Wray, 2002: 183). If L2-users do not encounter idiomaticity in repeated social contexts they cannot easily acquire it. Can classroom practice provide a shortcut to the kinds of idiomaticity learners' might need?

### 12.2.3 Pedagogic implications

What place do the two kinds of idiomaticity that we have been examining have in the EFL and ELF classroom? Can they be acquired in the pragmatically restricted conditions of classrooms around the world? The answer we give may be very different for TWP's such as *you see* and *sort of* from that we give for 'colourful' idioms of the *kick the bucket* variety.

My feeling is that, outside of total immersion in the socio-cultural matrix of the idiom-generating speech community, it is probably impossible for an L2-user to acquire productive L1-like idiomatic competence of the 'colourful' variety in classroom conditions. This, however, does not exclude individual learners from acquiring, outside the classroom, a productive competence in L2-like creative idiomaticity, reflecting the speaker's own local socio-cultural matrix.

On the level of 'small', relatively transparent phrases, we have seen that expressions that speakers are hardly aware of, including many pragmatic markers such as *sort of*, *you know*, *like*, and so forth, can actually be more elusive *because* they lack salience and because they are so inseparable from on-line face-to-face interaction; this will make them more difficult for the L2 learner than the big linguistic issues such as conditionals 1,2 and 3 or the passive voice, which students often manipulate with carefree abandon. Interestingly, the small, less salient discourse markers are rarely focussed on in EFL classrooms, while logical connectors make regular appearances in textbooks, tests and classrooms. The insights of this thesis can throw light on why this is so.



The chasm between the richly interactive and contextualised nature of idiomaticity on the one hand, and the poverty of context activated by teachers in many EFL classrooms, it is suggested, can be bridged either by an increased emphasis on 'noticing' strategies (Lewis, 1993; Carter and McCarthy, 1995; Hunston et al, 1997; Carter, 1998) or by an approach based on 'genuine interaction in the classroom' (Willis, 1990, 2003; Wray, 1999). The implications of these approaches are conflicting: should we be focussing on these items as receptive or productive resources or should we have more realistic expectations of EFL/ELF learners as far as the whole gamut of idiomatic skills is concerned? (Wray, 2002: 183). One way out of the wood is to opt for an approach based on learner input rather than input imported from 'native' contexts (Curran, 1976; Deller, 1990; Campbell and Kryszewska, 1992; Prodromou, 2001).

In a learner-input approach, the teacher draws on data provided by the students themselves in order to identify their needs and create classroom materials in response to those needs. It is an approach which involves students in working together to pool whatever resources they have and work towards group grammars and group lexicons (Tudor, 1996). The teacher transforms the learner-input in response to felt interactive needs, drawing on appropriate models (ELF and ENL corpora) to enrich the learner's linguistic and socio-cultural competence.

This learner-driven approach would seem to be essential if students are to get practice in forms of idiomaticity that express their needs; through learner input techniques, ELF users will be able to use the language to 'talk back' and 'write back' (Pennycook, 1994; Canagarajah, 1999b). It is thus an approach which encourages 'actively responsive understanding' in the learners (Bakhtin, 1986: 60). Where models are provided, successful L2-users should have a central role rather than a walk-on part.



L1 models and corpus-informed materials, both L1 and L2 based, will be useful in responding to felt needs rather than forming a priori data for syllabi imposed from the outside. An ‘appropriate’ methodology thus entails ‘appropriation’ of the language by the learners (Freire, 1973; Kramsch and Sullivan, 1996: 211) and a redefinition of the concept of ‘proficiency’ in SUE terms. Activities in class should try to approximate to the personal, lived experience of learners in here-and-now contexts. This will involve degrees of autonomous pair and group-work which many L2 teachers and learners may feel uncomfortable with. It is hard to imagine that controlled practice or noticing activities alone can lead to acquisition of idiomatic competence.

The teacher’s and learner’s task would be made easier if syllabi were based on a ‘common core’ of idiomaticity, appropriate to ELF needs. This would seem to be an eminently sensible approach but one question that arises is how to select a common core of formulae and ‘idioms’ from the embarrassingly huge store of available items and the by definition diverse nature of ELF?

The dialogic approach to language taken in this thesis also has implications for testing: there is a contradiction between the inherently dialogic/heteroglossic nature of language in a globalised world and the largely monologic approach to testing taken by most examining bodies. There are signs that this testing paradigm may be changing (e.g. Dendrinos, 2003, and the ‘portfolio’ approach inspired by the Common European Framework, Morrow, 2004). This brings us to future research.

### **12.3 Future research**

In the pedagogic domain, where time is short and acquisition long, we need to draw up a common core of idiomatic expressions which can form the basis for constructing syllabi in different contexts where English is being taught as a lingua franca. The scale of idiomaticity I drew up in Chapter 2 may be helpful in deciding on what basis



to include items in the common core, always in response to *emergent* local needs and any *emerging* common patterns in global ELF.

With firsthand knowledge gained from impromptu speech, we may hope to develop further hypotheses about the significance both of minimal idiomatic units and ‘extended idiomatic units’, which can be tested against further empirical data of a cross-cultural nature and incorporated into a theory of socio-cultural networks and sociolinguistic variation. Specifically, we need to explore the behaviour of more two-word pragmatic phrases which differ in frequency in the two kinds of corpora and attempt to identify common features across different pragmatic phrases. In my corpus, for example, *a bit*, was less frequent than it is in L1 corpora: is *a bit*, like *sort of* and *you see*, a small but powerful bit of language? Does it form lexico-grammatical and pragmatic networks?

Thirdly, L2-users do not seem to have, on the whole, the same kind of capacity as L1-users to break the code; they do, of course, break the code in their own way, either intentionally, in error or as part of the intuitive process of socio-interaction and negotiation of meaning. More research needs to be done in the art of common talk as practised by L2-users of English to complement the work done by Tannen (1989), Carter (2004) and others in L1 use.

A major area for future research is the link between phonology and idiomatic competence in spoken English. Are minimal and maximal idiomatic units ‘primed’ as Hoey says ‘to occur with certain pitches or tones?’ (Hoey, 2005: 188). If the answer is yes, as I suspect it is, then the acquisition of idiomatic competence after a certain age is a daunting task.



It would be interesting to see how pragmatic markers facilitate fluency in other languages and what challenges this may present for the learner. Holland (2003) gives this example of how tricky small words can be for the learner of Spanish:

Si no es que tienes en ti algo tan profundo...

(Holland, 2003: 57).

My own experience of learning Spanish confirms the profoundly elusive nature of the small words in the pragmatics of language: *no*, *me entiendes*, *ah*, *eh*, *pues*, *hombre*, *vale*, *bueno* etc. Do these individual markers in Spanish (and other languages) form compounds and clusters: (*bueno pues/pues entonces/pues eh*) and do these compounds form extensive discursal and pragmatic networks?

There is a lot more one can discover from an EFL corpus, even a small one like the SUE corpus. It would, for example, be interesting to examine the type-token ratio in an ELF corpus and compare it to type-token ratios in ENL corpora. A first glance at the SUE corpus suggests that SUE spoken discourse is lexically denser but pragmatically thinner than its ENL counterparts. Further investigation of this initial observation might throw more light on the role of pragmatic markers in L2 use.

Finally, the diagram on page 128 (Figure 5.3) might be more interesting if we added another circle: 'the politics of language' to facilitate the exploration of the socio-political and ideological implications of 'small words' and idiomatic language (Partington, 2003).

## 12.4 Conclusion

*I know it is there in England  
But it shall never be mine.*

(Tatiana Dobrosklonskaya).

When I embarked on this thesis I thought I would be exploring the manifold nature of idiomaticity and thus when I found myself analyzing small expressions like *sort of*



and *you see* I initially felt disappointed. I now realise I was not, in fact, looking at single lexico-grammatical items but at multiple extended units, composed of a whole range of related linguistic items, be they full lexical categories or pragmatic markers. I also realise that ‘minor’ grammatical categories do not necessarily express minor meanings.

On another level, this thesis has been a prolonged response to the arrival of corpus linguistics on the ELT scene. It is the continuation of a dialogue which began with the question raised by a classroom teacher at a TESOL Conference, querying the relevance of corpus linguistics to ELF. It has been an ‘utterance’ in Bakhtin’s sense, addressed to the other parties to the dialogue and anticipating a response. I hope my ‘utterance’ has been filled with the echoes and reverberations of the meanings and intentions of all those who prompted this research, in true dialogic fashion. I hope it has been dialectical and that the end product is a creative synthesis of differing positions on a range of questions such as the role of corpora and idiomaticity in ELF.

English has gone forth and multiplied – it has proliferated into Englishes, both ‘nativized’ Englishes and international lingua franca Englishes, and this heteroglossia reigns supreme, with all the potential for innovation that this entails. Any ‘models’ of English we decide to work with must be capable of accommodating this diversity and the creativity that all language users, be they L1 or ELF users, are heir to.

The analysis of L1 use of pragmatic phrases and of creative idiomaticity in this thesis has illustrated how deeply embedded dialogic competence is in socio-cultural contexts: utterances come trailing clouds of meaning from previous use by members of the same speech community; these meanings are often beyond the reach of conscious control but are buried in the collective memory. In a sense, corpus data is the outer manifestation of the collective memory of particular speech and discourse



communities and idiomaticity may be that feature of 'Standard English' which, along with accent, is the quintessence of the imagined community of ENL users: the embodiment of a shared past. To adapt Joseph (2004: 219): 'idiomaticity is deeply woven into the text of common memory that is the foundation of ENL'.

How far can the L2 learner share in the collective memories of the mysterious 'other', which Tatiana felt could 'never' be hers? And yet, clearly, Tatiana and so many other successful users have made English their own, in its full, expressive power.

I feel it is too early to draw firm conclusions about the performance features of successful users of English as an international language from such a small corpus of language. Though a broad outline of how the proficient L2 speaker uses the language is emerging. My SUE corpus, however, has given me, and I hope the reader, some tantalizing glimpses of how successful L2 speakers use the language. The search and re-search continues. Indeed, the search has only just begun.



## References

**Achebe, C. 1975.** 'The African writer and the English language.' In *Morning Yet on Creation Day*. London: Heinemann.

**Adolphs, S. 2005.** "I don't think I should learn all this.' A longitudinal view of attitudes towards 'native-speaker' English.' In C. Gnutzmann and F. Intemann (eds.) 119-132.

**Adolphs, S. and V. Durrow. 2004.** 'Social-cultural integration and the development of formulaic sequences.' In N. Schmitt (ed.) 107-126.

**Aijmer, K. 1984.** 'sort of and kind of in English conversation.' *Studia Linguistica*, 38 (2): 118-128.

**Aijmer, K. 1986.** 'Discourse variation and hedging.' In J. Aarts and W. Meijs (eds.) *Corpus Linguistics II: New Studies in the Analysis and Exploitation of Computer Corpora* 2-18 Amsterdam: Rodopi.

**Aijmer, K. 1996** *Conversational Routines in English: Convention and Creativity*. Harlow: Longman.

**Aijmer, K. 2002.** *English Discourse Particles*. Amsterdam: John Benjamin's Publishing Company.

**Aijmer, K and B. Altenberg. 1991.** (eds.) *English Corpus Linguistics*. London. Longman.

**Alexander, R. 1978.** 'Fixed expressions in English: a linguistic, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic and didactic study, (Part 1).' *anglistik & englischunterricht* 6/1978: 171-188.

**Alexander, R 1979.** 'Fixed expressions in English: a linguistic, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic and didactic study, (Part 2).' *anglistik & englischunterricht* 7/1979: 181-202.

**Alexander, R. 1983.** 'Catch phrases rule O.K - allusive puns analyzed.' *Grazer Linguistische Studien* 20: 9-30.

**Alexander, R. 1983.** 'Metaphors, connotations, allusions: thoughts on the language-culture connexion in learning English as a foreign language.' *Linguistics Agency University of Trier: Series B Paper 91*. Trier: University of Trier.

**Alexander, R. 1984.** 'Fixed expressions in English: reference books and the teacher.' *ELT Journal* 38/2: 127-134.

**Alexander, R. 1987.** 'Problems in understanding and teaching idiomaticity in English.' *anglistik & englischunterricht. Band 32 Wortschatzarbeit*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag. 105-122.



- Alexander, R. 1989.** 'Fixed expressions, idioms and collocations revisited.' In P. Meara, (ed.) *Beyond Words, British Studies in Applied Linguistics*. 15-24.
- Alexander, R. 1992** 'Fixed expressions, phraseology and language teaching: a sociosemiotic perspective.' *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik XL*, 3/3: 238 - 249.
- Alexander, R. 1997.** 'The Octopus-Hydra debate (2): British-based or British-biased?' *IATEFL Newsletter* 138: 11.
- Alexander, R. 1998.** 'Nine angles on the culture-language mesh and their implications for teaching English to speakers of other languages.' In W. Boeder., C. Schroeder, K. Wagner and W. Wildgen (eds.) *Sprache in Raum und Zeit. In memoriam Johannes Bechert. Bd 2. Beiträge zur empirischen Sprachwissenschaft*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr. 155-165.
- Alexander, R. 1999.** 'Caught in a global trap, or liberated by a lingua franca? Unravelling some aims, claims, dilemmas of the English teaching profession.' In C. Gnutzmann (ed.) 23-39.
- Alptekin, C. 2002.** 'Towards intercultural communicative competence in ELT.' *ELT Journal* 56/1: 57-64.
- Alptekin, C. and M. Alptekin. 1984.** 'The question of culture.' *ELT Journal* 38/1: 14-20.
- Altenberg, B. 1998.** 'On the phraseology of spoken English: the evidence of recurrent word combinations.' In A. Cowie (ed.) 101-124.
- Altenberg, B and S. Granger. 2001** 'Grammatical and lexical patterning of *make* in student writing.' *Applied Linguistics* 22/2: 173-194.
- Altenberg, B. and M. Eeg-Olofson. 1990.** 'Phraseology in spoken English: presentation of a project.' In J. Aarts and W. Meijs (eds.) *Theory and Practice In Corpus Linguistics*. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 1-26.
- Anderson, B. 1991.** *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.
- Arnaud, P. and H. Bejoint (eds.) 1992.** *Vocabulary and Applied Linguistics*. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan.
- Arnaud, P. and S. Savigon. 1997** 'Rare words, complex lexical units and the advanced learner'. In J Coady, J and T Huckin (eds.): *Second Language Vocabulary Acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 157-200.
- Aston, G. 1988.** *Learning Comity*. Bologna: Editrice Clueb
- Aston, G. 1993.** 'Notes on the interlanguage of comity.' In G. Kasper and S. Blum-Kulka (eds.) 224-250.



- Aston, G. 1995.** 'Corpora in language pedagogy: matching theory and practice.' In G. Cook and B. Seidlhofer (eds.) *Principles and practice in applied linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 257-270.
- Aston, G. and L. Burnard. 1998.** *The BNC Handbook*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bahns, J., H. Burmeister. and T. Vogel, 1986.** 'The pragmatics of formulas in L2 learner speech.' *Journal of Pragmatics* 10: 693: 723.
- Bahns, J and M. Eldaw. 1993.** 'Should we teach ESL students collocations?' *System*, 21/1: 101-114.
- Baker, M., G. Francis and E. Tognini-Bonelli. (eds.) 1993.** *Text and Technology*. Philadelphia/Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Bakhtin, M 1981.** *The Dialogic Imagination*. Austin Texas: University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. 1986.** *Speech Genres and other late essays*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. 1984.** *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Bamgbose, A. 1998.** 'Torn between the norms: innovations in world Englishes.' *World Englishes* 17/1: 1-14.
- Bardovi-H.K. and B. Hartford. 1996.** 'Input in an institutional setting.' *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 18: 171-188.
- Barnbrook, G. 1996.** *Language and computers: a practical introduction to the computer analysis of language*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Barrow, R. 1990.** 'Culture, values and the language classroom.' In B. Harrison (ed.) *Culture and the Language Classroom*. Modern English Publications/The British Council. 3-10.
- Bauer, L. 1983.** *English Word Formation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bauer, L. 2002** *A Guide to International Varieties of English*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Beltz, J.A. 2001.** 'Review of *Language Play, Language Learning*.' *Applied Linguistics* 22/1: 129-132.
- Bensoussan, M. and B. Laufer. 1984.** 'Lexical guessing in context in EFL reading comprehension.' *Journal of Research in Reading* 7: 15-32.
- Bergman, M. and G. Kasper. 1993.** 'Perception and performance in native and non-native apology.' In G. Kasper and S. Blum-Kulka (eds.) 82-107.



**Bex, T and R. Watts, (eds.). 1999.** *Standard English: The widening debate*. London: Routledge.

**Bhatt, R. 1995.** 'Prescription, creativity and world Englishes.' *World Englishes* 14/2: 247-259.

**Bhabha, H. 1994.** *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.

**Bialystock, E. 1994.** 'Analysis and control in the development of second language proficiency.' *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 16: 157-168.

**Biber, D. 1996.** 'Investigating language use through corpus-based analyses of association patterns.' *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 1/2: 171-197.

o **Biber, D and S. Conrad. 1999.** 'Lexical bundles in conversation and academic prose.' In H. Hasselgård, H and S Oksefjell (eds.). *Out of Corpora*. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 181-190.

**Biber, D., S. Conrad and R. Reppen. 1994.** 'Corpus-based approaches to issues in applied linguistics.' *Applied Linguistics* 15/2: 169-189.

**Biber, D., S. Conrad and R. Reppen. 1998.** *Corpus Linguistics: investigating language structure and use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Biber, D., Johansson, S, Leech, G, Conrad, S and E. Finnegan. 1999.** *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. London: Longman.

**Biber, D., S. Conrad and V. Cortes. 2004.** 'Lexical bundles in university teaching and textbooks.' *Applied Linguistics* 25/3: 371-405.

**Birdsong, D. 1992.** 'Ultimate attainment in second language acquisition.' *Language* 68: 706-755.

**Biskup, D.1992** 'L1 influence on learners' renderings of English collocations: a Polish/German study.' In P. Arnaud and H. Bejoint (eds.) 85-93.

**Blakar, R. and R. Rommetveit. 1979.** 'Utterances in vacuo and in contexts.' In R. Rommetveit and R. Blakar (eds.) 361-374.

**Block, D. 2003.** *The Social Turn in Second language Acquisition*. Edinburgh. Edinburgh University Press.

**Blum-Kulka, S., J. House and G. Kasper (eds.) 1989.** *Cross-cultural pragmatics: requests and apologies*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

**Blum-Kulka, S. and E.Olshtain. 1986.** 'Too many words: length of utterance and pragmatic failure.' *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 8: 165-180.



- Bodman, J and M. Eisenstein. 1988.** 'May God increase your bounty: The expression of gratitude in English by native and non-native speakers.' *Cross Currents* 15: 1-21.
- Bohn, O. 1986.** 'Formulas, frame structures, and stereotypes in early syntactic development: some new evidence from L2 acquisition.' *Linguistics* 24: 185-202.
- Bolander, M. 1989.** 'Prefabs, patterns and rules in interaction? Formulaic speech in adult learners' L2 Swedish.' In K. Hyltenstam and L. Obler (eds.) *Bilingualism across the lifespan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 73-86.
- Bolinger, D. 1961.** 'Syntactic blends and other matters.' *Language* 37: 366-381.
- Bolinger, D. 1976.** 'Meaning and memory.' *Forum Linguisticum* 1: 1-14.
- Bourdieu, P. 1991.** *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge. Polity Press
- Bowers, R. 1999.** 'Whose culture does the English language learner want?' In C. Gnutzmann (ed.) 221-246.
- Braine, G. (ed.) 1999.** *Non-Native Educators in English Language Teaching*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Braine, G. 1999.** 'From the periphery to the center: one teacher's journey.' In G. Braine (ed.) 15-28.
- Brazil, D. 1995.** *A Grammar of Speech*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Breen, M. 1985.** 'Authenticity in the language classroom' *Applied Linguistics* 6/1: 60-70.
- Bremer, K., C. Roberts, M-T .Vasseur, M. Simonot and P. Broeder. 1996.** *Achieving Understanding: discourse in intercultural encounters*. London: Longman.
- Brinton, L. 1996.** *Pragmatic Markers in English*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- British National Corpus. World Edition, 2000 Humanities Computing Unit.** Oxford: Oxford University.
- Brown, G. 1977.** *Listening to Spoken English*. London: Longman
- Brown, G. 1978.** 'Understanding spoken English.' *TESOL Quarterly* 12: 271-283.
- Brown, P and S. Levinson. 1987.** *Politeness - some universals in language use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brutt-Griffler, J. 1998.** 'Conceptual questions in English as a world language.' *World Englishes* 17/3: 381-392.
- Brutt-Griffler, J. and K. Samimy. 2001.** 'Transcending the nativeness paradigm.' *World Englishes* 20/1: 99-106.



- Brutt-Griffler, J. 2002.** *World English: a Study in its Development*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Bryant, R. 2004.** *Imagining the Modern: the cultures of nationalism in Cyprus*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Bublitz, W. 1988.** *Supportive Fellow-Speakers and Co-operative Conversations*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Byram, M. and A. Feng. 2004.** 'Culture and language learning: teaching, research and scholarship.' *Language Teaching* 37:149-168.
- Campbell, C. and H. Kryszewska. 1992.** *Learner-based teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Canagarajah, S. 1999a.** 'Interrogating the native speaker fallacy: non- linguistic roots, non-pedagogical results.' In G. Braine (ed.) 77-92.
- Canagarajah, S. 1999b.** *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Canale, M. 1983.** 'From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy.' In J. Richards and R. Schmidt (eds.) *Language and communication*. London: Longman. 2-27.
- Candlin, C. 2000.** 'General editor's preface.' In J. Coupland (ed.) xiii-xx.
- Carroll, D. 2004.** 'Restarts in novice turn beginnings: disfluencies or interactional achievements?' In Garder and Wagner (eds.) 201-220.
- Carter, R. 1997.** *Investigating English Discourse*. London: Routledge.
- Carter, R. 1998.** *Vocabulary: Applied Linguistics Perspectives*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). London: Routledge.
- Carter, R. 1998.** 'Orders of reality: CANCODE, communication and culture' *ELT Journal* 52/1: 43-56.
- Carter, R. 1999.** 'Common language: corpus, creativity and cognition.' *Language and Literature* 8/3:195-216.
- Carter, R. 2004a.** *Language and Creativity: The Art of Common Talk*. London: Routledge.
- Carter, R. 2004b.** 'Introduction.' In J. Sinclair. *Trust the Text*. 1-6.
- Carter, R. and S. Adolphs, 2003.** 'And she's like 'it's terrible like': spoken discourse, grammar and discourse analysis'. *International Journal of English Studies* 3/1: 45-57.



**Carter, R. and M. McCarthy (eds.) 1988** *Vocabulary and Language Teaching*. London: Longman.

**Carter, R. and M. McCarthy. 1995.** 'Grammar and the spoken language.' *Applied Linguistics* 16/2: 141-58.

**Carter, R and M. McCarthy. 1997a.** *Exploring Spoken English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Carter, R. and M. McCarthy. 1997b.** 'Correspondence.' *ELT Journal* 50/4: 369-371.

**Carter, R. and M. McCarthy. 2001.** 'Size isn't everything: Spoken English, corpus and the classroom.' *TESOL Quarterly* 35/2: 337-340.

**Carter, R. and M. McCarthy. 2004.** 'Creating, interacting: creative language, dialogue and social context.' *Applied Linguistics* 25/162-88.

**Cazden, C. 1989.** 'Contributions of the Bakhtin Circle to communicative competence.' *Applied Linguistics* 10/2: 116-127.

**Chafe, W. 1968.** 'Idiomaticity as an anomaly in the Chomskyan paradigm.' *Foundations of Language* 4: 109-27.

**Chafe, W. 1982.** 'Integration and involvement in speaking, writing and oral literature.' In D. Tannen (ed.) *Spoken and Written Language: Expressing Orality and Literacy*. Norwood, N.J: Ablex Publishing Corporation. 35-53.

**Channell, J. 1994.** *Vague Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Chavez, M. 1998.** 'Learner's perspectives on authenticity.' *IRAL* 36/4: 277-301.

**Cheng, W. and M. Warren, 1999a.** 'Inexplicitness: What is it and should we be teaching it?' *Applied Linguistics* 19/1999 : 293-315.

**Cheng, W. and M. Warren. 1999b.** 'Facilitating a description of intercultural conversations: the Hong Kong Corpus of Conversational English.' *ICAME Journal* 23: 5-18.

**Cheng, W. and M. Warren. 2001.** 'The functions of *Actually* in a corpus of intercultural conversations.' *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 6/2: 257-280.

**Cheshire, J. 1999.** 'Spoken Standard English.' In Bex and Watts (eds.) 129-148.

**Chick, J. 1996.** 'Intercultural communication.' In S. McKay and N. Hornberger (eds.) *Sociolinguistics and Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 329-348.

**Chomsky, N. 1965** *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.



- Christie, A. 1974.** *Hercule Poirot Stories 1*. Cambridge: Folio.
- Cleese, J. and Booth, C. 1975** 'The Anniversary' in *Fawlty Towers, Radio Collection*. Volume 3. London: BBC.
- Clenell, C. 1997.** 'Raising the pedagogic status of discourse intonation.' *ELT Journal* 51/2: 117-125.
- Close, R.A. 1981.** 'English as a world language and as a mother tongue.' *World Language English* 1/1: 7.
- Cook, G. 1998.** 'The uses of reality: a reply to Ronald Carter.' *ELT Journal* 52/1: 57-63
- Cook, G. 1990** 'Transcribing infinity: problems of contextual presentation' *Journal of Pragmatics* 14: 1-24.
- Cook, G. 2000.** *Language Play, Language Learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cook, G. 2001.** "The philosopher pulled the jaw of the hen.' Ludicrous invented sentences in language teaching.' *Applied Linguistics* 22/3: 366-387.
- Cook, H. 2001.** 'Particles.' In A. Duranti (ed.) *Key Terms in Language and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell. 176-179.
- Cook, V. 1997.** 'Monolingual bias in second language acquisition research.' *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses* 34 : 35-49.
- Cook, V. 1999.** 'Going beyond the native speaker in language teaching.' *TESOL Quarterly* 33/2: 185
- Cook, V. (ed.) 2002.** *Portraits of the L2-user*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Cook, V. (in press).** 'Basing teaching on the L2-user.' In E. Llurda (in press): *Non-Native English language teachers*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Cooper, T.C. 1999.** 'Processing of idioms by L2 learners of English.' *TESOL Quarterly* 33/2: 233-262.
- Coppieters, R. 1987.** 'Competence differences between native and non-native speakers' *Language* 63: 544-573.
- Coulmas, F. 1979.** 'On the socio-linguistic relevance of routine formulae.' *Journal of Pragmatics* 3: 239-66.
- Coulmas, F. (ed.) 1981a.** *Conversational Routine: Explorations in Standardized Communication Situations and Pre-patterned Speech*. Hague: Mouton Publishers



**Coulmas, F. 1981b.** 'Idiomaticity as a problem of pragmatics.' in H. Parret, M. Sbisà and J. Verschuren (eds.) *Possibilities and limitations of Pragmatics, Proceedings on the Conference on Pragmatics*. Urbino, 1979. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 139-151.

**Coupland, J. (ed.) 2000.** *Small Talk*. Harlow: Pearson.

**Cowie, A. 1978** 'The place of illustrative material and collocations in the design of a learner's dictionary.' In P. Strevens (ed.) *In Honour of A.S. Hornby*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Cowie, A. 1989.** 'The language of examples in English learners' dictionaries.' In G. James (ed.) *Lexicographers and their works*. Exeter: University of Exeter. 55-65.

**Cowie, A. 1998.** *Phraseology: theory, analysis and applications*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Cowie, A. and R. Mackin (eds.). 1975.** *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English. Vol. 1*. London: Oxford University Press.

**Cowie, A., R. Mackin and I. McCraig (eds.). 1983.** *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English. Vol. 2*. London: Oxford University Press.

**Crystal, D. 1997.** *English as a global language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Crystal, D and D Davy. 1975.** *Advanced Conversational English*. London: Longman.

**Curran, C. 1976.** *Counseling Learning in Second Languages*. Apple River: Apple River Press.

**Dagut, M and Laufer, B. 1985.** 'Avoidance of phrasal verbs: a case of contrastive analysis.' *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 7: 73-9.

**Dailey-O'Cain, J. 2000.** 'The sociolinguistic distribution of attitudes toward focuser *like* and quotative *like*.' *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 4: 60-80.

**Davies, A. 1991.** *The Native Speaker in Applied Linguistics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

**Davies, A. 1995.** 'Proficiency or the native speaker: what are we trying to achieve?' In G. Cook and B. Seidlhofer (eds.) 145-158.

**Davies, A. 2003.** *The Native Speaker: Myth and Reality*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

**De Cock, S. 1998a.** 'A recurrent word combination approach to the study of formulae in the speech of native and non-native speakers of English.' *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 3/1: 59-80.



**De Cock, S. 1998b.** 'Corpora of learner speech and writing in ELT.' In A Usoniene (ed.) *Germanic and Baltic Linguistic Studies and Translation, Proceedings of the International Conference held at the University of Vilnius, Lithuania*. Vilnius: Homo Liber. 56-66.

**De Cock, S. 2000.** 'Repetitive phrasal chunkiness and advanced EFL speech and writing.' In C. Mair and M Hundt (eds.) *Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory: Papers from ICAME 20 1999* 51-68. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 51-68.

**De Cock, S., Granger, G. Leech and T. McEnery. 1998.** 'An automated approach to the phrasicon of EFL learners.' In S. Granger (ed.) 67-69.

**De Jong, W. 1996.** *Open Frontiers*. Oxford: Heinemann.

**Dechert, H. 1983.** 'How a story is done in a second language.' In C. Faerch and G. Kasper (eds.) 175-95.

**Dechert, H. and P. Lennon. 1989.** 'Collocational blends of advanced learners: a preliminary analysis.' In W. Oleksy (ed.) *Contrastive Pragmatics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 131-168.

**Deller, S. 1990.** *Lessons from the Learner*. Harlow: Longman.

**Dendrinis, V. 2003.** 'Presentation at European Federation of National Institutions for Language. Stockholm, Sweden, October 2003'.

**Dewaele, J. 2002.** 'Individual differences in L2 fluency: the effect of neurobiological correlates.' In V. Cook (ed.) 219-250.

**Dörnyei, Z., V. Durow and K. Zahran. 2004.** 'Individual differences and their effects on formulaic sequence acquisition'. In N. Schmitt (ed.) 87-106.

**Doutrich, D. 2000.** 'Cultural fluency, marginality, and the sense of self.' In H. Riggensbach (ed.) 141-159.

**Dovring, K. 1997.** *English as a Lingua Franca: Double Talk in Global Persuasion*. Connecticut: Praeger.

**Drew, P. and E. Holt, 1988.** 'Complainable matters: the use of idiomatic expressions in making complaints.' *Social Problems* 35/4: 398-417.

**Drew, P and E. Holt. 1995.** 'Idiomatic expressions and their role in the organization of topic transition in conversation.' In M. Everaert., E van der Linden, A. Schenk and R. Schreuder (eds.) 117-132.

**Drew, P. and E. Holt, 1998.** 'Figures of speech: figurative expressions and the management of topic transition in conversation.' *Language in Society* 27/4: 495-522.



**Drummond, K. and R. Hopper . 1993.** 'Backchannels revisited: acknowledgement tokens and speakership incipency.' *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 26: 157-177.

**Dranti, A. 1997.** *Linguistic Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Duranti, A. 2001.** *Key Terms in Language and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell.

**Edge, J. 1988.** 'Natives, speakers and models.' *JALT Journal* 9/2: 153-157.

**Edge, J. and K. Richards. 1998.** 'May I see your warrant please?': Justifying outcomes in qualitative research'. *Applied Linguistics* 19/3:334-356.

**Edmundson, W. 1981.** *Spoken Discourse: a model for analysis*. London: Longman.

**Edmondson, W. and J. House, 1991.** 'Do learners talk too much?: the waffle phenomenon in interlanguage pragmatics.' In R. Phillipson., E. Kellerman, L.Selinker, M. Smith, and M. Swain (eds.) *Foreign/Second language Pedagogy Research*. Clevedon: Multi-lingual Matters. 273-286.

**Eisenstein, M.. and J. Bodman. 1993.** 'Expressing gratitude in American English.' In Kasper and Blum-Kulka (eds.) 64-81.

**Ellis, N. 1996.** 'Sequencing in SLA: phonological memory, chunking and points of order.' *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*. 18: 91-126.

**Ellis, R. 1994.** *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Eliot, T.S. 1969.** *Collected Poems*. London: Faber and Faber.

**Erlich, K. and Wagner, J. 1995.** *The Discourse of Business Negotiations*. Berlin Mouton de Gruyter.

**Erling, E. 2005.** 'Who is the global English speaker ?' In C.Gnutzmann and F. Intemann (eds.) 215-230.

**Erman, B. 1987.** *Pragmatic Expressions in English. A study of 'you know' 'you see' and 'I mean' in face-to-face conversation*. *Stockholm Studies in English* 69. Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell.

**Erman, B. and B. Warren. 2000.** 'The idiom principle and the open choice principle.' *Text* 20/1: 29-62.

**Everaert, M., E van der Linden, A. Schenk and R. Schreuder (eds.) 1995.** *Idioms: Structural and Psychological Perspectives*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

**Farghall, M and H. Obiedat. 1995.** 'Collocations: a neglected variable in EFL.' *IRAL* 33/4: 315-329.



**Faerch, C. and G Kasper, (eds.) 1983.** *Strategies in Interlanguage Communication*. London: Longman.

**Fernando, C. 1996.** *Idioms and Idiomaticity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Fernando, C. and R Flavell, 1981.** *On Idiom: critical views and perspectives*. Exeter: University of Exeter.

**Fiksdal, S. 1988.** 'Verbal and nonverbal strategies of rapport in cross-cultural interviews.' *Linguistics and Education* 1:3-17.

**Fiksdal, S. 2000.** 'Fluency as a function of time and rapport.' In H. Riggenbach (ed.) 128-140.

**Fillmore, C. 1979/2000.** 'On fluency.' In H. Riggenbach (ed.) 43-60.

**Firth, A. 1990.** 'Lingua franca negotiations: towards an interactional approach' *World Englishes* 9/3: 269-280.

**Firth, A. 1996.** 'The discursive accomplishment of normality. On 'lingua franca English and conversation analysis.' *Journal of Pragmatics* 26: 237-259.

**Firth, A. and J. Wagner, 1997.** 'On discourse, communication and (some) fundamental concepts in SLA research.' *The Modern Language Journal* 81/3: 285-300.

**Firth, J.R. 1957.** *Papers in Linguistics 1934-1951*. London: Oxford University Press.

**Firth, J.R. 1968.** *Selected Papers of J.R. Firth (ed. F.R. Palmer)*. London and Harlow: Longman.

**Fishman, 1992.** 'Sociology of English as an additional language.' In B. Kachru (ed.) 19-26.

**Foster, P. 2001.** 'Rules and routines: a consideration of their role in the task-based language production of native and non-native speakers.' In M. Bygate., P. Skehan, and M. Swain (eds.) *Researching pedagogic tasks: second language learning, teaching and testing*. London, New York: Longman. 75-94.

**Fox, G. 1998.** 'Using corpus data in the classroom.' In B Tomlinson (ed.) *Materials Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 25-43.

**Fox Tree, J. and Schrock, J. 2002.** 'Basic meanings of *you know* and *I mean*. *Journal of Pragmatics* 34: 727-747.

**Fraser, B. 1970.** 'Idioms within a transformational grammar.' *Foundations of Language* 6: 22-42.

**Fraser, B. 1999.** 'What are discourse markers?' *Journal of Pragmatics* 31: 931-952.



**Freire, P. 1973.** *Education: The Practice of Freedom*. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative.

**Fromkin, V (ed.) 1973.** *Speech errors as linguistic evidence*. The Hague: Mouton.

**Fronek, J. 1982.** ‘‘Thing’ as a function word.’ *Linguistics*, 20: 633-54.

**Fukushima, S. 1990.** ‘Offers and requests: performance by Japanese learners of English.’ *World Englishes* 9/3: 317-326.

**Gardner, R. 1997.** ‘The listener and minimal responses in conversational interaction.’ *Prospect* 12: 12-32.

**Gardner, R. 1998.** ‘Between speaking and listening: the vocalisation of understandings.’ *Applied Linguistics* 19/2: 204-224.

**Gardner, R. and J. Wagner. 2004.** *Second Language Conversations*. London: Continuum.

**Garfinkel, H. 1972.** ‘Remarks on ethnomethodology.’ In J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (eds.) 301-323.

**Gaskill, W. 1980.** ‘Correction in NS-NNS conversation.’ In D. Larsen-Freeman (ed.) *Discourse Analysis in second language research*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House. 125-137.

**Gass, S and E. Varonis. 1994.** ‘Input, interaction and second language production.’ *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 16: 283-302.

**Geertz, C. 1973.** *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

**Gibbs, R. 1986.** ‘‘Skating on thin ice’’: literal meaning and understanding idioms in conversation.’ *Discourse Processes* 9: 17-30.

**Gibbs, R. 1990.** ‘Psycholinguistic studies on the conceptual basis of idiomaticity.’ *Cognitive Linguistics* 1-4: 417-451.

**Gibbs, R. 1994.** *The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language and Understanding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Gibbs, R. 1995.** ‘Idiomaticity and human cognition.’ In M. Everaert., E. van der Linden, A. Schenk and R. Schreuder (eds.) 97-116.

**Gnutzmann, C. 1999.** ‘English as a global language: perspectives for English language teaching and for teacher education in Germany.’ In C. Gnutzmann (ed.) 157-170.

**Gnutzmann, C. (ed.) 1999.** *Teaching and learning English as a global language*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag.



- Gnutzmann, C. and F. Intemann. 2005.** *The Globalisation of English and the English Language Classroom*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Goffman, E. 1959.** *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. London: Penguin.
- Goffman, E. 1979.** 'Footing.' *Semiotica*, 25: 1-29.
- Goffman, E. 1981.** *Forms of Talk*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Gramley, S. and K. Pätzold. 1992.** *A Survey of Modern English*. Routledge.
- Granger, S. 1993.** 'International Corpus of Learner English.' In J. Aarts., O. de Haan and Nelleke Oostdjik (eds.) *English Language Corpora: Design, Analysis and Exploitation*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Granger, S. (ed.) 1998a.** *Learner English on Computer*. London, New York: Addison, Wesley Longman.
- Granger, S. 1998b.** 'Prefabricated patterns in advanced EFL writing: collocations and formulae.' In A. Cowie (ed.) 145-160.
- Grau, M. 2005.** 'English as a global language – what do future teachers say?' In C. Gnutzmann and F. Intemann (eds.) 261-274.
- Greenbaum, 1991.** 'The development of the International Corpus of English.' In K. Aijmer and B. Altenberg (eds.) 83-92.
- Greenbaum, S. (ed.) 1996.** *Comparing English Worldwide. The international corpus of English*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Grice, P. 1975.** 'Logic and conversation.' In P. Cole and J. Morgan (eds.) *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press. 41-58.
- Guilherme, M. 2002.** *Critical Citizens for an Intercultural World*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Gumperz, J. 1992.** 'Contextualisation and understanding.' In A. Duranti and C. Goodwin (eds.) 229-252.
- Gumperz, J. and D. Hymes. (eds.) 1972.** *Directions in Sociolinguistics*. New York: Holt Rinehart.
- Haegeman, P. 2002.** 'Foreigner talk in lingua franca business calls.' In K. Knapp and C. Meierkord (eds.) 109-134.
- Hakuta, K. 1974.** 'Prefabricated patterns and the emergence of structure in second language acquisition.' *Language Learning* 24: 287-97..



- Hall, G. 2001.** 'The Poetry of Everyday Language.' In J. McRae (ed.) *Reading Beyond Text: Processes and Skills (CAUCE: Revista de Filologia y su Didactica 24)* Seville: University of Sevilla. 24: 69-86.
- Halliday, M. 1978.** *Language as Social Semiotic: the Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Harrison, T. 1984.** *Selected Poems*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- He, Z. 1989.** 'Creative idiomaticity.' In H. Hall-Kira., M Meacham, R Shapiro (eds.) *Proceedings of the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* February 8-20, 1989. Berkeley: Berkeley Linguistics Society.
- Hensher, P. 2000.** 'Review of *When we were orphans* by K. Ishiguro' *Observer* Sunday March 19, 2000.
- Heritage, J. 1989.** 'Current developments in conversation analysis.' In D. Roger and P. Bull (eds.) *Conversation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. 21-47..
- Hirschkop, K. 1999.** *Mikhail Bakhtin, An Aesthetic for Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hoey, M. 2005.** *Lexical Priming*. London: Routledge.
- Holborow, M. 1999.** *The Politics of English*. London: Sage.
- Holland, J. (ed) 2003.** *Puerta del Sol*. XI/5: 27-67. Nashville, Tennessee. Champs-Elysees, Inc.
- Holliday, A. 1994..** *Appropriate methodology and social context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Holly, D.1990.** 'The unspoken curriculum, or how language teaching carries cultural and ideological messages.' In B Harrison (ed.) *Culture and the Language Classroom*. Modern English Publications. 11-19
- Holmes J. 1984.** 'Modifying illocutionary force.' *Journal of Pragmatics* 8: 345-365.
- Holmes, J. 1988.** 'Of course: a pragmatic particle in New Zealand women's and men's speech.' *Australian Journal of Linguistics* 8: 49-74.
- Holmes, J. 1988.** 'Sort of in New Zealand women's and men's speech.' *Studia Linguistica* 42: 85-121.
- Holmes, J and M. Meyerhoff. 1999.** 'The Community of Practice: theories and methodologies in language and gender research.' *Language in Society* 28/2: 173-183.
- Holquist, M. 1981.** 'Introduction' to M. Bakhtin *The Dialogic Imagination*. xv-xxxiii.
- Holquist, M. 2002.** *Dialogism*. London: Routledge,



- Hopper, P. 1979.** 'Aspect and foregrounding in discourse.' In T. Givon (ed.) *Syntax and Semantics Volume 12: Discourse and Syntax*. New York: Academic Press. 213-41.
- Hopper, P. and Thompson, S. 1993.** 'Language universals, discourse pragmatics, and semantics.' *Language Sciences* 15/4: 23-33.
- Hopper, P. 1998.** 'Emergent grammar.' In M. Tomasello (ed.) *The New Psychology of Language*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 155-175.
- House, J. 1993.** 'Toward a model for the analysis of inappropriate responses in native/non-native interaction.' In G. Kasper and S. Blum-Kulka (eds.) 160-183.
- House, J. 1996.** 'Developing pragmatic fluency in English as a foreign language: routines and metapragmatic awareness.' *Studies in Second language Acquisition* 18/2: 225-252.
- House, J. 1999.** 'Misunderstanding in intercultural communication: interaction in English as a lingua franca and the myth of mutual intelligibility.' In C. Gnutzmann (ed.) 73-79.
- House, J. 2000.** 'Understanding misunderstanding: a pragmatic-discourse approach to analyzing mismanaged rapport in talk across cultures.' In H. Spencer-Oatey (ed.) 145-164.
- House, J. 2002.** 'Developing pragmatic competence in English as a lingua franca.' In Knapp and Meierkord (eds.) Frankfurt. Peter Lang. 245-268.
- Howarth, P. 1998a.** 'Phraseology and second language proficiency.' *Applied Linguistics* 19/1: 24-44.
- Howarth, P. 1998b.** 'The phraseology of learners' academic writing.' In A. Cowie (ed.) *Phraseology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 161-186
- Hughes, R. and M. McCarthy. 1998.** 'From sentence to grammar: discourse grammar and English language teaching.' *TESOL Quarterly* 32/2: 263-287.
- Hulstijn, J. and E. Marchena. 1989.** 'Avoidance: grammatical or semantic causes?.' *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 11: 241-255.
- Humboldt, W. 1836/1999.** *On Language* (ed.) Michael Losonky. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hunston, S. 2002** *Corpora in Applied Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hunston, S., G.Francis and E. Manning. 1997.** 'Grammar and vocabulary: showing the connections.' *ELT Journal* 51/3: 208-215.



**Hunston, S. and G. Francis. 2000.** *Patterns of Grammar: a corpus-driven approach to the lexical grammar of English.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

**Hyltenstam, K. and N. Abrahamsson. 2000.** 'Who can become native-like in a second language? All, some, or none?' *Studia Linguistica* 54/2: 150-166.

**Hymes, D. 1964.** 'Toward ethnographies of communication: the analysis of communicative events.' In P. Giglioli (ed.) 1972. *Language and Social Context.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books. 21-44.

**Hymes, D. 1972.** 'On communicative competence.' In J. Pride and J. Holmes. (eds.) *Sociolinguistics.* Harmondsworth: Penguin. 269-293.

**Illes, E. 2001.** 'The definition of context and its implications for language teaching.' Ph.D Thesis. University of London, Institute of Education.

**Ioup, G., E. Boustagui, M. El Tigi and M. Moselle. 1994.** 'Re-examining the critical period hypothesis: a case study of successful adult SLA in a naturalistic environment.' *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 16: 73-98.

○ **Irujo, S. 1986a.** 'A piece of cake: learning and teaching idioms.' *ELT Journal* 40/3: 236-242.

**Irujo, S. 1986b.** 'Don't put your leg in your mouth: transfer in the acquisition of idioms in a foreign language.' *TESOL Quarterly* 20: 287-304.

**Irujo, S. 1993.** 'Steering clear: avoidance in the production of idioms.' *IRAL* 31/3.

**Ishiguro, K. 2000.** *When we were orphans.* London: Faber.

**James, A. 2005.** 'The challenges of the lingua franca: English in the world and types of variety.' In C. Gnutzmann and F. Intemann (eds.) 133-144.

○ **Jaworski, A. 1990.** 'The acquisition and perception of formulaic language and foreign language teaching'. *Multilingua* 9/4:397-411.

**Jaworski, A. 2000.** 'Silence and small talk.' In J. Coupland (ed.) Harlow: Pearson. 110-132.

**Jenkins, J. 2000.** *The Phonology of English as an International Language* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Jenkins, J. 2003.** *World Englishes. A resource book for students.* London. Routledge.

**Jenkins, J. 2005.** 'Teaching pronunciation for English as a Lingua Franca: a sociopolitical perspective.' In C. Gnutzmann and F. Intemann (eds.) 145-158.

**Jespersen, O. 1894.** *Progress in Language: with special reference to English.* New York: Macmillan



- Jespersen, O. 1904.** *How to teach a foreign language*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Johnson, M. 2004.** *A Philosophy of Second Language Acquisition*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Johnson, R.K. 1990.** 'International English: towards an acceptable, teachable target variety.' *World Englishes* 9/3: 301-316.
- Joseph, J. 2004.** *Language and Identity*. London: Macmillan.
- Kachru, B. 1985.** 'Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realm: the English language in the outer circle.' In R. Quirk and H. Widdowson (eds.) *English in the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 11-30.
- Kachru, B. 1990.** 'World Englishes and applied linguistics.' *World Englishes* 9/1: 3-20
- Kachru, B. 1991.** 'Liberation linguistics and the Quirk concern.' *English Today* 25: 3-13.
- Kachru, B. 1992 (ed.)** *The Other Tongue* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Kaponen, M. and H. Riggenbach. 2000.** 'Overview: varying perspectives on fluency.' In H. Riggenbach (ed.) 5-24.
- Kasper, G. 1989.** 'Variation in interlanguage speech act realization.' In S. Gass., C. Madden, D. Preston, and L. Selinker (eds.) *Variation in Second Language Acquisition: discourse and pragmatics*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. 37-58.
- Kasper, G. 1997.** "'A' stands for acquisition: a response to Firth and Wagner.' *Modern Language Journal* 81: 307-312.
- Kasper, G. 2000.** 'Data collection in pragmatics research.' In H. Spencer-Oatey (ed.) *Culturally Speaking. Managing Rapport through Talk across Cultures*. London: Continuum. 316-341.
- Kasper, G. and S. Blum-Kulka, (eds.) 1993.** *Interlanguage Pragmatics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kasper, G. and M. Dahl. 1991** 'Research methods in interlanguage pragmatics.' *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*. 13: 215-247.
- Kasper, G. and E. Kellerman. (eds.) 1997.** *Communication Strategies*. London. Longman.
- Kelly Hall, J. 1993.** 'The role of oral practices in the accomplishment of our everyday lives: The socio-cultural dimension of interaction with implications for learning another language.' *Applied Linguistics* 14/2: 145-166.



**Kelly Hall, J. 1995.** '(Re)creating our worlds with words: a socio-historical perspective on face-to-face interaction.' *Applied Linguistics* 16/2: 206-32.

**Kelly Hall, J. 2002.** *Teaching and Researching Language and Culture*. Harlow: Longman.

**Kelly Hall, J. and W. Eggington (eds.) 2000.** *The Sociopolitics of English Language Teaching*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters

**Kennedy, G. 1998.** *An Introduction to Corpus Linguistics*. Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman.

**Kellerman. E. 1986.** 'An eye for an eye: crosslinguistic constraints on the development of the L2 lexicon.' In E. Kellerman and M. Sharwood Smith. *Crosslinguistic influence in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press. 35-48.

**Kerr, P. 1997.** 'Authenticity and artifice.' *International House Journal of Education and Development* 4:8-9.

**Kjellmer, G. 1991.** 'A mint of phrases.' In K. Aijmer and B. Altenberg (eds.) 111-27.

**Kleinmann, H. 1977.** 'Avoidance behaviour in adult second language acquisition.' *Language Learning* 27: 93-107.

**Knapp, K and C. Meierkord. 2002.** *Lingua Franca Communication*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

**Kövecses, Z and P. Szabo. 1996.** 'Idioms: a view from cognitive semantics.' *Applied Linguistics* 17/3: 326-254.

**Kramsch, C. 1993.** *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Kramsch, C. 1998a.** 'The privilege of the intercultural speaker.' In M. Byram and M. Fleming (eds.) *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 23-37.

**Kramsch, C. 1998b.** *Language and Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Kramsch, K. 1999.** Global and local identities in the contact zone. In C. Gnutzmann (ed.) 131-146.

**Kramsch, C. and P. Sullivan. 1996.** 'Appropriate pedagogy'. *ELT Journal* 50/1:199-212.

**Krashen, S. 1981.** *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.

**Krashen, S and R. Scarcella. 1978.** 'On routines and patterns in language acquisition and performance' *Language Learning* 28/2: 283-300.



**Kreuz, R. and R. Roberts. 1995.** 'Two cues for verbal irony.' In *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 10 / 1: 21-31.

**Kroskrity, P. 2001.** 'Identity.' In A. Duranti (ed.) *Key Terms in Language and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. 106-109.

**Kurhila, S. 2002.** 'Clients or language learners – being a second language speaker in institutional interaction.' In R. Gardner and J. Wagner (eds.) 58-74.

**Labov, W. 1972.** *Language in the Inner City*. Oxford. Basil Blackwell.

**Lakoff, G. 1972.** 'Hedges: A study in meaning criteria and the logic of fuzzy concepts.' *Chicago Linguistic Papers* 8: 183-228.

**Lakoff, G and M. Johnson. 1978.** *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

**Lantolf, J.P. 2000.** *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Laufer, B. 1997.** 'What's in a word that makes it hard or easy: some intralexical factors that affect the learning of words.' In N. Schmitt and M. McCarthy (eds.) *Vocabulary: Description, Acquisition and Pedagogy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 140-155.

**Laufer, B. 2000.** 'Avoidance of idioms in a second language: the effect of L1-L2 degree of similarity.' *Studia Linguistica*. 54/2: 186-196.

**Lemke, J. 2002.** 'Language development and identity: multiple timescales in the social ecology of learning.' In C. Kramsch (ed.) *Language Acquisition and Language Socialisation. Ecological Perspectives*. New York: Continuum. 68-87.

**Lennon, P. 1991a.** 'Advanced learner at large in the L2 community.' *IRAL* 28/309-24.

**Lennon, P. 1991b.** 'Error and the very advanced learner.' *IRAL* 29/1: 31-44.

**Lennon, P. 1990.** 'Investigating fluency in EFL: a quantitative approach.' *Language Learning* 40/3: 387-417.

**Lennon, P. 1996.** 'Getting 'easy' words wrong at the advanced level.' *IRAL* 34/1: 23-36.

**Levey, S. 2003.** 'He's like 'do it now' and I'm like 'No!' *English Today* 73, Vol.19: 24-32.

**Lewis, M. 1993.** *The Lexical Approach*. Hove: Language Teaching Publications.

**Lewis, M (ed.). 2000.** *Teaching Collocation* Hove: Language Teaching Publications.



**Lesznyák, A. 2002.** 'From chaos to the smallest common denominator: topic management in English lingua franca communication.' In K. Knapp and C. Meierkord (eds.) 163-194.

**Lesznyák, A. 2004.** *Communication in English as an international lingua franca: an exploratory case study*. Norderstedt, Germany: Books on Demand.

**Lightbown, P. and N. Spada. 1999.** *How languages are learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Liontas, J. 2002a.** 'Context and Idiom Understanding in Second Languages.' in S. Foster-Cohen., T. Ruthenberg and M-L. Poscen (eds.) *EUROSLA Yearbook: Annual Conference of the European Second Language Association*. Vol. 2. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 155-185.

**Liontas, J. 2002b.** 'Exploring second language learners' notions of idiomaticity.' *System* 30/3: 289-313.

**Long, M. 1983.** 'Native speaker and non-native speaker conversation and the negotiation of comprehensible input.' *Applied Linguistics* 4: 126-141.

**Longacre, R. 1976.** 'Mystery particles and affixes.' In S. Mufwene., C. Walker and S. Steever (eds.) *Papers from the twelfth regional meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*. Chicago Linguistic Society. 468-475.

**Louw, B. 1993** 'Irony in the text or insecurity in the writer?' In M. Baker., G. Francis and E. Tognini-Bonelli (eds.) 157-174.

**Lynn, J and A. Jay. 1991.** *Yes, Minister*. BBC Radio Collection. BBC Worldwide Ltd.

**Maalouf, A. 2000.** *On Identity*. London: The Harvill Press.

**Macedo, D., B. Dendrinos and P.Gounari. 2003.** *The Hegemony of English*. Colorado: Paradigm.

**Mair, C. (ed.) 2003.** *The Politics of English as a World Language*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

**Makkai, A. 1972.** *Idiom Structure in English*. The Hague: Mouton.

**Malinowski, B. 1935.** *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*. Dover: American Book Company.

**Marks, J. 2002.** 'All change or small change? The corpus revolution: what's in it for me?.' *Modern English Teacher* 11/2: 7-14

**Marton, W. 1977.** 'Foreign vocabulary learning as problem number one of foreign language teaching at the advanced level.' *Interlanguage Studies Bulletin* 2/1: 33-47.



- Mauranen, A. 2003.** 'Academic English as a lingua franca – a corpus approach.' *TESOL Quarterly* 37: 513-527.
- Mauranen, A. 2004.** 'They're a little bit different.' Variation in hedging in academic speech.' In K. Aijmer and A.-B. Stenström (eds.) *Discourse Patterns in Written and spoken Corpora*. 173-198.
- McCarthy, M. 1988.** 'Some vocabulary patterns in conversation.' In R. Carter and M. McCarthy *Vocabulary and Language Teaching*. London: Longman. 181-200.
- McCarthy, M. 1998.** *Spoken Language and Applied Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McCarthy, M. 2000.** 'Mutually captive audiences: small talk and the genre of close-contact service encounters.' In J. Coupland (ed.) 84-119.
- McCarthy, M. 2002.** 'Good listenership made plain: British and American non-minimal response tokens in everyday conversation.' In R. Reppen., S. Fitzmaurice and D. Biber (eds.) *Using Corpora to Explore Linguistics Variation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 47-71.
- McCarthy, M. 2003.** 'Talking back: 'small' interactional responses in everyday conversation.' *Research on language and Social Interaction. Special Issue on Small Talk* 36/1: 33-63.
- McCarthy, M. 2005.** 'Fluency and confluence: what fluent speakers do.' *The Language Teacher (JALT)* 29/6: 26-28.
- McCarthy, M and R. Carter. 1994.** *Language as Discourse*. London: Longman.
- McCarthy, M. and R. Carter. 1995** 'Spoken grammar: what is it and how can we teach it.' *ELT Journal* 49/3: 207-18.
- McCarthy, M. and R. Carter. 1997.** 'Octopus or Hydra?' *IATEFL Newsletter* 137: 16-17.
- McCarthy, M. and R. Carter. 2001.** 'Ten criteria for a spoken grammar.' In E. Hinkel and S. Fotos (eds.) *New Perspectives on Grammar Teaching in Second Language Classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 51-75.
- McCarthy, M. and R. Carter. 2002.** 'This that and the other: multi-word clusters in spoken English as visible patterns of interaction.' *Teanga. Yearbook of the Irish Association for Applied Linguistics* 21: 30-52.
- McCarthy, M. and C. Spöttl. 2003.** 'Formulaic utterances in the multi-lingual context.' In J. Cenoz, U. Jessner and B. Hufeisen (eds.) *The Multilingual Lexicon*. Dordrecht: Kluwer. 133-151.
- McDermott, R. and H. Tylbor. 1995.** 'On the necessity of collusion in conversation.' In D. Tedlock and B. Mannheim (eds.) 218-236.



- McEnery, T. and A. Wilson. 1996.** *Corpus Linguistics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- McKay, S. 2002.** *Teaching English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McKay, S. and N. Hornberger. 1996.** *Sociolinguistics and Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Medgyes, P. 1994.** *The Non-Native Teacher*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Medgyes, P. 2000.** 'Talking shop: from aid to partnership.' *ELT Journal* 54/4: 379-386.
- Meierkord, C. 1998.** 'Lingua franca English: characteristics of successful non-native-non-native-speaker' discourse' *Erfurt Electronic Studies* (EES) 1998. <http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/edoc/ia/eese/eese.html>
- Meierkord, C. 2000.** 'Interpreting successful lingua franca interaction. An analysis of non-native-/non-native small talk conversations in English' *Linguistik online* 5. Retrieved December 23 2004 from: <http://www.linguistik-online.de/1-00/MEIERERKOR.HTM>.
- Meierkord, C. 2002.** 'Language stripped bare' or 'linguistic masala'? - culture in lingua franca communication.' In K. Knapp and C. Meierkord (eds.) 109-133.
- Meierkord, C. 2005.** 'Interaction across Englishes and their lexicon.' In C. Gnutzmann and F. Intemann (eds.) 89-104.
- Meierkord, C. and K. Knapp 2002.** 'Approaching lingua franca communication' in K. Knapp and C. Meierkord (eds.) *Lingua Franca Communication*. Frankfurt a.M.: Lang. 9-28.
- Meyer, C. 2002.** *English Corpus Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mitchell, T.F. 1957.** 'The language of buying and selling in Cyrenaica: a situational statement.' In *Hesperis*, 44: 31-71. Reprinted in Mitchell T F, 1975. *Principles of Firthian Linguistics*. London: Longman. 167-200.
- Modiano, M. 1990.** 'Standard English(es) and educational practices for the world's lingua franca.' *English Today* 15 / 4 : 3-13.
- Modiano, M. 1999** 'International English in the global village.' *English Today* 58 15/2: 22-28.
- Modiano, M. 2001.** 'Linguistic imperialism, cultural integrity, and ELF.' *ELT Journal* 55/4: 339-346.
- Moon, R. 1994.** 'The analysis of fixed expressions in text.' In M. Coulthard (ed.) *Advances in Written Discourse Analysis*. London: Routledge. 117-135.



**Moon, R. 1998a.** *Fixed Expressions and Idioms in English: A Corpus-Based Approach*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.

**Moon, R 1998b** 'Frequencies and forms of phrasal lexemes in English.' in A. Cowie (ed.) 79-99.

**Morrow, K. (ed.) 2004.** *Insights from the Common European Framework*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Morson, G.S. (ed) 1986.** *Bakhtin. Essays and Dialogues on His Work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**Musman, R. 1973.** *Britain Today*. London: Longman.

**Nattinger, J. 1980.** 'A lexical phrase grammar for ESL.' *TESOL Quarterly* 14/3: 337-344.

**Nattinger, J. 1988.** 'Some current trends in vocabulary teaching.' In R. Carter and M. McCarthy (eds.) 62-82.

**Nattinger, J. and J. DeCarrico. 1992.** *Lexical Phrases and Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Nelson, G., J. Carson, M. Al Batal and W. El Bakary. 2002.** 'Cross-cultural pragmatics: strategy use in Egyptian Arabic and American English refusals.' *Applied Linguistics* 23/2: 163-189.

**Norrick, N. 1984.** 'Stock conversational witticisms.' *Journal of Pragmatics* 8: 195-209.

**Norrick, N. 1985.** *How proverbs mean*. Amsterdam: Mouton.

**Norrick, N. 2001.** 'Poetics and conversation.' *Connotations* 10/2-3: 241-267.

**Norton, B. 1997.** 'Language, identity and the ownership of English.' *TESOL Quarterly* 31/3: 409-430.

**O'Donnell and Todd, 1980.** *Variety in Contemporary English*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

**O'Keeffe, A. 2003.** 'Strangers on the line: a corpus-based lexico-grammatical analysis of radio phone-in.' Ph.D Thesis. University of Limerick, April 2003.

**Oppenheim, N. 2000.** 'The importance of recurrent sequences for non-native speaker fluency and cognition.' In H. Riegenbach (ed.) 220-240.

**Östman, J-O. 1981.** *You know: a discourse functional approach*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.



- Paikeday, T. 1985.** *The Native Speaker is Dead*. Toronto: Paikeday Publications Inc.
- Park, Y-Y. 2003.** 'Characteristics of NNS talk in oral interview.' *English Teaching Anseonggun*, South Korea. 58/3: 41-68.
- Partington, A. 1996.** *Patterns and Meanings*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Partington, A. 2003.** *The Linguistics of Political Argument*. London: Routledge.
- Partington, A and J. Morley. 2004.** 'From frequency to ideology: investigating word and cluster/bundle frequency in political debate.' In B. Lewandoska-Tomaszcyk (ed.) *Practical Applications in Language and Computers PALC 2003*. Frankfurt a. Main: Peter Lang. 179-192.
- Pavlenko, A. and J. Lantolf, 2000.** 'Second language learning as participation and the (re)construction of selves.' In J. Lantolf (ed.) 155-178.
- **Pawley, A and F. Syder. 1983.** 'Two puzzles for linguistic theory: native-like selection and native-like fluency.' In J. Richards and R. Schmidt (eds.) *Language and Communication*\_Longman. 191-226.
- Pennycook, A. 1994.** *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*. Harlow: Longman.
- Pennycook, A. 1998.** *English and the Discourse of Colonialism*. London: Routledge.
- Pennycook, A. 2001.** *Critical Applied Linguistics: a critical introduction*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Peters, A. 1983.** *The Units of Language Acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Phillipson, R. 1992.** *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pierce, B. 1989.** 'Toward a pedagogy of possibility in the teaching of English internationally: people's English in South Africa.' *TESOL Quarterly* 23/3: 401-420.
- Pölzl, U. 2003.** 'Signalling cultural identity: the use of L1/Ln in ELF.' *Vienna English Working Papers* 12/2: 3-23.
- Poos, D and R Simpson. 2002.** 'Cross-disciplinary comparisons of hedging' in R. Reppen (ed.) *Using Corpora to Explore Linguistic Variation*. 3-23.
- Porte, G. 1999.** 'English as a forgotten language: the perceived effects of language attrition.' *English Language Teaching Journal* 53/1: 28-35.
- Porte, G. 2003.** 'English from a distance: code-mixing and blending in the L1 output of long-term resident overseas EFL teachers.' In V. Cook (ed.) 103-119



- Powell, M. 1985.** 'Purposive vagueness: an evaluative dimension of vague quantifying expressions.' *Journal of Linguistics* 21: 31-50.
- Powell M 1992.** 'Semantic/pragmatic regularities in informal lexis: British speakers in spontaneous conversational settings.' *Text* 12 (1): 19-58.
- Prabhu, S. 1995** 'On new / non-native Englishes: a gamelan.' *Journal of Pragmatics* 24: 295-321.
- Preston, D. 1981.** 'The ethnography of TESOL.' *TESOL Quarterly* 15: 105-116.
- Prodromou, L. 1988.** 'English as cultural action.' *ELT Journal* 42/2:73-83.
- Prodromou, L. 1992.** 'What culture, which culture?' *ELT Journal* 46/1: 39-50.
- Prodromou, L. 1996a.** 'Correspondence.' *ELT Journal* 50/1: 88-89.
- Prodromou, L. 1996b** 'Correspondence.' *ELT Journal* 50/4 : 371-373
- Prodromou, L. 1997a.** 'Global English and its struggle against the octopus.' *IATEFL Newsletter* 135: 12-14.
- Prodromou, L. 1997b.** 'From corpus to octopus.' *IATEFL Newsletter* 137: 18-21
- Prodromou, L. 1997c.** 'Corpora: the real thing?' *English Teaching Professional* 5: 2-12.
- Prodromou, L. 2001.** 'Prospero's books or which English, whose English?' In J. McRae (ed.) *Reading Beyond Text: Processes and Skills (CAUCE: Revista de Filologia y su Didactica* 24) Seville: University of Sevilla. 24: 583-615.
- Prodromou, L 2003.** 'In search of the successful user of English.' *Modern English Teacher* 12/2: 5-14.
- Quirk, R. 1955.** 'Colloquial English and communication.' In B.Evans (ed.) *Studies in Communication*. London: Secker and Warbug. 169-182.
- Quirk, R., S. Greenbaum, G.Leech and J. Svartvik. 1972.** *A Grammar of Contemporary English*. London: Longman.
- Quirk, R. 1981.** 'International communication and the concept of nuclear English.' In L Smith (ed.) *English for Cross-Cultural Communication*. London: Macmillan. 151-165.
- Quirk, R. 1985.** 'The English language in a global context.' In R. Quirk and H. Widdowson 1-6
- Quirk, R. 1990.** 'Language varieties and standard language.' *English Today* 21: 3-10.



- Quirk, R and H. Widdowson (eds.) 1985.** *English in the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rampton, B. 1990** 'Displacing the 'native-speaker'. *ELT Journal* 44/2: 97-101.
- Rampton, B. 1995.** *Crossing*. London: Longman.
- Rampton, B. 1997.** 'A sociolinguistic perspective on L2 communication strategies.' In G. Kasper and E. Kellerman (eds.) 279-303).
- Rampton, B. 2001.** 'Crossing.' In A. Duranti (ed.) *Key terms in Language and Culture*. Oxford: Blackweell Publishers. 49-51.
- Raupach, M. 1984.** 'Formulae in second language speech productions.' In H. Dechert., D. Möhle and M. Raupach (eds.) *Second language Productions*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr. 114-137.
- Read, J. and P. Nation. 2004.** 'Measurement of formulaic sequences.' In N. Schmitt (ed.) 23-36.
- Renouf, A. amd J. Sinclair. 1991.** 'Collocational frameworks in English.' In K. Aijmer and B. Altenberg (eds.)128-143.
- Richards, F. 1948.** *Billy Bunter's Barring-Out*. London: Charles Skilton Ltd.
- Riggenbach, H. 2000.** *Perspectives on Fluency*. Ann Arbor: The University of: Michigan Press.
- Roberts, C. 1996.** 'A social perspective on understanding: some issues of theory and method.' In Bremer et al (eds.) 9-36.
- Roberts, M. 1944.** *The Science of Idioms: A Method of Inquiry into Cognitive Design of Language*. The Modern Language Association of America. 69: 291-306.
- Robinson, G. 1985.** *Crosscultural Understanding*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Rommertweit, R. 1974.** *On Message Structure: A Framework for the Study of Language and Communication*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.
- Rommetveit, R. and R. Blakar. (eds.) 1979.** *Studies of Language, Thought and Verbal Communication*. London: Academic Press.
- Roger, D. and P. Bull (eds.) 1989.** *Conversation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Rosch, E. 1975.** 'Cognitive representations of semantic categories.' *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 104: 192-233
- Rudza, B., J Channell, Y. Putseys and P. Ostyn. 1981.** *The Words You Need*. London: Macmillan.



**Rundell, M. 1997.** 'Understatement and indirectness in English: from corpus evidence to classroom practice.' *Proceedings of the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Practical Applications in Classroom Corpora*. Lodz, Poland. 90-98.

**Rundell, M (ed.) 2002.** *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*. Oxford: Macmillan Education.

**Ryan, D. 2005.** 'A comparative corpus based analysis of advanced Spanish learners and native English speakers use of lexical chunks.' Unpublished MA dissertation, University of Limerick.

**Sacks, H., E. Schegloff and G. Jefferson. 1974.** 'A simplest systematics for the organisation of turn taking for conversation.' *Language* 50/4: 696-735.

**Sanchez Macarro, A. (ed.) 2002.** *Windows on the World: Media Discourse in English*. Valencia : Universitat de Valencia.

**Scarcella, R. 1979.** 'Watch up! A study of verbal routines in adult second language performance.' *Working Papers in Bilingualism* 19: 79-88.

**Schegloff, E. 1982.** 'Discourse as an interactional achievement: some uses of 'uh huh' and other things that come between sentences.' In D.Tannen (ed.) *Georgetown University round table on languages and linguistics*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press. 71-93.

**Schegloff, E., G. Jefferson and H. Sacks. 1977.** 'The preference for self-correction in the organisation of repair in conversation.' *Language* 53/2:361-382.

**Schegloff, E., I. Koshik, S. Jacoby and D. Olshe. 2002.** 'Conversation analysis and applied linguistics.' *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 22: 3-31.

**Schiffrin, D. 1987.** *Discourse Markers*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

**Schleppegrell, M. 1991** 'Paratactic because.' *Journal of Pragmatics* 16: 323-337.

**Schiffrin, D. 1987.** *Discourse Markers*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

**Schmidt, R. 1993.** 'Interaction, acculturation, and the acquisition of communicative competence: a case study of one adult.' In N. Wolfson and E. Judd (eds.) *Sociolinguistics and Language Acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House. 137-174.

**Schmidt, R. 2000.** 'Foreword.' In H. Riggensbach (ed.) v-vii.

**Schmitt, N. (ed.) 2004.** *Formulaic Sequences: Acquisition, Processing and Use*. Amsterdam: John Benjamin.

**Schmitt, R. and R. Carter. 2004.** 'Formulaic sequences in action: an introduction.' In N. Schmitt (ed.) 1-22.



- Schmitt, R., S. Grandage and S. Adolphs. 2004a.** 'Are corpus-derived recurrent clusters psychologically valid? In N. Schmitt (ed.) 127-152.
- Schmitt, N., Z. Dornyei, S. Adolphs and V. Durow. 2004b.** 'Knowledge and acquisition of formulaic sequences: a longitudinal study.' In N. Schmitt (ed.) 55-86.
- Schourup, L. C. 1985.** *Common Discourse Particles in English Conversation*. Garland: New York.
- Schumann, J. 1976.** 'Social distance as a factor in second language acquisition.' *Language Learning* 26: 135-143.
- Scott, M. 1996.** *Wordsmith Tools: Manual*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Scott, M. 1999.** *Wordsmith Tools. Software*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Scovel, T. 1977.** 'The ontogeny of the ability to recognize foreign accents.' In C. Henning (ed.) *Proceedings of the Los Angeles second language acquisition research forum*. Los Angeles, Department of English, UCLA. 31-42
- Segalowitz, N. 2000.** 'Automaticity and attentional skill in fluent performance.' In H. Riggensbach (ed.) 200-219.
- Seidlhofer, B. 1996.** 'It is an undulating feeling...': the importance of being a non-native teacher of English.' *Views: Vienna English Working papers* 5/1-2: 63-80.
- Seidlhofer, B. 2001a** 'Towards making 'Euro-English' a linguistic reality.' *English Today* 68: 14-16.
- Seidlhofer, B. 2001b** 'Closing a conceptual gap: the case for a description of English as a lingua franca.' *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 11/2: 133-158.
- Seidlhofer, B. 2003.** *Controversies in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Seidlhofer, B. 2004.** 'Research perspectives on teaching English as a lingua franca.' *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 24: 200-239.
- Seidlhofer, B. 2005.** 'Standard future or half-baked quackery?' In C. Gnutzmann and F. Intemann (eds.) 159-173.
- Seidlhofer, B. and J. Jenkins. 2003.** 'English as a lingua franca and the politics of property.' In C. Mair (ed.) 139-154.
- Selinker, L. 1971.** 'Interlanguage' *International Review of Applied Linguistics* 10: 209-231.
- Shakespeare, W. (ed. W.J. Craig). 1969/1623.** *Complete Works*. London: Oxford University Press.



- Sherzer, J. 1987.** 'A discourse-centred approach to language and culture.' *American Anthropologist* 89: 295-309.
- Sinclair, J. 1985** 'Selected issues.' In R. Quirk and H. Widdowson (eds.) 248-254
- Sinclair, J. 1991.** *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sinclair, J. 1992.** 'Shared knowledge.' *Proceedings of the Georgetown University Roundtable in Linguistics and Pedagogy - the State of the Art*. Georgetown University Press. 496-499.
- Sinclair, J. 1996a.** 'The search for units of meaning.' *TEXTUS* 9/1: 75-106
- Sinclair, J (ed.) 1996b.** *The Collins Cobuild Learners' Dictionary*. London: Harper-Collins.
- Sinclair, J. 1998.** 'The lexical item.' In E. Weigand (ed.) *Contrastive Lexical Semantics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Sinclair, J. 2004.** *Trust the Text: Language, Corpus and Discourse*. London. Routledge
- Sinclair, J. and A. Renouf. 1988.** 'A lexical syllabus for language learning.' In Carter and McCarthy (eds.) 140-160.
- Singh, M., P. Kell and A. Pandian. 2002.** *Appropriating English*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Singh, R. J. D'souza, K. P. Mohanan, and N.S. Prabhu. 1995.** 'On 'new/non-native' Englishes: a quartet.' *Journal of Pragmatics* 24: 283-294.
- Skehan, P. 1998.** *A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, L. (ed.). 1983** *Readings in English as an International language*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Smith, L. 1925.** *Words and Idioms*. London: Constable.
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (ed.) 2000.** *Culturally Speaking. Managing Rapport through Talk across Cultures*. London: Continuum.
- Sperber, D and D. Wilson. 1981.** 'Irony and the use-mention distinction.' In P. Cole (ed.) *Radical Pragmatics*. New York: Academic Press. 295-318.
- Sperber, D and D. Wilson. 1995** (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). *Relevance*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Spóttl, C and M. McCarthy. 2004.** 'Comparing the knowledge of formulaic sequences across L1, L2, L3 and L4.' In N. Schmitt (ed.) 191-225.



- Starfield, S. 2004.** “‘Why does this feel empowering?’”: Thesis writing, concordancing and the corporatizing university.’ In B. Norton and K. Toohey (eds.) *Critical pedagogies and language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 138-157.
- Stenström, A-B. 1998** ‘From sentence to discourse: Cos (Because) in teenage talk.’ In A. Jucker, A. and Y. Ziv (eds.) *Discourse Markers: Descriptions and Theory*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Benjamins. 127-46.
- Stenström, A-B. 1990.** ‘Lexical items peculiar to spoken discourse.’ In S. Svartvik (ed.) *The London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English*. Lund: Lund University Press. 137-175.
- Stenström, A-B. and J. Svartvik, 1994.** ‘Imparsable speech: repeats and other nonfluencies in spoken English.’ In N.Oostdijk and P.de Haan (eds.) *Corpus-based research into language*. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 241-254.
- Strässler, J. 1982** *Idioms in English: a pragmatic analysis*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr.
- Stubbs, M. 1986.** ‘Lexical density: a technique and some findings.’ In M. Coulthard, (ed.) *Talking About Text*. Birmingham, English Language Research. 27-42.
- Stubbs, M. 1994.** ‘Grammar, text and ideology: computer-assisted methods in the linguistics of representation.’ *Applied Linguistics* 15/2: 201-223.
- Stubbs, M. 1996** *Text and Corpus Analysis*. Oxford. Basil Blackwell
- Stubbs, M. 2001.** *Words and Phrases: Corpus studies of lexical semantics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Stubbs, M. 2002.** ‘Two quantitative methods of studying phraseology in English.’ *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 7/2: 215-244.
- Svartvik, J. 1985** ‘Commentator 2.’ In R. Quirk and H. Widdowson (eds.) 33-34.
- Tannen, D. 1987a.** ‘Repetition in conversation: toward a poetics of talk.’ *Language* 3: 574-605.
- Tannen, D. 1987b.** ‘Repetition in conversation as spontaneous formulaicity.’ *Text* 7/3: 215-243.
- Tannen, D. 1989.** *Talking Voices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tannen, D. 1995.** ‘Waiting for the mouse: constructed dialogue in conversation.’ In D. Tedlock and B. Mannheim (eds.) 198-217.
- Tao, H and M. McCarthy, 2001.** ‘Understanding non-restrictive which-clauses in spoken English, which is not an easy thing.’ *Language Sciences* 23: 651-677.
- Tedlock, D and B. Mannheim. 1995.** *The Dialogic Emergence of Culture*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.



**The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1993.**

**Thomas, J. 1983.** 'Cross-cultural pragmatic failure.' *Applied Linguistics* 4: 91-112.

**Thomas, J. 1999.** 'Voices from the periphery: non-native teachers and issues of credibility.' In G. Braine (ed.) 5-14.

**Thorne, S. 2000.** 'Second language acquisition theory and the truth(s) about relativity. In J. Lantolf (ed.) 219-244.

**Tokahashi, T. and L. Beebe, 1993.** 'Cross-linguistic influence in the speech act of correction.' In G. Kasper and S. Blum-Kulka (eds.) 138-160.

**Timmis, I. 2003.** 'Corpora, context and classroom: The place of spoken grammar in ELT.' Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham.

**Titone, D. and C. Connine, 1999.** 'On the compositional and noncompositional nature of idiomatic expressions.' *Journal of Pragmatics* 31: 1655-1674.

**Tognini-Bonelli, E. 2001.** *Corpus Linguistics at Work*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

**Tomalin. B. 1993.** *Cultural Awareness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Tudor, I. 1996.** *Learner-centredness in Language Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**UCLES, 2003.** *CPE Handbook*. Cambridge: ESOL Examinations. University of Cambridge.

**University of Michigan, 2001.** *Michigan EECE/ECPE Certificate Examinations General Information Bulletin*. English Language Institute, The University of Michigan.

**Ure, J. 1971.** 'Lexical density and register differentiation.' In G. Perren and J. Trim (eds.) *Applications of linguistics: selected papers of the second international congress of applied linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 443-452.

**Valdes, J. (ed.) 1986** *Culture Bound: Bridging the cultural gap in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Van Lancker, D. 1987.** 'Nonpropositional speech: neurolinguistic studies.' In A. Ellis (ed.) *Progress in the Psychology of Language*. Vol.3. Lawrence Erlbaum: Hillsdale, NJ. 49-118.

**Van Lancker, D., G. Canter and D. Terbeek. 1981.** 'Disambiguation of ditropic sentences: acoustic and phonetic cues.' *Journal of Speech and Hearing Research*. 24: 330-335.

**van Lier, L. 1996.** *Interaction in the Language Curriculum: awareness, autonomy and authenticity*. Harlow: Longman.



- Varonis, E. and S. Gass. 1985a.** 'Miscommunication in native/non-native conversation.' *Language in Society* 14: 327-343.
- Varonis, E. and S. Gass. 1985b.** 'Non-native/non-native conversations: a model for negotiation of meaning.' *Applied Linguistics* 6: 71-90.
- Vygotsky, L. 1978.** *Mind in Society: the development of higher mental functions*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wagner, J. 1996.** 'Foreign language acquisition through interaction – a critical review of research on conversational adjustments.' *Journal of Pragmatics* 26: 215-235.
- Wagner, J. and A. Firth. 1997.** 'Communication strategies at work.' In G. Kasper and E. Kellerman. (eds.) 323-344.
- Warren, M. 1993.** 'Inexplicitness: a feature of naturalness in conversation.' In M. Baker, G. Francis and E. Tognini-Bonelli (eds.) *Text and Technology: in honour of John Sinclair*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 37-53.
- Watts, R. 1989.** 'Taking the pitcher to the 'well': native speakers' perception of their use of discourse markers in conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics* 13: 203-37.
- Weinert, R. 1995.** 'The role of formulaic language in second language acquisition: a review.' *Applied Linguistics* 16/2: 180-205.
- Weinreich, U. 1969.** 'Problems in the analysis of idioms.' In J. Puhvel (ed.) *Substance and Structure of Language*. Los Angeles: University of California Press. 23-81.
- Weizman, E. 1993.** 'Interlanguage requestive hints.' In G. Kasper and S. Blum-Kulka (eds.) 123-137.
- Wenger, E. 1998.** *Communities of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wertsch, J. 1991.** *Voices of the Mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- White, L. and F. Genesee. 1996.** 'How native is near-native? The issue of ultimate attainment in adult second language acquisition' *Second Language Research* 17: 233-265.
- Widdowson, H. 1994.** 'The ownership of English.' *TESOL Quarterly* 28/2: 377-389
- Widdowson, H. 1996.** 'Comment: authenticity and autonomy in ELT.' *ELT Journal* 50/1: 67-68.
- Widdowson, H. 1998** 'Context, community and authentic language.' *TESOL Quarterly* 32/4: 705-16.
- Widdowson, H. 2000.** 'On the limitations of linguistics applied.' *Applied Linguistics* 21/ 1: 3-25.



- Wilkins, D. 1972.** *Linguistics in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Willis, D. 1990.** *The Lexical Syllabus*. Collins: COBUILD.
- Willis, D. 2003.** *Rules, Patterns and Words*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wilson, D and D Sperber, 1992.** 'On verbal irony.' *Lingua* 87: 53-76.
- Wilson, D and D Sperber, 1995.** (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wong, J. 2000a.** 'The token 'yeah' in nonnative speaker English conversation.' *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 33: 39-67.
- Wong, J. 2000b.** 'Delayed next turn repair initiation in native/nonnative speaker English conversation.' *Applied Linguistics* 21: 274-297.
- Wong, J. 2004.** 'Some preliminary thoughts on delay as an interactional resource.' In R. Gardner and J. Wagner (eds.) 114-131.
- Wong, J and D. Olsher. 2000.** 'Reflections on conversation analysis and nonnative speaker talk: an interview with Emanuel A. Schegloff.' *Issues in Applied linguistics* 11/1: 111-128.
- Wong-Fillmore, L. 1979.** 'Individual differences in second language acquisition.' in C. Fillmore., D. Kempler and W. Wang (eds.) *Individual Differences in Language Ability and Language Behavior*. New York: Academic Press.203-228.
- Wood, D. 2002.** 'Formulaic language in acquisition and production.' *TESL Canada Journal* 20/1: 1-15.
- Wood, D. 2004.** 'An empirical investigation into the facilitating role of automatized lexical phrases in second language fluency development.' *Journal of Language and Learning* 2/1:27-50.
- Wray, A. 2000.** 'Formulaic sequences in second language teaching: principle and practice.' *Applied Linguistics* 21/4: 463-489.
- Wray, A. 2002.** *Formulaic Language and the Lexicon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yngve, V. 1970.** 'On getting a word in edgewise.' *Papers from the 6<sup>th</sup> Regional Meeting, Chicago Linguistics Society*. Chicago: Chicago Linguistics Society.
- Yorio, C.A. 1989.** 'Idiomaticity as an indicator of second language proficiency.' In K. Hyltenstam and L. Obler (eds.) *Bilingualism across the lifespan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 55-69.



# Appendices



## Appendix 1

### Opinion of SUEs by people who know them.

1: X is to my mind a near native user of English albeit not a full native speaker. Assessing his ability is difficult due to the amount of time...approximately 10 years...since he was last in regular contact with English. In his present work environment he needs only reading skills to keep up with seismographic events around the world. Spoken English is restricted to foreign friends, like me, and then only occasionally if he feels his interlocutor is comfortable with Greek. I judge his ability on his pronunciation primarily but he does surprise me with the range of his idiomatic phrases from time to time

2: 'native speaker'.

3: X's English is somewhere around 5, I think. It's not so much what she says as the way she says it...that weird whining intonation which is very peculiar.

4: (Greece) 'native-speaker'-like' in both spoken and written - you know she's NNS from her accent but she writes competently and seems completely fluent to me. Does it feel learned or acquired? She feels to me like someone who grew up with English all around her so is totally fluent, perhaps in a slightly formal old fashioned way - but it doesn't lack a sense of total command, and she doesn't make 'mistakes'.

5: (Mexico) 'native-speaker'-like' spoken - I haven't got any reason to think that's not true in written form either, though I have this slight memory about problems with her writing of teachers book, but this may not be to do with actual language skills and anyway it may be a false memory! - able to make jokes in English, understand all jokes, sounds like a competent speaker of American English though there is a trace of nns-ness about accent. I feel I'm talking to a native speaker when I talk to her. Can't think of her making a mistake.

6: I would say X is excellent, and so are Y and Z. All three are good, clean and clear. I only know one person who fits your native-like category - Katerina Smith from Zagreb - Croat married to an Englishman. Quite frightening. These are all very impressionistic, trying to recall inevitably patchy contact and not a full range of contexts! but here goes: X (in Uruguay) - I adore the little I know of him - like all Uruguayans, he's got a superb formal command of English - doesn't feel to me like a native speaker but outstandingly good nns. I don't really know him well enough to know - but if he's as good as X, another Uruguayan,



he's very good, with only the very occasional lapse, like once a year there's a slightly odd-sounding phrase. There's just the occasional idiom that she doesn't get quite right, and because she is very familiar with some highly colourful idiomatic language, she slightly overuses it - but I don't know if all this is true for Mario, too!

7: X (in Greece) - good 'NNS', but no mistaking him for a 'ns', not as good as Mario. I don't think he could so fluently joke or use idioms in English as either X, Y or Z. I can imagine him making mistakes and although I feel he's completely competent at expressing his meanings and understanding others, I don't feel it's very idiomatic. Feels learned rather than acquired - some unattended to fossilised expressions – L1 interference perhaps? like he leaves off prepositions 'she was operated yesterday'.

8: (Greece) very similar to X above - maybe a bit better? but no mistaking her for a ns. Like SUE X, her English feels learned rather than acquired - perhaps that's to do with little use of idiom - but I think she understands everything and can express everything she wants to say.

9: X (in Mexico) - very competent 'NNS' - extremely fluent - of course the accent makes you feel he's not quite as good as those who have very little foreign-sounding about them e.g. X - perhaps as good as Y? I'm just trying to think of his use of idiom and whether his English feels learned or acquired - I think I'd probably fall a bit on the learned side, though he's completely able to express all he wants to say and I've never known him not understand something. Does he use idioms? I can't think of fossilized errors, but impressionistically I think they might be there, but maybe that's because he sounds 'nns-like'.

10: X (Mexico) outstanding 'native speaker-like' and US educated. I completely feel I'm talking to a 'native speaker' when I'm talking to her. The best of all of these in my view

11: X, mmm. To my mind (though I'm just going from rather dim memories here) she wasn't quite what I'd see as one of your 'expert non-natives' - I mean, definitely not in the SUE 2 and SUE3 league. Fluent, yes, but the kind of person that you sometimes have to repeat things for if you've slipped into being very idiomatic; and that wouldn't be the case with the two people mentioned above, would it?

12: Frankly, I've never met anyone whose English is as good as SUE X's – almost including native-speakers of English. And I'm not kidding. Especially when it comes to him using idiomatic phrases - your hobby-horse.

13: spoke to her once or twice, and felt that her English was native speaker level. She is also



native speaker level in Spanish (and I assume Swedish, although I can't vouch for that!). She was educated in the UK, up to post-graduate level. I received a lot of her written work while she was on our MA programme, and it was outstanding, again native-level academic English. That's about all the detail I can give you I'm afraid, but do let me know if I can help any further.

14: My totally subjective description would 'near-'native-speaker' fluency, with a wider lexical range than many 'native-speaker's from a similar background. Language is often slightly 'literary' in tone/register. Intonation bears marks of Hungarian intonation patterns: would you agree?!

15: X is to my mind a near-native user of English albeit not a full 'native-speaker' Assessing his ability is difficult due to the amount of time...approximately 10 years...since he was last in regular contact with English. In his present work environment he needs only reading skills to keep up with seismographic events around the world. Spoken English is restricted to foreign friends, like me, and then only occasionally if he feels his interlocutor is comfortable with Greek. I judge his ability on his pronunciation primarily but he does surprise me with the range of his idiomatic phrases from time to time

16: Our Latvian friend X; yes, I'd say very proficient – advanced ELF – and in different registers (I saw his presentation, which was flawless; as well as chatting with him and also argued, briefly, about politics. The only 'error' I heard him make (and he made it twice, so it can't be a slip) is using 'win' instead of 'beat' in the context of talking about football (Latvia won Croatia).

17: (Holland) I rated her English as extremely good, not quite at the top of the scale (functionally bilingual) but up to a level 8 on my 9-point scale, i.e. at what is called 'Professional Level', one level above the Common European Framework's C2, definitely post-Proficiency in UCLES terms. I saw evidence of her written English in a range of contexts, from the formality of her initial application to the entirely appropriate use of note form in some of her correspondence and evidence of other delicacy of control of register when she chose to use things like 'asap'. I spoke to her a lot less than you did, but enough to get an impression of her English as being very good, with very few grammatical errors, frequent appropriate ellipsis and extensive vocabulary. The one area where I felt she may have had a little lack (or it may have been her personal style in Dutch as well) was where I felt she was being inappropriately waspish and a bit abrupt – as if she didn't have some of the socio-cultural awareness, but I can't be sure it wasn't her choice to be like that.



## **Appendix 2**

### **(a) Bio-data questionnaire completed by SUEs (Total: 42)**

1. Name:
2. Nationality:
3. Place of birth:
4. Occupation:
5. First language / mother tongue:
6. University degree (s)
7. Any formal English language qualifications.
8. Do you use English in your job?
9. Do you use English at home?
10. Do you use English in your social life?
11. Where did you grow up? .
12. When did you start learning English?
13. What language(s) did you speak at home?
14. In which language(s) was your education?
15. How long have you spent in an English speaking country?
16. How much contact have you had with English-speaking friends?
17. To what factor(s) do you attribute your high level of English?
18. Any other languages spoken:
19. How important is it for you to speak idiomatically, like a 'native-speaker'?
20. Have you ever had any experience of misunderstandings with idiomatic. expressions (when you used them or heard them?)
21. Do you mind if I use the recording we made for my research? All names will be changed:

### **(b) Extended comments made by SUEs in answer to bio-data questionnaire.**

#### **17. To what factor(s) do you attribute your high level of English ?**

Elsa (Hungarian): My father, who had been brought up by an Austrian nurse and was a professor at the Technical University, had lots of friends all over Europe. He travelled a lot and although at that time we were not allowed to travel, a lot of people visited us from different countries. I think I thought it absolutely normal from my early age that people spoke different languages. The first language I heard after my mother tongue was German. But when I had to choose a language to learn, (in 1965) my father found English more important than German, so



I practically never learned German but I can speak it. I am fully convinced that it was my talent for languages and hard work that helped me most in learning languages. (My sister, who was brought up in the same environment, cannot speak any foreign languages).

Hans (Germany): A range of things, really: I liked the language a lot when I started (still do); living in East Germany, my main access to English was through BFBS radio programmes, so I listened to various programmes, language varieties etc. for many years; I also learned a lot by working out the lyrics of English songs I wanted to play on the guitar ; 'Miss Meier' a good, enthusiastic German teacher of English at secondary school; she gave me little Russian adaptations of short stories to read ('The Invisible Man' and the like). Doing my Master's degree in Britain certainly helped, especially in moving my writing along and in terms of 'lived English' . Over the past 10 years English has become a true lingua franca for me. It's the language of love and conflict both with my partner and, more recently, also with my daughter. It's my key professional language in speech and writing, with colleagues, students, course participants elsewhere.

Patty (Swedish): I've always read a lot of books, most of which have been in English, and obviously the 6 years I lived in Britain probably have a lot to do with my command of the language and with the idiomacy (sic)

Marta (Hungarian): I spent six years in the States from eleven to seventeen, I think I mentioned this to you. ... When I was seventeen and we moved back to Hungary I sounded very much like a native speaker, and I didn't like it. Since then many years have passed and of course I don't sound like an American any more. It's a strange sort of thing that over the past twenty odd years I have gone through an incredible development as a competent user of the language, and have moved away from a 'native-speaker' model ... that these two things happened sort of parallel. I don't know if this is of any significance to you. I was just thinking that language development is very much an individual journey and so much depends on where you start out from. ... In my case the conscious phase of working on my language, wanting to be a better communicator came AFTER I had picked up a near-native level fluency.

Greg (Polish): I started learning English in grade 7 in primary school at the age of 12. The teacher was very good, she was motivating us to learn by getting us to do projects of different sorts, by being nice, supportive and demanding.

Then I continued my education in secondary school, starting at the ... beginner level. We did a lot of translation work with the use of completely useless and nonsense structures of the *what would you have wished you had done had you been in Susie's shoes after she'd talked to*



*the boss about having been sexually harassed in the workplace the day before yesterday* type. The good thing about this method was that I really tried, never getting more than a mere C, and as a consequence my vocabulary stock and the spectrum of complex structures were getting constantly bigger/wider?.

In grade three, at the age of 17, I decided to take private one-to-one English lessons. My teacher was really impressed by my ability to catch him out on strange words and phrases, but he said I couldn't speak English, which was true. The first thing he did was that he gave me a tape (a rarity at that time - we are still in the late 80s) with real English. The word real, though, has changed its meaning over the last 15 years or so. Now we would call the tape regular and mundane, recorded by actors with not particularly interesting listening tasks. But then it was real English for me, because I had never heard anything like that before. And I listened to it 60 hours a day and noticed that the language used by the English is completely different from my beliefs about what it should sound like. After some time, I started noticing details, first in intonation, which, for me was more high-key like when compared to Polish, then to the tone which was more nasal, and finally to the pronunciation of individual sounds, for example short and long vowels, aspiration, or glottal stops to name but a few. And I started imitating what I could hear. I remember that the most English feature for me was glottalisation, so I started barking like a proper Londoner. The tape, then, was some kind of breakthrough in my learning.

After secondary school I started studying English because it was the safest option (I couldn't do anything else). We had a number of classes a week, including Linguistics, Literature (British and American), History, Cultural Studies and Practical English (as opposed to more theory-driven subjects, all done in English). I did MA in linguistics (metaphors in cognitive linguistics), and I got a job at a university where I now teach ELT Methodology and Rhetoric. At my Rhetoric classes I try to sensitize the students to some facts about language, because, apart from its academic value, I find it useful, practical and practicable to know details about language that are not found in course books. This is how I learnt English

### **19. How important is it for you to speak idiomatically, like a 'native-speaker' ?**

Dimitri (Greece): Not very important. In fact, I do not wish to sound like a native speaker, but I do want my English to be very accurate. It is much more important for me to have a receptive awareness of idiomatic English.

Celia (Argentinian): It is important to communicate with friends, to sound 'up to date' when I teach advance levels. The problem is what native speaker to take as a model: most of my



students are interested in American English and the idioms they hear on TV and in business contexts, whereas my reading and education are 'British centred'

José (Uruguayan): The whole question of native, non-native, bilingual - very subjective terms - is such a grey area, innit? I tend to describe myself as a bilingual non-native, but this has led to natives saying nonsense, of course you're a native, while others have assured me that native I ain't... It's a bit like whether you are black or white if your parentage is mixed. This is where affective and motivational factors come in, such as degrees of empathy/identification - even admiration (so embarrassing!) - with the target language/culture. I agree entirely that the crucial moment for acquiring a native-like command of a language, idiomaticity included of course, occurs in one's early years. Nursery rhymes and songs are very much the basis of my own English and allow me to understand and share things cultural that to a great extent surprise some natives ("You're not supposed to know things like Little Jack Horner and Little Miss Muffet, José!"). But then I had what for some of my co-nationals and English speakers alike, a rather unconventional, maybe weird, schooling. I mean, your ordinary Uruguayan can't sing Auld Lang Syne and Rule Britannia!

Elsa (Hungarian): Why, why not ? I find it very important. Any time I spend a few days either in an English speaking country or with native English people, my English gets a lot better and I tend to use more idiomatic expression than before. Whenever I read for pleasure I make sure I do it in English to brush up my English. Idioms used actively, that is the problem. Understanding idioms is evident.

Hans (German): Interesting assumption. I'm not sure I find it important to speak idiomatically LIKE A 'NATIVE-SPEAKER', though I do find it important to speak IDIOMATICALLY. My idiomaticity is probably quite a mixed bag of influences from various English-speaking environments over the past ten years or more. Quite messy really. I am fairly aware, though, of the lexical potential of English for my professional language use. Like Marta, I find English richly metaphorical and am fascinated by its descriptive power e.g. for 'imaging' my students or my own teacher/training issues. I'm quite interested in a different model orientation for EFL i.e. 'intercultural speaker' construct) myself. I guess it's partly to do with my own 'live interculturalism' and partly with the work I've been doing here in Hungary (I worked closely with a group of Hungarian school teachers who published a fairly 'intercultural' coursebook I've always felt the 'who's worth more - native or non-native' debate is somewhat misconstrued and narrow. For me, the wider frame of intercultural competence has offered a more productive way forward.



Patty (Swedish): I like being part of the community in which I live and one way in which you can do that is integrating culturally and linguistically. The more native-like you speak the language, the more effort you've made to do so, which in turn is a way to show your respect for the country you're living in. Speaking idiomatically also makes you more aware of the culture in which the language is spoken, which in turn is important to understand the people who live there and their customs. Apart from that I work as a translator and knowing the language like a native is extremely important to be able to translate certain texts correctly.

Christine (Finnish): Important enough. To be honest, I have never given it much thought. I suppose it is important to communicate correctly. It is very important to understand people and avoid misunderstandings. Job-wise, I am an English teacher and i love teaching!!!!. Been hired by different companies because I am a (near) 'native-speaker'! I suppose that is important, I would be jobless otherwise.

Marta (Hungarian): I've never really thought about this. For me, it's important to express myself really well, to be able to say exactly what I want to say, not to be held back my language constraints. But to speak idiomatically, no, I don't think that's important. Or it's something I've never been concerned about. For example, I've never tried consciously to bring in an idiom because it sounds good.

José (Uruguyan): I have always got very high native-like results in tests: an A in Proficiency, a 9 in IELTS, and I think it was 99% in the Edinburgh battery, but this has to do with a high command of the language rather than with idiomaticity, which is your question. I think I mentioned when you interviewed me that I tend to shy away from being too idiomatic because I don't want to sound like a native speaker. And yes, I have experienced misunderstandings when hearing idiomatic expressions. I wouldn't be caught dead though using an idiomatic expression wrongly! It's very easy - I only use those I'm, absolutely sure about. A point about the idiomaticity of Cambridge CPE: the 70% they mention is mostly on the receptive side - I have had students with very low idiomaticity who still got As. On the question of punning, I enjoy punning in both languages and I get a special kick out of working out the puns in English headlines, but I'm aware that some of them escape me. They are indeed very culturally loaded, and it has been a great frustration for me as a teacher to find that the vast majority of the advanced student's I have taught, do not get them. I actually collect puns from newspapers and adverts: Specs Appeal (ad for glasses), Ecology begins at home, Faulty winks (article on insomnia), Are we being ad? (on the untruthfulness of ads), Boys will be Girls (article on Rupaul), Meeting Mr Wright (on a guy who bought a Frank



Lloyd Wright house), Leaving little to chants (article on the Spanish Benedictines whose Gregorian chants CD went to the top of the pops - I also think there is a suggestion that the 'little' also refers to the fact that they got ripped off by EMI and therefore received only a fraction of what they might have since the album made a pile for the recording company).

I do leave out parts of idioms (eg, 'hair of the dog...') but I'm aware I don't do this to the extent that natives do. I am also aware of the literalness that you mention idioms may acquire as in "it never rains in southern California" (Mamas and the Papas?).

To finish, let me tell you that I am not particularly good at using (or understanding) idioms in Spanish - it does not interfere with my liking for puns, however. This must surely have something to do with being bilingual - or maybe it's just me!

One last thing - and this has to do with teaching in a monolingual environment like Uruguay, but also applies when speaking with non-natives in general -surely accommodation is at work here: the poorer my students' or interlocutors' English, the more errors I make and the less idiomatic I become. It requires an effort on my part to keep my English up to scratch when I am in constant contact with non-natives and the proof of the pudding is that when I travel to England (which I do once a year), I find that my fluency, grammar, idiomaticity, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc are pitiful to pathetic for about a week and then it all starts coming back... My English was never better than when I was at Reading for a full year. At that time, I was also very keen on sounding English (which I no longer am) and was able to produce an RP that was so 'frightfully' good that it took in more than one RP native speaker, not to mention my newsagent who did not believe I wasn't English.

Ignatio (Brazilian): I think it's the ultimate goal of some non-native speakers, myself included. Not only English but any language you study. While I was attending University, I lived with some guys from Panama. Portuguese and Spanish are really close but some people have a hard time because they say it's too close and they can't tell the two languages apart. I was so involved learning the language, I liked the guys a lot, had fun, relaxed and learned a kind of a "supra" dialect. People from Panama noticed some idiomatic expressions but I also used some other expressions from Argentina, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Bolivia (there were people from these countries studying at our University and I picked an accent here, an expression there, etc). Making a long story short, native speakers noticed I was not a native speaker of their language variant but they took me for a native speaker of Spanish and treated me as an equal (this means better language input and more learning).

Celia (Argentina): It's important not essential. To speak idiomatically makes you feel closer to the culture, beliefs, history, customs and humour of a language. Without idioms you feel like



an acquaintance of the language, with idioms you feel like 'pals'.

Tania (Polish): Not important really. Some idioms or colloquial expressions have probably entered my idiolect but I do realise that foreigners using certain idioms may sound ridiculous, and so I'm not even making an effort learning idioms. On the other hand, I do need to know idioms for passive use, yes, that's important. When I don't understand a phrase, I just ask for an explanation. I can usually sense an idiom when hearing one.

Isabel (Chilean): Not much when talking to 'native-speaker's but quite important when 'acting' as an EFL teacher, as students, colleagues and other people expect you to know and use them naturally as if you were a 'native-speaker'.

Greg (Polish): It is very important for me to speak idiomatically, however I realize that it may not always work (vide: drink like a horse). It is so important that when I do speaking with my proficiency students I choose such items which seem interesting for me (and I'm willing to benefit myself from the phrases I prepare - some are new for me). The choices are based on how idiomatic and how useful the phrases are (i.e. frequent and natural) from the perspective of phraseological competence. The CD-ROM MED is a great source for such phrases (the smart search option), I also use some corpora. Recently we've done 'LIKE' and I see some of my students use it now, esp. as a direct speech marker, but also as a marker of vagueness. This probably goes counter to the theory presented by Carter and McCarthy in ELTJ, where they said that raising learners' awareness is probably the only possibility. In my opinion awareness comes first, then we need anchoring (lots of written exercises so that an item sinks in), contextualization in more-or-less controlled speaking practice, and then waiting and observing... Can send you some worksheets to illustrate what I mean if you're interested. I seem to have wandered off a bit... But idiomaticity is very important for me, especially natural idiomaticity.

Helda (Finnish): Not at all; a language in international use deserves all it gets; I do manifestly NOT want to sound like a native speaker. The only important aspects are that people understand what I say, and that I can be persuasive in English.

Patty (Swedish): I think it's quite important since I don't like being a foreigner in the languages i speak. Mind you, I haven't done anything in particular to become more idiomatic, just my education and reading loads. Some 'native-speaker's don't realise I'm not a native...they just take for granted I'm from some 'other' part of Britain then them. Those who do know I'm not native usually ask me about it and want to know where and how I learnt the language.



**20. Have you ever had any experience of misunderstandings with idiomatic expressions (when you used them or heard them ?)**

José (Uruguyan): I didn't know the expression "belt up" (in your article) in the sense of shutting up, so I would have missed the pun altogether since I would have got its literal meaning only.

Dimitri (Greek): In the last few years, I have rarely misunderstood idiomatic expressions, perhaps because my level in English is now very advanced and I always know when an idiomatic expression has been used, even if I am not familiar with the expression itself. In spoken interaction, I will usually ask what the expression means; otherwise I will look it up. When speaking English myself, I have sometimes been misunderstood, especially when I am being creative with the language. Some of my interlocutors assume that as a nonnative speaker I must be making mistakes rather than playing with the language and this has occasionally led to misunderstandings. However, because I tend to avoid using lexis that I am not 100% sure I have mastered, I have rarely been misunderstood because of a 'genuine' mistake in my use of the language.

As a nonnative speaker I am not as free as native speakers to use the language creatively and idiomatically. For instance, yesterday I said something to a group of teachers and one of them commented 'you can say that again!' Humorously, I said 'OK, I'll say it again' and repeated myself more emphatically - embarrassingly, she said, 'no, I actually meant that I agreed with you.' The assumption was, of course, that the meaning of the idiom had been lost on me!' A few weeks ago, I sent an e-mail to a long-lost friend who humorously replied 'your name does indeed ring a bell.' I replied that I was glad I could still ring bells in his quarters and when I saw him the following week he said he was surprised I didn't know the meaning of 'ring a bell.'

Tania (Polish): I can't remember misunderstandings but I remember my experimenting with an idiom once: e.g. I said (to someone I knew) in a pub once: 'Can I bum a cigarette off you?' and this raised a smile; probably the phrase did not match the language of the people I was with or something.

Ignatio (Brazilian): When I first arrived in the USA in 1996, I was not prepared to face the demands of graduate courses in the US (even though I was only an exchange student aspiring to get into grad school). In the shuttle who took passengers from New York City to Albany, I



started talking to a couple and the husband said something like this "Albany is so many miles away as the crow flies". We spent half the trip trying to both translate miles into kilometers and explaining/understanding the expression.

Greg (Polish): Quite often, actually, both passively and actively. Passively: when somebody says something I'm not familiar with and the context is not sufficient to understand an item; actively: when I say something and it turns out to be something regional and not every NS is familiar with it (probably the influence of Trudgill and Co., esp. the cassette 'English accents and dialects which used to be my hobby horse - didn't have the book so had to detect what the people were saying). Also manipulating with idioms: a new example to be added to your data: recently some of the teachers from the school where I work went out to a pub and there were some people who didn't speak English. One of the NS got pissed and he thought we were joking at him in Polish. The next day he came to me and told me he didn't like it and that he wouldn't mind if we'd done it in a language he understands. I explained to him that when we speak Polish (with those for whom English is not an international lingua franca) we have better things to talk about than our teachers and that the URINE WAS NOT EXTRACTED. He didn't get that at all and asked for clarification. Do you think it was because the topic of our conversation was quite serious and using the phrase for effect (humorous and to establish a more friendly rapport) was a bit out of place (sort of incongruent) and the speaker wasn't expecting this kind of register and tried to detect the phrase as literal (read: making no sense at all) thus failing to communicate (or me failing to communicate or the phrase failing to communicate its meaning)? Or he wasn't expecting this sort of play on words from a non-NS (the 'drink like a horse syndrome')?

Helda (Finnish): : masses of times, in all my languages



## Appendix 3

### SUE TEST

(Completed by 100 L1 and L2-users, mostly ELT professionals, from around the world).

Instructions:

Please read through the extracts of speech below and give a rough assessment of the level of the speaker, according to the following criteria. A close analysis of the extracts is not necessary. A brief 'gut reaction' is sufficient.

Definition of competence

**Competent** = able to use English fluently for a wide range of purposes in the context of English as an International Language, with both native speakers and non-native speakers of English.

Put a score from 1-4 after each extract for Speaker A only. The score is not a precise measure of the objective features of the texts but an indication of your intuitive, subjective reaction as to how good the speaker is.

4 = seems to be an excellent user of English

3 = seems to be a very competent user of English

2 = seems to be a competent user of English

1 = does NOT seem to be a competent user of English

COMPETENT    VERY COMPETENT

NOT COMPETENT    1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 EXCELLENT

Thank you for your time.

**Extract 1:** *Two lecturers are talking about participants at a conference*

**Speaker A:** - people don't ask as many questions – participants don't ask as many questions as if you have a group of...

**Speaker B:** Native speakers. Do native speakers tend to ask more than non-native speakers

**Speaker A:** We were talking about that yesterday...erm...I think they do because we are always using English examples. So, if you have a native speaker they can raise their hand and say, 'Well this point here, I see that the fourth example – I would interpret that as...' but a non-native speaker wouldn't come up with that even though they might recognise it as being something different. But I think also now that we are starting to use more examples about translation you can see that people are getting more and more involved because they can start to say, 'Well, in Italian we'd say it this way.' Or 'In Malay we would use this expression.' So that they don't open themselves to criticism as much as if they had to say something about English.



**Speaker B:** Yeah. Your own interest is in...er...computing, programming? Also you have a linguistic interest.

**Speaker A:** Definitely. It's only interesting to implement a new tool if that tool can bring me closer to finding meaningful anything in language or something else I'm interested in. I mean, just to implement a tool is not terribly exciting if I'm not waiting for the results. I've been recently together with a colleague looking at the high frequency structures because I think, well, first of all function words are at the top of the frequency list- those words interest me...

**Extract 1, Speaker A Score:**

**Extract 2:** *Two teachers are discussing their students*

**Speaker A:** ...we were concerned with the students who were behind

**Speaker B:** Yes.

**Speaker B:** and now we've got to think of more options for those students who are fast finishers and they can do plenty of things that we can implement. ..erm...and...er...the ..let's say the things that we've got to improve for the following year has got to do with the tasks that we give to students; the students have complained (*Laughter*) that....er...why should the weaker students do the true or false always and can't we can't do making questions, for example ...er...the same ...the stronger students say we're always making the questions and writing the paragraph and why can't we do true or false or sentences and so we've also fallen into the temptation of following a recipe and say well the weaker students can do true or false or ordering.

**Speaker B:** Yeah

**Speaker A:** Or matching

**Speaker B:** Yeah.

**Speaker A:** and cannot ..er...do making the question or inventing a...a...a..

**Speaker B:** the story

**Speaker A:** an end of story

**Speaker B:** a character ...describing

**Speaker A:** But the thing is that I never know if it's gonna work. ..erm...until it's put into practice because all groups of students are different all teachers are different all groups of teachers are different because you have good rapport with the... those teachers at that school but that's not the same in another school in which ..the...the...relationship is very professional , quite detached so the same idea works...er...I've got to think of different things according to the situation so I never ...I never know for sure if it's gonna work; I know it's gonna provide some change

**Extract 2, Speaker A Score:**



**Extract 3:** *The speaker is giving a talk at a teachers' conference*

**Speaker A:** when I was beginning to learn Spanish a couple of years ago...erm...I had a Spanish teacher and these were mainly one-to-one lessons. My teacher was very ambitious – unlike the student and she wanted me to develop very fast; she wanted me to learn Spanish as quickly as possible and she gave me a lot of help and...er...I very often didn't do my homework because I didn't have time because I was a teacher then and I simply couldn't find time to...to...to...do my Spanish homework and whenever I didn't have my Spanish homework she got she got very very furious like you know the Spanish way and I once thought that of course that not having done my homework it would be nice to somehow to excuse myself to explain why I don't have it. So, I took a dictionary and...er...tried to find a phrase which would sort of explain the fact that I wasn't prepared and after about two hours I found this, which is a pretty complex phrase as you will see in a minute from the grammatical point of view pretty complex pretty complex...er...because there are various patterns in this sentence in this in this...er...in this line ...however, I knocks on the door, of course...memorised this phrase...er...knocks on the door opened the door I said 'Hola' she said : 'Hola' and then

Extract 3, Speaker A score:

**Extract 4:** *Two teachers are talking about their students*

**Speaker A:** you know, the other day I had this girl, she's eleven you know

**Speaker B:** mm...nice age

**Speaker A:** no, it is a nice age; she is actually quite nice; she's very nice [Speaker B: mm] but...erm...you know how do you don't actually teach kids to think , you know at the place... at school at all

**Speaker B:** shall I write this in columns or shall I write a long list? I don't know, sweetheart, it's your book, you choose, OK ?

**Speaker A:** But it was quite funny, 'cos she'd done an exam, yeah, and she'd photocopied the exam for me; we went, you know, we looked through what she'd done wrong and things and meanwhile she was finishing off her homework that she should've done for that day but after a while I said to her look now do you think it might be a good idea not to do your homework five minutes before the lesson? Yeah, and she went OK do you think it's a good idea not to do your homework five minutes before the lesson? Yeah. Why? She looks at me with big eyes, thinking what answer does she want now ... and she goes I don't know, I don't know and now just think about it – why do you think it might be a better idea, you know, you have one week to do your homework because you see me every Wednesday yeah so you have a week why do you do it on a Wednesday five minutes before the class because if you do your homework before Wednesday you can look it over before the class, something I know you won't do



**Extract 4, Speaker A Score:**

**Extract 5:** *Two colleagues are discussing different ways of learning*

**Speaker A:** There was a lot of that – learning by heart learning through memory

**Speaker B:** Whereas the Americans placed less emphasis on that.. ?

**Speaker A:** Oh, yes, totally. Totally. It was like more ‘self-discovery’. You go ahead and do things and see what works for you.

**Speaker B:** I imagine that’s had an impact on the way you now think about education and...

**Speaker A:** Absolutely, absolutely; and I think I do incorporate many of those things into my classes as well, giving opportunities to people to choose their own best ways of learning, whatever works for them. I try not to stake into one particular method or approach but I try to give them a variety of options, ways they can go about and.. and learn something. Yeah, through discovery but by giving them options, by giving them options, what’s best for them and perhaps doing a little bit of learner training because you cannot just let them go and say find find your own ways of learning, discover what you need to discover.

Code – co-de – switching.. ! I do that. Being in the States, being in Canada, being in England; ‘cause I’ve noticed that there’s a lot of er .. reactions to expressions which they might not consider appropriate. British-Canadian, Australian-English, this sort of thing – Scottish-English, you name it, and as a non-native speaker that’s shocking. It’s like “ What’s the right thing,”you know? They use it, they think that it’s appropriate.

**Extract 5, Speaker A Score:**

**Extract 6:** *The speakers are discussing how to bring up children. Speaker A has been talking about a woman who smacked her child*

**Speaker A:** of course then the baby only cries even more, screams its heart out; I said it needs some help, it really does; she said she felt really uncomfortable about it

**Speaker B:** Yeah, that’s right. Here thirty years ago it was quite acceptable to give a child a slap now there are still people who do that it’s not against the law yet but still

**Speaker A:** I’ve definitely decided I’m not going to do it and I also think you can do it when they’re young but there will come an age when they can hit back and probably harder than ...than you so it doesn’t work, does it? And it’s not I don’t want I don’t want them to be like other kids I don’t want to set that example...I mean we do need to lead by example

**Speaker B:** Yeah, that’s the way to solve the problem

**Speaker A:** So I think it works both ways. I mean we talked about that in the education course as well the different ways of...erm...exerting authority over your children sooner or later you abuse that authority if you use your authority to get your own way it’s gonna turn against you, It’s very important that an early age you discuss things with them and...and you teach them to think about things and they also are responsible that you to take them seriously



and that you respect them and you really you really want try and do and if something goes wrong at home now

**Speaker B:** Yeah, it's very, very important.

**Speaker A:** An old friend of mine she's ...I mean she doesn't really hit them but she's ...gives them a slap on the wrist ....I said it's OK you want to do it but I...I...I don't think it's gonna help and...and maybe it will help for a very brief moment but...er...

**Extract 7:** *Speaker A is telling Speaker B, a colleague, about her MA at Birmingham University.*

**Speaker A:** Well, as I'm a teacher I thought the content of the modules were very interesting

**Speaker B:** Hm. And how is the course organized?

**Speaker A:** I find it very well organized, the modules, it's a kind of self-study

When we were choosing the...er...you know, the course to take this one from Birmingham was the best one for us because it had to with what we do everyday in the classroom. And much more than this like right now we're studying testing and assessment and written discourse and I don't remember having...having studied this at the University it's been a long time since I finished my university course

**Speaker B:** Was there any aspect of the course that was new to you something that you'd never come across before and for the first time?

**Speaker A:** ...er...yes...we took the corpus linguistics...er...at Birmingham in January and February we went there for the term and this was something new I had heard of the work with the Collins Cobuild and the University of Birmingham but I didn't know how the corpora works and how to use it the classes helped me and I found it very interesting because it told me as a teacher how sometimes to give a student answers not based on what grammarians say but how language works how it is used in the written and spoken language...erm...it's very hard for me. I had lots of trouble working with this at Birmingham.

**Extract 7, Speaker A Score:**

**Extract 8:** *Speaker A is describing a family holiday to Speaker B.*

**Speaker A:** and it wasn't a touristy place and ...er...when we looked at the menu we were really surprised; the prices were exactly as high as the restaurant near the beach and someone asked for a ....fish....there's no fixed price for the fish....this and this amount of fish for this money, well you can't measure, you can't weigh it once it's on your plate, a 2-kilo fish even if it looks 20 decagrams...it's ...we had absolutely no choice we had to pay for the ...I don't know one kilo fish, of course, 'cos it wasn't a kilo but at the same time it was funny we thought we were cheated on as ...er...we had this bad feeling and ...er...er...we left the restaurant and we were walking back to the port and someone stopped beside me and the guy was saying in German that you left your mobile phone here and I did I had left my mobile



phone there but I hadn't left it on purpose but then I remembered that I had left it there ...we went back to the place I was given my mobile and he drove back me to the port funny really because in Hungary if you leave your mobile phone in a restaurant you have to buy another one yeah

**Speaker B:** Ha, ha, ha, it's lost forever

**Speaker A:** Ha, ha, yeah

**Speaker B:** Yeah. Lost in space

**Speaker A:** The same thing actually happened to us in Dublin

**Extract 8, Speaker A Score**

**Extract 9:** *Speaker A is explaining the problems of being a publisher's rep.*

**Speaker A:** ... I wouldn't say we have cliques or anything like that; I think for us the publishers it's really easy except that trying to sell books to private language schools is more difficult than state schools because...

**Speaker B:** Why's that?

**Speaker A:** Private language schools have directors of studies and directors of studies make their own mind about what they want to use; so what they appreciate... the role of... of the publishers or representative, but only in terms of 'can you come over and bring us lots of books so we can have a look at them' ? So, so, it's important then that the representative get in touch, but they can't do any sales pitch or they can't say this book is good or that book is good, they can only say neutrally 'we've got this and this and this'

**Speaker B:** They don't give you the opportunity to present the new book to teachers?

**Speaker A:** Hmm.

**Speaker B:** have a presentation

**Speaker A:** I'm afraid they are a bit looked down, because the representatives whichever publishing house you take, but they're usually... they've got teaching experience in most cases but they don't have the experience of the teacher trainer ..er...and so in the large schools, in International House or Bell or...erm...The Study Centre, the Director of Studies is someone who is very experienced and the contact is appreciated but there is no way you can influence...

**Extract 9, Speaker A score:**

**Extract 10:** *The speakers are discussing different varieties of English*

**Speaker A:** when you brought... with Mayflower... English to America and all the nationalities came around and they wanted to communicate and they wanted to communicate; they had to...they had to, well, they had to cultivate fields, they had to sell land, they had to ...they had...they were married together, they got married to each other...they...they, whatever, they started, they needed a simple version of the language ...a language in common.



It's worked and now we have American; it's much simpler, it doesn't have ...I hate in a textbook when you have - in the third lesson - 'I've got bla-bla-bla; he's got bla-bla-bla...sorry, more than half of the world, I don't know, how many people say 'I have this' 'he has that' and then we trouble our students, and the students.. It's the same meaning and they're confused, you know, and even the text that Janos wrote , you met Janos today, it's 'have' and 'have got' all over and I remember even being at the Oxford Center...in America, you can also say 'have' ...he does that in the middle of 'have/have got exercise' - he says in America people say 'have' because our children , who are learning English, also hear 'have'..

**Speaker B:** We tend to teach them British English, that's why there's so much have/ have got

**Speaker A:** The same is in French. If you observe French in Morocco or elsewhere or in Canada, it's much more simple; again, like English, nobody is so attentive to it because it's a smaller Francophone ...

**Extract 10, Speaker A score:**

**Extract 11:** *Two colleagues are discussing problems at work*

**Speaker A:** But that's, that's their fault, Maria, I gave them enough time to get it ready. They had to be ready the 21<sup>st</sup> of February, they had to have everything ready for the Consultant's convention and then they still had two weeks to look at it and make any adjustments according to the – and what did they have to do? They had to do things last month so that they just got like you grab somebody's talk and then you look at it and then you – I could have done this or that or that, that, that's their fault. I mean, that's why I was mad last week. The thing is that er, I wanted him to have everything done and there was Elena she wanted to go to Guadalajara – you know what? Because she had some commitment with her mother on Friday morning. I said I don't care but nobody is going to go except if they have a – er, work commitment until everything is ready because that's where you have to stick together as a team I think. So, and well, you intend to work hard with Maru so and they just needed to work here together as well. It's difficult to get them to work together as a team, you know...

**Speaker B** Yeah, I can imagine.

**Speaker A:** You know and I'm sorry to say that men are much easier to work with than women especially

**Speaker B:** There's less competition yeah, definitely.

**Extract 11, Speaker A: score:**

**Extract 12:** *Two colleagues are discussing people at work*

**Speaker A:** I think P...yeah...Peter. didn't...I think...I think...he was allud..alluding to that somehow but he was sort of he didn't say it very well; he just, I mean, basically one thing he said - that we need to ...kind of advertise ourselves more to a different student body

**Speaker B:** Yeah.



**Speaker A:** And...er...he then took it quickly into privatizing some functions of what we're doing, basically, what he was talking about was we should create a language school within the Institute, which would mean us being the language school and the others do their lovely academic stuff, you know, that was...a screamer...and...er...yeah...yeah what struck me at that meeting, you know, it was like a clash of worlds and you're sitting there and you feel like a ...like in a bad dream and you're thinking...er...I was thinking the...the...I actually do belong to this Institute, but you know, some of the people behind me were just making really rude jokes about anybody who came on to talk ...but they don't care, I mean...kind of...er...at the same time ...nobody said anything...we didn't either...I mean, I don't have the language in Hungarian – you could've argued if John probably doesn't ...wouldn't feel good about it – he wouldn't have that sophisticated language, to say 'look can we just stop talking ..'

**Speaker B:** but there was no opening, I mean, you...it would've been rude to say 'stop saying what you're saying and just don't ...' or just 'give your report as though we weren't around' but..

**Speaker A:** But surely it was badly structured at the beginning and then they should've said is there a point raising things...

**Extract 12, Speaker A Score:**

**Extract 13:** *The Speaker is discussing solutions to the Cyprus problem*

**Speaker A:** we may think that things are going fine now as they are but in actual fact they're not and I think this is the message we have to give people – we have to inspire them with the will to overcome the difficulties...er...in order to come to a some kind of ...er...a just and viable solution which is acceptable to both sides. We're looking for a glimmer of hope and ...er...my feeling is that there is hope because actually it's in all the interested parties' interests... best interests to solve the Cyprus problem. I mean, it's in Greece's interests, Turkey's interests in the interests of the Cypriots themselves and the interests of the United States and the European Union to see this problem solved and this sore point in the Eastern Mediterranean removed. It just seems that somehow ...er...the whole situation has not yet gelled to a point where we can get this erm... solution, but I think the fact that we've had this rapprochement between Greece and Turkey is a very significant factor... er... and I also think that Turkey's possible achievement of the status of candidate country in the European Union is also another which will be positive in the long term in helping towards bringing about a solution. I think, you know, our job is to make people in both communities aware that really if we solve this problem we have a much better future on this island. All of us. I mean, just the fact that children will start coming back.

**Extract 13, Speaker A Score:**



## Appendix 4

### Sort of: Concordance (250 random) from CANCODE socialising and intimate sub-corpus; 2.7m words)

1 <\$2> <\$=> Yeah but it's still the best sort of <\\$=> <\$1> Well yeah it's got  
2 <\$1> Well I don't know. <\$=> I just sort of <\\$=> <\$2> <\$G?> <\$1> I  
3 \$G?> <\$1> I don't know. <\$=> I just sort of <\\$=> <\$2> <\$G?> <\$1> I  
4 But you've gotta you've gotta give some sort of <\$2> You could tell their mum  
5 only person who's doing a like a really sort of a jet set sort of <\\$=> <\$2>  
6 \$G?> <\\$0155> <\$=> It's er er er it's a sort of a a retreating from the world an  
7 before I started doing this I was quite sort of a person who was quite a= aggrav  
8 ot four cheese terrine. I'm afraid it's sort of a bit Delia oriented. Then we're  
9 ow erm suspicious of everything <\$0749> sort of a guy </\\$0749>. <\$3> <\$0749>  
10 s <\\$E> <\\$H> <\$1> +and I made a h= sort of a half-hearted attempt to get in  
11 and had his breakfast and rushed off in sort of about twenty minutes. <\$1> Mm  
12 have to er g= er g= er g= er fit it in sort of after work you know. However I h  
13 <\$1> Yeah. <\$2> And er I saw Derek sort of ap= a= approach the side of the  
14 </\\$=> you wanna go back to er your your sort of apartments then? <\$4> Yeah. I  
15 ust sort of arty. <\\$0138> Well no it's sort of arty things. It's got jewellery  
16 gallery. <\\$0138> <\$2> <\$0138> Just sort of arty. <\\$0138> Well no it's sort  
17 asty-looking bint who sang with various sort of bands and big bands and did all  
18 om families where <\\$0117> everybody m= sort of basically loves each other and t  
19 omeone how to do it. <\$=> But at at the sort of basics of hitting the <\\$=> Well  
20 \$G?> </\\$0121> <\$=> But you're not gonna sort of be openly </\\$=> <\$2> <\$0121>  
21 <\$?> <\$E> laughs <\\$E> <\$2> What sort of door would you like? One <\$0688>  
22 <\$E> laughs <\\$E> It looks like someone sort of drinking in their eyes doesn't i  
23 sort of er er clones so that we're all sort of <\$E> sighs <\\$E> you know always  
24 <\$G?> <\$?> The bits he tells us it's sort of <\$E> pause <\\$E> just intriguing  
25 distracted a bit and you know she just sort of eats as <\$=> part of the <\\$=> p  
26 laughs <\\$E> <\$2> <\$E> laughs <\\$E> Sort of echoes in one's head. <\$0205> Do  
27 2> <\$=> So that'd be ideal because on a sort of er is it a boat thing or just a  
28 ed every evening. I don't remember what sort of er meals they were but er I I ca  
29 ssian cowboy because they have the same sort of er idea of camp fire balalaika m  
30 thought erm <\\$=> Do you know the last sort of <\$=> er+ <\$?> <\$E> laughs <\\$  
31 ther one erm you get all these that get sort of erm or= oriental African jewelle  
32 ome looking for curtains and you didn't sort of even vaguely measure the <\$E> la  
33 . <\$2> <\$=> It d= <\\$=> it gets this sort of faded stuff on it. Do you know h  
34 s An Abortion <\$G?> Only aimed at about sort of fifty thousand people <\$G?>.  
35 ah. <\$0300> You did. Yeah. But that was sort of from <\\$0300> the point of view  
36 er <\\$E> <\$G?> <\$3> <\$=> It was sort of funny and it was <\\$=> It sort o  
37 t's just to say em could you bring down sort of <\$G?> clothes basket and bin and  
38 screaming. And like you've you've gotta sort of get out of her what's wrong.  
39 ah. <\\$090> I don't know. Thing is it's sort of getting quite late now for kind  
40 d <\$G?> own decorations and how much it sort of glows. <\$3> She thought it wa  
41 \$1> But when you go to college you just sort of go to college. You don't have to  
42 was a disaster <\$=> and <\\$=> and he's sort of going back to that episode <\$=>  
43 it's <\\$=> <\$E> rolls tongue <\\$E> it's sort of gonna be an evening night thing.  
44 d it again and <\$=> having <\\$=> having sort of got this idea that perhaps this  
45 is plan we'll get everything set up but sort of got distracted+ <\$2> <\$E> lau  
46 E> laughs <\\$E> <\$1> Actually has he sort of got floppy brown hair? <\$2> Y  
47 + <\$2> One down. <\$1> +which is a sort of granny flat bedroom <\$X> in't |  
48 joined the Force. Er he's a brash pilot sort of guy <\$=> similar to </\\$=> simila  
49 e that week when I go home while I <\$H> sort of <\\$H> thought I'll do some work.  
50 ou see it everywhere these days. <\$H> A sort of <\\$H> hard blue. <\$G?> <\$1>  
51 > <\$=> But then <\\$=> <\$=> But it's the sort of <\\$=> <\$H> It's just sort of <\\$  
52 ll be <\\$=> I'll be in <\\$071> erm from sort of half ten eleven at night. <\$1  
53 liant. <\$2> <\$=> And they were a bit sort of hard to eat so+ <\$1> Yeah. Po  
54 <\$?> Mm. <\$F?> +and they want you to sort of have to go and search and know.  
55 ow what Bob said and what Jane said and sort of I think <\$=> I'm <\\$=> I'm going  
56 me point. <\\$054> <\$=> <\$G?> funny in a sort of <\\$=> I have friends that you've  
57 as firing questions at me. <\$=> And I'd sort of <\\$=> I've been reading my <\$H>  
58 ng otherwise. <\$=> Do you know what I'm sort of i= </\\$=> <\$1> Mm. <\$=> I find  
59 to it. And er I didn't sort of mind the sort of idea of it. I mean probably the  
60 the doorstep going you know that really sort of intense kind of <\$H> oh <\\$H>/  
61 liked the beginning. <\$=> And then I'm sort of <\\$=> It sounds strange but I'm  
62 very short like cos it's sort of quite sort of it's just like in panels. <\$  
63 4> Yeah. <\$7> Erm it's all played in sort of jazz ryzisms rhythms <\$4> Ye  
64 rally with non-Christians I try to just sort of just hope my life isn't affected  
65 t was sort of funny and it was <\\$=> It sort of just meant that you know you you  
66 ughs <\\$E> <\$5> Mm. For me I try and sort of just you know retreat. Can er er  
67 <\$1> I've only seen FX once and she was sort of kind of a bit <\$0187> strange th



67 <\$1> I've only seen FX once and she was sort of kind of a bit <\$0187> strange th  
68 that I wouldn't. Don't know how you can sort of know that you wouldn't like a bo  
69 ers a bit going back into our Christian sort of life and say Well hang on what h  
70 \$2> Yeah. <\$1> But she wanted it all sort of like crazy paving pointed or som  
71 >. <\$2> <\$G?>. <\$1> Shall we just sort of like cut out the middle man and  
72 t of caught this girl's eye and she was sort of like trying not to laugh. And I  
73 => all the long court cases and all the sort of like reports from court to get a  
74 \$2> <\$G?> glass of water. <\$1> +he's sort of like <\\$=> <\$2> Do you want  
75 ected me to be a bit more upset cos she sort of like broke the news to me in tha  
76 ahara desert. <\$=> And comes <\\$=> He's sort of like dying of thirst and dehydra  
77 cessant sort of <\\$=> Don't know I just sort of like Oh God it's getting on my n  
78 > Yeah. <\\$016> <\$=> And he erm he just sort of like <\\$=> He was so shocked tha  
79 nd it you know if I c= could have had a sort of like magical powers you know <\\$  
80 se paintbrushes doing in here? <\$=> And sort of like you know with all this <\\$=  
81 ts around the edges. So it's like quite sort of like a a pet= a flower with all  
82 And er so she's back and she's got this sort of like all right job but it's not  
83 Blaster on board but it's going to link sort of link up to it <\$0843> and you wi  
84 <\$1> <\$010> But they <\\$010> were all sort of little scabbing get by kind of t  
85 734> Erm </\$0734> as you walk along you sort of look at a couple of people. <  
86 d some bloke just got on and said <\\$=> Sort of looked at him <\$G?> and said ``E  
87 ly sort of dismissive with her. And she sort of looked really hacked off. So she  
88 having me on''. So I gave up on them. I sort of looked at the odd one like when  
89 > a dark alley </\$H>. <\$1> Er Zed is sort of looking rather embarrassed er co  
90 l> Er <\$0714> er </\$0714> <\$0715> he he sort of looks around </\$0715> and gestur  
91 r was really grim. We had some terrible sort of maize that we <\$=> had <\\$=> see  
92 was Les Henry and Norman and they were sort of mates of his. <\$=> And then ther  
93 it was incredible. But they have a very sort of matter of fact approach to every  
94 nds are so young. Anybody who's got any sort of maturity whatsoever just tells h  
95 hat <\$H> is <\\$H> done. So he wanted to sort of meet me informally and sort of c  
96 n't sustain being+ <\$3> No. <\$2> +sort of mental. <\$3> No you can't.  
97 > <\$2> <\$=> It got <\\$=> It gets to sort of midday and I'm really really hun  
98 ?> <\$0340> Do you <\\$0340> think they'd sort of nod wisely+ <\$?> Yes. <\$F?  
99 rvice afterwards. And <\$G2> devised a a sort of noncommittal er memorial out in  
100 want it to go on for too long that it's sort of nothing's happening. And then yo  
101 g another child cos they're both really sort of nurturing nice excellent people.  
102 \$0117> buying a book that's marked as a sort of <\$0118> romantic <\\$0118> novel  
103 <\\$010> just got this prophet and said sort of <\$011> ``Go and prophesy <\\$011>  
104 \$=> <\$0170> If you can get away with it sort of </\$0170> <\$H> think you can just  
105 hurch had already known. They'd <\$0174> sort of <\\$0174> filtered through to <\$0  
106 th me so she came in a different <\$024> sort of <\\$024> <\$G?>. <\$1> <\$024> Ye  
107 nk my mum does either. <\$031> <\$=> He's sort of <\\$=> <\\$031> <\$2> <\$031> I c  
108 class. <\$=> As I say <\$037> officially sort of <\\$037> <\\$=> <\$?> <\$036> Yea  
109 \$H> about the guild and they do <\$0417> sort of </\$0417> assign people to go aft  
110 2> saying Amir don't do it. <\$0493> And sort of <\\$0493> like Oh I've gotta go a  
111 or people who find life a bit difficult sort of <\$0519> thing <\\$0519>. <\$2>  
112 e Tim was there and <\$055> like he just sort of <\\$055>+ <\$1> <\$055> Well but  
113 . <\\$0605> <\$?> <\$E> tuts <\\$E> Oh. Sort of <\$0606> <\$G?> <\\$0606>. <\$?>  
114 collecting exhibitions and <\$085> this sort of <\\$085> thing you know. <\$2>  
115 ut it's a bit bloody abrupt. It's quite sort of <\$08> <\$G?> <\\$08>. <\$1> <\$0  
116 bert we knew but erm Greg and Ruth were sort of outsiders. <\$=> They they weren'  
117 pare bedroom? <\$2> Yeah there's some sort of pad in the attic. <\$1> Any ol  
118 r and his brother that they're both the sort of people who don't want to be seen  
119 ou get used to <\\$=> Even if you're the sort of person that you would have thoug  
120 aries in any case. <\$0321> I'm not that sort of person. <\\$0321> <\$1> <\$0321>  
121 m= m= Jesmond and Gosforth you know the sort of posh suburbs erm on a Friday nig  
122 > school name <\\$E> is like the <\$0166> sort of preppy school <\\$0166>. <\$4>  
123 > <\\$028> We <\$E> laughs <\\$E> got some sort of primitive kind of programmes.  
124 </\$=> the system. As a general he just sort of pushes you out of the way and wa  
125 in front of you? <\$2> Well yeah you sort of put all weight on this leg but y  
126 ature <\$=> do you <\\$=> do you you know sort of read histories and biographies t  
127 was making me cry <\$020> cos I <\\$020> sort of realized that I just couldn't ma  
128 <\$E> pause <\\$E> Doesn't Carr mean some sort of rock or place? <\$G?> <\$4> I'  
129 it's all rough as it was? <\$2> Yeah sort of rough+ <\$1> Yes. <\$2> +loo  
130 they were sort of back up troops er the sort of Russian elite that they didn't p  
131 s bag <\$=> and em <\\$=> and then Robert sort of said that that like his em Echos  
132 else. <\$=> I didn't really <\\$=> I just sort of sat there. That's the great thin  
133 it just gonna be dry? <\$2> Well what sort of sauce? <\$1> <\$=> Well I don't  
134 <\$X> everyone'll | everyone will <\\$X> sort of say Oh it's going pretty good+  
135 friend. Betty's a friend and t= so you sort of say that cos you've forgotten.  
136 they. <\$=> and <\\$=> <\$2> So she's sort of saying you know er I only have t  
137 <\$3> +erm then you go left at the first sort of set of pubs. <\$E> child makes  
138 und <\$=> Gree= erm <\\$=> Turkey that we sort of settled on because there were li  
139 all the time and <\$08> all that <\\$08> sort of shit. <\$2> <\$08> Yeah. <\\$08>  
140 y're the same age. And er Peter had had sort of shortish hair and he'd started <  
141 /\$0735> he's er </\$=> he recognizes the sort of similar features in you and stri  
142 > That's what's good about them cos you sort of sit there and expect <\$=> all th  
143 ting opposite him. And there was a girl sort of sitting next to him or near him



144 of June. <\$?> And what are these em sort of sky diving jobs? <\$3> Well we  
 145 <\$3> <\$E> laughs </\$E> <\$1> +and sort of slides down in his seat. And he'  
 146 y Blackburn and various others who were sort of slowly weeding out the <\$G?>. An  
 147 0371> Er and </\$0371> he's <\$0372> well sort of slumped in his seat </\$0372>.  
 148 e and that's it. And everyone in a town sort of small town knows you by the hair  
 149 can see the tractor beam below er as it sort of snakes out to grasp you into pur  
 150 l> No it might not be I don't know what sort of soil ferns need to be honest.  
 151 rprise thing out for <\\$=> <\$=> I think sort of something <\\$=> <\$1> For your  
 152 nd then fire it back at him. Get him to sort of speak a lot. And get him on the  
 153 s me MX and a couple of his mates we're sort of starting about one. <\$E> laughs  
 154 y? <\$1> What FX's plan is that we're sort of starting off round like Red Lion  
 155 I finished my degree and I was in that sort of state. I mean I started going ou  
 156 't explain how differently but I had to sort of stop and remind myself that I wa  
 157 od er casting for <\$G?>. Okay. Erm what sort of story line would you follow. Rig  
 158 four seven one during the day. All this sort of stuff. <\$=> It's really really <  
 159 hardly any domestic work'' and all this sort of stuff. <\$2> Oh there isn't mu  
 160 dine shouting Cyril and saying all this sort of stuff. <\$=> And we were <\\$=>  
 161 yeah. <\$5> +I eat pork and all that sort of stuff. And you know. <\$=> But th  
 162 <\\$041> <\$1> <\$G3> I never use this sort of stuff. <\$2> Really does dry y  
 163 ome? <\$1> Because the person that is sort of supplying me with like jacket po  
 164 what he wanted to do really. And he was sort of swaying God when he said Well sh  
 165 ulous. And all around er the trees were sort of swaying at forty five degrees al  
 166 Yeah he's been <\\$=> <\$2> +and just sort of switches off. <\$1> He's been  
 167 re er carriers and <\$H> half trek <\\$H> sort of tanks you can say. Gun <\$G1>. Th  
 168 o forth. <\$=> And without <\\$=> There's sort of th= quite a lot of b= in-built p  
 169 y speak Russian. Course er that gave me sort of the ground= <\$2> Mm. <\$1>  
 170 backward er dysfunctional person er in sort of the sticks of America. And then  
 171 <\$1> <\$0238> Cos those Goats are quite sort of there's something <\\$0238> cute  
 192 0> the dictionary before he goes to bed sort of thing <\\$080>? <\$?> <\$079> <\$  
 193 of how bacon tastes. <\$0243> <\$H> That sort of thing <\\$H> <\\$0243>. <\$?> <\$  
 194 wonder what she did with that. Cos that sort of thing is like heirloom isn't it.  
 195 That's so childish. <\$1> It will be sort of thing like two can play that gam  
 196 k them to plays and er and and and that sort of thing <\$0157> you know <\\$0157>.  
 197 you don't get away from me now <\$G?>'' sort of thing <\$G?> hideous <\$G?> <\$  
 198 s talking about doing an H N D and this sort of thing starting next you know nex  
 199 like quite a lot. And I say that's the sort of thing that I'd wear like. I like  
 200 water pipes and that <\$E> laughs <\\$E> sort of thing and and f= fallen walls an  
 201 \$?> Yeah. <\$?> And I think it's that sort of thing I think that's what he was  
 202 nd they haven't even thought to do that sort of thing and it's just shite. Reall  
 203 got my name on. Cos they must have some sort of thing that they check. <\$2> Y  
 204 <\$1> Yeah. <\$E> yawns <\\$E> <\$2> +sort of thing that haven't played for a  
 205 o now it's good. And he sits like there sort of thing so we talk <\$0543> all day  
 206 > He's <\\$0303> got shares and all that sort of thing. I mean you got <\$0304> sh  
 207 \$=> you haven't got that get out clause sort of thing. Do you know what I mean.  
 208 at <\\$=> do his bit at a moments notice sort of thing. <\$1> Oh he would yeah.  
 209 e a nice looking bloke if you like that sort of thing. <\$2> Yeah but she know  
 210 r mum or your dad for like for years s= sort of thing. It really is. And <\$=> ev  
 211 So he only does <\$=> things <\\$=> that sort of thing. But like never talk about  
 212 s. <\\$H> <\$2> <\$G?> if you like that sort of thing. <\$1> Don't know. Cos y  
 213 airman of governors of schools and this sort of thing. And she said Well the Hea  
 214 wake up at eight the next <\\$0442> day sort of thing. <\$1> <\$0442> Yeah. Cos  
 215 e more jumpers and they're all the same sort of thing. <\$=> I <\\$=> I come out w  
 216 d your finger would make an indentation sort of thing. <\$3> Ugh. <\$2> It w  
 217 eel that I fancy that <\$E> laughs <\\$E> sort of thing. <\$088> But why do people  
 218 d. <\$E> laughter <\\$E> <\$?M> That sort of thing. <\$E> laughter <\\$E>  
 219 no suffering <\$G?> <\$=> like <\\$=> like sort of thing. And I was reading this th  
 220 and that train back and forth every day sort of thing. And I still didn't see th  
 221 > we're doing <\$0566> implants all that sort of thing. <\$=> But we have got now  
 222 raight into me going south out of Leeds sort of thing. <\$2> <\$017> Yeah. <\\$0  
 223 t was like like a diary of about a week sort of thing. And I must have st= decid  
 224 s <\\$E> And he had some <\$H> fruit gums sort of things. <\\$H> Well I don't know  
 225 d to him but changing all the you know. Sort of thinking back to something that'  
 226 <\$3> Than fags. And it's a different sort of tobacco isn't it? <\$2> Yeah t  
 227 > I don't mind <\\$H>. <\$G?> You know he sort of told <\$0153> <\$G1> <\\$0153> <\$H>  
 228 electricity then. <\$1> <\$014> What sort of trifle is a sort of trifle then?  
 229 ou know. <\$=> And he <\$042> was <\\$042> sort of trying <\\$=> Can you shush mate  
 230 ything in fact er the <\$H> Rodean </\$H> sort of turns round holstering his blast  
 231 in April it should be I mean Jane likes sort of twenty twenty five kind of tempe  
 232 Lucy and Jimmy came for dinner as well sort of unexpected. And then Danny and J  
 233 her day. <\$G1> looked frail. Very small sort of very small shoulders. <\$1> Mm  
 234 <\$H> Yes </\$H> but </\$01014> I'm gonna sort of walk away and use my <\$H> com ro  
 235 lled on me and I had written to him and sort of welcomed him and said er what er  
 236 <\$2> +cornflake sponge. <\$=> It was sort of well sort of <\$03> like really <  
 237 t me and he didn't say anything he just sort of went <\\$=> <\$1> Derek? <\$2  
 238 looked. I couldn't see anyone. And then sort of went ``Oh.'' My next door neighb  
 239 damn nails back on and the glue it just sort of went a bit black in places you k  
 240 his life you know and <\$=> he <\\$=> he sort of when he did those erm bossa nova



241 I wear quite a lot but like I wore that sort of when we went over to Leeds and I  
242 oblem. <\$2> <\$=> But it just depends sort of where I <\\$=> <\$1> <\$=> If yo  
243 They don't know. <\$0153> <\$G?> <\\$0153> sort of worked out that he <\$G?> as I re  
244 of area <\$05> and <\\$05> then going up sort of working our way up that way.  
245 weight by the gallon and he was really sort of worried about it goes to the doc  
246 the general time for the genre for that sort of writing? <\$=> Stephen King and e  
247 mention words like base. Er he's a very sort of you know erm suspicious of every  
248 in a very dramatic fashion I wanted to sort of you know <\$=> that <\\$=> that <\$  
249 d him you know and kissing his feet and sort of you know bathing him in oil or w  
250 a better person and is really trying to sort of you know get it together but of



## Appendix 5

### *Sort of*: Concordance (complete) from Successful User of English subcorpus; 160,000 words).

N Concordance  
1 't there because it seems to me that it...it's more sort of ...the more you can break them down the easi  
2 Jornada Reducida [ ; Yeah] because you're a sort of : you're a mother, yeah : you  
3 could have also said something this is like, sort of you know, it's like a foreign culture to m  
4 the close of', 'At the top of', 'At the end of' - sort of, yeah, something they know by heart at the  
5 I was there. Eddie didn't. Somebody did, sort of, without saying outright what it was about  
6 Mm. Yeah. But having said that in.. in.. a sort of weird sense I felt kind of sorry for him.  
7 showed you..er..the words 'lo' and 'que' they are sort of tricky here because grammatically they sho  
8 for private language school teachers, 'cos this sort of training, if it's done by International H  
9 accusing of having to -ing forms Yeah, -ing, sort of too many complications if you're teaching,  
10 group into this courtyard they put all the tables sort of together to have different groups working  
11 teacher-centred, very traditional, very spoon-fed sort of thing. Absolutely. I- I was no  
12 ht hold you up on the next traffic light and this sort of thing, which you hear cases which I've nev  
13 n't ...maybe it was a sort of gentleman's agreement sort of thing ...but they're not..on..on..in reality  
14 riate. British-Canadian, Australian-English, this sort of thing - Scottish-English, you name it, and  
15 ico Yeah, yeah or rifles and guns and this sort of thing but you see it all around, so you ki  
16 in English listened to songs in English, all that sort of thing so that input whenever I could and t  
17 at conversation - you wouldn't normally find this sort of thing would you? I dunno, I imagine  
18 in' and 'limit' and 'bounds' are all very synonym sort of they're all in the same group of words. 'B  
19 r something; there was a programme to honour him, sort of...so there wasn't much I could say, except  
20 'd like to do ( : Yeah) and I'd already done a sort of teaching certificate after I'd graduated i  
21 bably conversation with me. I had a..er...er..very sort of strange encounter in a Macmillan conferenc  
22 first attempt to ... Interesting. ..to..er sort of...cross-step those knowledges to put on the  
23 rd and go back to your reading you usually try to sort of sort it out somehow using some strategies  
24 ldn't we ? : buy one set of everything and sort of sh... : Ah, but she's lucky, though be  
25 accent I imitate and I repeat his sentences aloud sort of showing them how ridiculously conservative  
26 proud to know such a word and I knew that I could sort of show off from time to time that I know a w  
27 t and so they started practicing and he was there sort of she was working on pronunciation pauses an  
28 so if he's done something bad I try to use it and sort of say 'Oh you tract [?]' then I see how stro  
29 ...idioms, sayings, proverbs I would group them all sort of roughly into the same area : even co  
30 I do that out of frustration and anger so it's my sort of revenge; a lot of the news that I see on A  
31 nguage things which are idiomatic but they're not sort of regular idioms and..er..I've got some expr  
32 obe English Centre for Advanced English. It was a sort of refresher course. Quite a lot! I wen  
33 loved English and he loved literature and he was, sort of, really only concerned about that and he d  
34 th something something new and original and I was sort of punished for that .. for trying to be crea  
35 they come out with it the next...it's...it's...it's...a sort of process...(inaudible) .we know that in gener  
36 ecifically to idiomatic expressions No, the sort of phrases I'm talking about it's like everyd  
37 in my bedroom there isn't and categorise it in a sort of personal way it's because because in my be  
38 s where (dog barks) and anyway the next ...the next sort of person they had on they said 'Oh, well, th  
39 them to look together at a text we look for these sort of partnerships we look for partnerships that  
40 into second because it was so slow the car was so sort of paceless so slow : and it's so ...it'  
41 yet I know there will be results but they will be sort of more in the long term than I mean you don'  
42 ential property costs remain high.' You know this sort of meanings are rather difficult to gra- to g  
43 id or...( : Yeah) so they, you know, there's this sort of mateying, kind of bonding ( : Yeah) and  
44 d to support my mum when she was young and he was sort of making his way to the top somehow and er h  
45 n equivalent which is why it's quite difficult to sort of make..or ..or..or..erm..make these phrases  
46 me to give him a word a Polish word that he could sort of (make) into his private word and he didn't  
47 e any meaning to it and if I were trying to ..er..sort of make this phrase myself by putting words t  
48 gency and that was a pretext a reason not to..to..sort of make trouble for her, so she didn't go bac  
49 er..young girls that are not married and that are sort of liberated together with..ermmm : Olde  
50 think she would like to go on doing it but she's sort of...you know, she realizes more and more that  
51 easy to figure out...'que' goes with 'lo' being a sort of intermediate user of Spanish now I have no  
52 self aware when you're speaking you sometimes you sort of hinder yourself from saying it; so, so one  
53 if you have if you if you sound well then you can sort of hide certain {interruption} Well, Am  
54 he was allud..alluding to that somehow but he was sort of he didn't say it very well he just I mean  
55 more in contact now with them so we have tried to sort of have a distribution of labour where she's  
56 ce ....not so much at home because at home we speak sort of Greeklsh, you know, she changes all the  
57 t the word doesn't have any impact on the overall sort of great picture or the general meaning of th  
58 old fears and their bad experiences and we keep, sort of, going round and round in a circle, talki  
59 ...an extra day ? ...not it isn't ...maybe it was a sort of gentleman's agreement sort of thing ...but t  
60 fine and there's a lot of space here, yes, do you sort of from time to time check your email ? Y  
61 know, all sorts of rather embarrassing ( Hm)...sort of face to face conflicts with...with people  
62 exts and simply learn so they will not have to be sort of exposed in a double way that is this dialo  
63 onary and..er..tried to find a phrase which would sort of explain the fact that I wasn't prepared an  
64 mean I really like everything but as you have to sort of erm establish a frontier Ah, ah, otherwise  
65 sh Cypriot side, my impression is that there is a sort of ..er...a strata in society which has benefi  
66 tic. Right So what kind of high level, sort of er, Another thing, an - yeah, anoth  
67 hbour. : Then I have these cards which are sort of double so we have two Helens two Johns and  
68 ed me of, you know, was it Don Quixote absolutely sort of Don Quixote de la Mancha, ( : Hm) you kn



69 e talking about six, seven years ago it was still sort of developing how it will be how it would li  
70 se once the Cypriot kids started playing about we sort of destroyed everything in sight - we weren't  
71 I haven't heard that one I've heard the other one sort of describe different the woman the different  
72 ber this commercial where there's this guy - he's sort of daydreaming and he thinks he's in a tropic  
73 then what you get is...and I don't mean this as a sort of criticism of the people who do finish but  
74 'm gonna be first I'll have a nervous I'll have a sort of crisis when my brother turns ...turns thirty  
75 t a bit slangy but not necessarily but definitely sort of conversation oriented erm..as Ada said the  
76 ff four [ : yeah ] and she works again eight sort of continuously : Nine, nine months  
77 because the school pays 50% of the fees. So it's sort of compulsive here. Last year the school paid  
78 oks in...you know what I mean ? They don't want any sort of commitment of any sort : I tried ye  
79 cific to their discipline as well but also I mean sort of collocations that you can use in different  
80 most of our (to waiter efharisto) ...er...most of our sort of colleagues and people who co-operate with  
81 re; Monterrey is more industrial; more industrial sort of city but Buena carto and other colonial pl  
82 n he has his ..erm..when he has his schizophrenic sort of changes at the end : fighting with  
83 ave is..er..a ..you have the subject wearing some sort of cap with a ..erm..with contacts on his hea  
84 shed reading two books in English; that's why I'm sort of...I can find my words : Good, which bo  
85 nd all that stuff so I have to already for myself sort of calm down and say that what do I do with s  
86 her and of course it's not happening in a real ..sort of...situation but when you, for example, read  
87 ..er...coming from a very poor family but a family sort of brought up by my great great grandmother w  
88 hey've got Mathematics, Science, History, English sort of bilingual but not 100%; I would say 70%/60  
89 now : no, I was just wondering : It's sort of back in my head, far, far, away : Be  
90 s simple past and there's a problem when you get sort of 'In the last year I've been there three ti  
91 r fully in command and at the end she was in this sort of 'I'm one of you and my heart goes out to a  
92 bond with and collude with. And then there's the sort of 'eye-winking', which I also picked up lik  
93 lish, erm, they have an access to this particular sort of authentic English and this kind of English  
94 o listen to anybody who's up front But that's sort of also part of a kind of a tradition that we  
95 the clinic - the owner of the clinic was patrt of sort of a gang that were trading organs : Yea  
96 , as you're wearing this cap with the electrodes, sort of...put a jelly on..erm..then...which means after



## Appendix 6

**You see: Concordance (200 random) from BNC, spoken, conversation; 5 million words.**

1 ain it. Not for owt like that. No, I 'm afraid You see, 'cos you were n't actually employed, you  
2 ot So Joyce thinks he 's, he 's going in after you see Well she told me that he in six months, ye  
3 e 's about that age, yeah she is about that age you see, you know, er that little girl though, y  
4 ked. Mm. Exactly. Yeah because it is cheaper and You see the thing is you see I mean wh wh when thi  
5 ors away are now putting their christmas mine are you see the first week in December . Yeah cos  
6 you could get tax relief on your life assurance you see? Mm. Which makes it advantageous becaus  
7 s, was, the two boys they were born in Australia you see and they came here, and one was four and  
8 lot of money put to it theirselves I see because you see all this bloody expensive Aga, they wo n  
9 re right. Water. Yeah. Oh! Yeah ! Well, before you see we have n't had no No, do n't get a lot  
10 in front of it . And we were dancing on that bit you see. Oh did you? There were n't a lot of roo  
11 ome tomorrow if you like bedrooms are ready, but you see she 'll be staying at her mum 's some time  
12 ocopier works out a bit more expensive. Mm. But you see, using the offset that case be I do n't k  
13 re ready for going again to get some more. But you see what he 'd done he 'd, he 'd had it out a  
14 nk, Frank said he were going like And er but you see, well er you know we 're going on a surpr  
15 they? Yeah, were n't gone two minutes Yeah but you see they reckon it were that Sandra do n't the  
16 le and mardy he is. Yeah. He 's another one. But you see when he living with Ange, maybe he were yo  
17 all four going Ah you 're all going ah yeah but you see Joyce has been saying to us Yeah why d  
18 see ducks. Ah look! There 's a white duck. Can you see the white duck? Straight over there look.  
19 et quite that high though. Oh ! Ah ah! What can you see now? That, I can see a a gas van. Yes. T  
20 nker trees? Look! They 've all opened out. Can you see all the new little leaves on the conker tr  
21 each this one. So can I. Look at this one, can you see hang on there look look at the leaves open  
22 cold. Look at the wind blowing the trees. Can you see the wind blowing the leaves? Yes, I can. O  
23 it, the silly thing it 's gone cock-eyed, can you see it Mm instead of growing up straight look  
24 screwed onto the tractor bit. Good. Grant, can you see Annabel 's little bowl for her tea set? No  
25 e 's another conker tree. Horse chestnut. Can you see the leaves? Wait a minute, I can reach th  
26 sts will have been washed away. I can see. Can you see the sand on this path where the water 's b  
27 for a wedding, yeah aye Just stop here now can you see caravan out on road? It 'll be old'un wo  
28 gh. They 're not at this end of the river. Can you see ducks, Ann? Yes, I can see ducks. Ah loo  
29 t. There. Look at the trees now. Oh look! Can you see the buds on the conker trees? Look! They '  
30 the yellow ones. Well the new ones are grey. Can you see the sandbags? Look at those sacks full of  
31 centre. Yeah. Was n't it? Over the bridge. Can you see all the bubbles on the river. All the whit  
32 Someone naughty 's smashed a seat, look! Can you see? A seat 's missing from there. Just the p  
33 ut, you see, they get more sun there look, can you see? Not there. At the bottom. Yeah but you  
34 g up. Snowdrops. Against that. Just top can you see top like Yeah. they are, like they are in,  
35 at 's the beginnings of the flowers growing. Can you see all the sand on the grass? Up came the riv  
36 oh, you 're too far forward. There look. Can you see James? No. Up here look. Yes. And, can y  
37 s that thing? I 'll let you see this. Oh. Can you see this? Aha. Come on Twinkle. You 're losi  
38 making one. Oh! That 's twenty three. Yeah. Can you see? Bit early for a spirit. Mm. I mean it 's  
39 Claire. Hello! Hello Christie. Who 's that? Can you see them? Look, they 're coming out for play  
40 ou see James? No. Up here look . Yes. And, can you see on the end, look that 's where the flower  
41 y. Twist your arm. I 'm dieting before Christmas you see and er Oh God no! Well then a then I ca D  
42 ecommendation to a recommendation to the church you see, so I Erm You must know the feeling of th  
43 I do n't m, my dad will do that, my dad cooks you see, mum do n't cook at all, dad normally do  
44 her holiday Well this is it and get rid of it cos you see Lily, Lily smokes, Lily smokes it 's no  
45 nd Yeah. and you get one if you run it. Crafty you see. I 'm not doing it, it 's too dear anyway  
46 few weeks Yes, I just saw you at the crossroads you see Mm and I was sort of concentrating so I ju  
47 for two or three And you you have a rest. days you see, like I was out Monday I was busy all day  
48 worth coming for were n't it? It were Oh dear You see you 're getting your money back Scones  
49 bloke. Ooh! Woo! Woo! What you doing? Well did you see that one other night? Kissing. Erm I th  
50 just write the Dee dee ee, dee dee ah ha. Did you see the river? Hold on a minute. There you ar  
51 ody lovely it did n't cost them that much No Did you see erm, they see in this paper the light d  
52 . Bobby? It 's what I Very good. And Bobby did you see Moira last night? And Look! Look! And how  
53 You know He could n't have played with him Did you see him? if he 'd have wanted to! Di did yo  
54 id you see him? if he 'd have wanted to! Di did you see him though Mick? He were just mess  
55 r him? Yeah. He 's still there is he? Mhm. Did you see him? Mhm. Did you? How is he? Alright. Y  
56 It 's always been our Margaret. Mind you, did you see that photo that Yeah. You are, I mean, I  
57 n, they 're getting two women out of show, did you see it on telly? Yeah, but I mean even, even  
58 play time. I saw Erin run past and Amanda. Did you see Erin and Amanda? We saw. I wonder if Mart  
59 ere they 're where they 're not protected. Did you see that top of Broadway? No. They 've blocke  
60 ree. Anyway, is John alright? I mean, where do you see at the beginning? Will you ger off my ba  
61 said one men Man. one ma one, said one man. Do you see that big brown thing that looks a boat? Yo  
62 nything happened. Mm. If anything if if it does You see again and then you see if you 're out of a  
63 going to have to talk about it with the elders you see. Sorry, what did you say? We 're still g  
64 wrong size I 'll have to take them back Yeah er you see my bedroom curtain windows they 're as wid  
65 ed up on the pulpit or whatever did n't he? Erm you see if this the pulpit, he did n't come s Ye  
66 ked him did n't they? Yes, oh yes. Yes. Yes erm you see we 're in a different, different situation  
67 'm waiting to go in hospital, it 's his excuse you see Ah, yeah says I 'm not So Joyce thinks he  
68 m that we would have to share in the Mm. expense you see.. of any changes. Are there any other co



69 that time of night? Well the game had finished you see so they brought supper out. Usually have i  
 70 onths. Two eighty. Yeah well you see, furnished you see they can charge extra. Norfolk Street sel  
 71 He ca n't go, that 's the reason he ca n't go you see but he 's going Yeah Six months ' time But  
 72 mall building societies are wanting to get going You see, the only trouble with building societies  
 73 ue for your nose? Oh yeah. Chock-a-block. Have you see her ear, it 's by her ear as well. the ot  
 74 top but it 's all over again. What it wants Have you see how that unit 's all cracked under sink? M  
 75 n't ha he would n't have it. More so in here you see. Yeah just cos you 're in a a an open Mm.  
 76 ell me what sort of I do n't want to hassle him you see cos I 've hassled No, that 's it. him befo  
 77 e other. Yeah. Well Steven used to tell on him you see. He 's been in detention again. Tell-tale  
 78 ked with Hello Ruth I was n't Penny 's Oh and I you see I put it there. There 's a real panic now  
 79 great! Plus , taking, keeping it and doing it if you see benefit in that. So that was a benefit to  
 80 yeah. But it 's got runners to hold the side in you see? Yeah. I mean but Steven would but Do th  
 81 r some years and she was always poodling about in you see. And it was her second car that she 'd ev  
 82 ah yeah yeah he 's wanting his own independence you see Yeah, that 's right yeah a bit I 'm gon n  
 83 ty trees Yeah, that 's why a, that 's all it is you see, , there 's no mention of any advice you  
 84 because it is cheaper and You see the thing is you see I mean wh wh when this law came out, LAUT  
 85 ible. You did n't? Yeah and Ann was on about it you see and I said oh well some noisy bloody neigh  
 86 oh oh oh oh oh That 's only four though in n it you see? No, yeah. That 's what I said, to do t  
 87 ks I know Oh I would taken it, take it all to it You see it suits us it suits us better for twenty  
 88 about that one across the way? Well that 's it you see. But if if I 'd have, if we 'd have gone  
 89 would be added to it. That would be added to it you see. Mm and just his wages how much extra th  
 90 mortgage it would be That would be added to it you see. They 'd probably have a fifty thousand  
 91 now they 're but is n't he? Sort of jewellery you see. Do they? for Tesco and Yeah quite casua  
 92 e again and then you see if you 're out of a job you see you if you happen to be out of a job then  
 93 t I you you put me down as as as er next of kin you see You can name he said, who do you wish to n  
 94 'd get anything anyway. You 're his next of kin you see. Am I? Mm. How about his father? Yeah,  
 95 at I would have done but But I did n't know you see, I Course not, no. I could n't work it ou  
 96 m that 's why I was yeah. Yes well I did n't know you see. If I do n't like playing singles, easy  
 97 . Ann. What love? What 's that thing? I 'll let you see this. Oh. Can you see this? Aha. Come on  
 98 t they No Oh and they kept their bottle on longer you see, while they were in and they were alright  
 99 've got owed out to ya. I know. When you look you see everything 's a bloody risk, Let's hope he  
 100 No No There 's a place where they go for lunch you see Yeah and we 're gon na be sat there having  
 101 o see Doctor please. Oh good. Just got married you see, she has n't changed her address. She has  
 102 now. She 's only in a bedsit. Yeah. But I mean you see her up town though. I know. That 's cos s  
 103 ealth Yeah because this is a pension mortgage you see. Yes. Yeah. You might have to have a med  
 104 Broke the window open Oh It were open that much you see Oh so that 's how they got in? Mhm But she  
 105 ow? Yes. We did n't have snow at home. Did n't you see the I saw it. cars ye when Doro did n't y  
 106 uld n't think so. Well exactly. So it 's gon na You see it 's be less than a want two hundred and  
 107 like that myself I 'd sooner have a steak. No you see I 'd I I 'd Yeah. prefer to try but yeah a  
 108 well is it? Mm it is. She 's playing for time now you see. Yes. playing for time again. Whoa! You  
 109 d pieces did n't you? Yeah. Yeah. Whereas now you see all the they can put them all into one. Ye  
 110 they may even have moved now. See that one, oh you see the one where the trees are? Yeah. And the  
 111 cial offer as and she would n't carry a big one you see. Three fifteen plus two what, did I say?  
 112 n the lead? I knew what to do with that one you see? Now who 's in the lead? I knew what to d  
 113 Whereas you 've had to do that at Salisbury Park you see? May I just say I went to erm Johnstown y  
 114 one himself, so he employs that sort of people you see? Mm But they get on now Good but they, th  
 115 seven six are forty two, hundred and two pound you see Mm then they stop her this tax what she ow  
 116 of stuff, if you buy foam back it 's the price you see So everyone 's on that training scheme now  
 117 a kitchen I think for if someone calls probably you see. Mm. Nice little room though. It could b  
 118 o many have closed, chapels? Er well it there 's you see we 've got Wrexham is a good sized town! M  
 119 e altogether. Well I did n't know when I 'd see you see so I thought I can always leave them at Do  
 120 e 'll be coming at thirty this year, wo n't she? You see, she 's just coming into her prime, and n  
 121 wer if you , good boxes cos they 're solid you see. sign of woollies and things like that ca  
 122 they 'll all be fighting for life all of a sudden You see they 're not gon na get a lot of chance th  
 123 eah it 's for you Yeah but this is the surprise you see? Oh that 'll be nice Now I see what you  
 124 tairs one And we can get a good package on that you see. How do you mean? Well he he 's wanting t  
 125 at concern you are so let's as well the ones that you see downstairs, we may already be addressing  
 126 day this wrist is a you know I do n't mind that you see what did that wrist was that elbow I had t  
 127 rd of it. I 'd never heard of it. Not only that you see alright the mortgage rates might go up but  
 128 ot rather than just Yeah. part of it. Cos that you see if you, if you, if you could link up life  
 129 ings and water and Mm. sugar and Yeah well that you see is just orange. But yeah, but the pure or  
 130 sort of like He Helen will be Halibin like that you see and that 's how we talk at work if we got  
 131 ck. Now a lot of people think something like that You see Grant has got a lot to put up with . What  
 132 er stick them put them in a box and sling them you see we 've got the heating on in here today by  
 133 one? Yeah and we 're supposed to do all of them you see put John, one of us start trussing early  
 134 t they? Had they got it through a Council then? You see he 's he 's got a choice, he got three we  
 135 n Take you up and then go straight to work then you see. Then go to work or we Well yeah but I I  
 136 lump sum. To get a higher lump sum. But then you see Would it be that much more? Should n't thi  
 137 f anything if if it does You see again and then you see if you 're out of a job you see you if you  
 138 it everything were going to twenty three you see and that Good job they were honest Yeah  
 139 e? And er I knew what Idris was referring to you see. I thought Somehow or another erm Idris a  
 140 and then Ann started that little line trussing you see, so we 've done it between us but I 've g  
 141 e. But you 've got the hall and that underneath you see. Yeah it 's the landing and everything. U  
 142 aid ooh it 's not as small as we thought it was you see. Mm. But erm it 's just having that one  
 143 and put the toys away, see they was in the way you see, put newspaper down there and then next w  
 144 Yeah. But she uses at night and Yeah. weekends you see. Oh yeah! Oh! She says, I could n't  
 145 als and she she was a real good Yeah well you see good cook if I mean the only th there was



146 there and telling blah blah blah and Well you see the thing is they they they And you knew w  
 147 . He did n't tell you anything else. No. Well you see when he said your base is gon na be I know  
 148 major finance resources comes from we, as well you see that I have to tell you now these have bee  
 149 to sca find the Ah! He said the blood well you see if your blood 's circulating. whatsern  
 150 not find contributions it really ca n't! Well you see, like like. Exactly! Yes well erm we 're  
 151 s furnished. Six months. Two eighty. Yeah well you see, furnished you see they can charge extra.  
 152 Botswana 's erm , doing quite well Oh yes, well you see they 've got the names Yes that 's right,  
 153 thing again cos er are you going to sleep or what you see or what you see or what you know you 're n  
 154 it 's never true then you go in a shop and what you see is what you get. Definitely There 's only  
 155 re you going to sleep or what you see or what you see or what you know you 're not worry about i  
 156 I do n't know. Is that it there. No Yeah. When you see at the carpet place, they come on a nin  
 157 could do that, I 've let him some out though when you see him at the back Yeah just, just unpick it  
 158 had them this morning. It 's in the morning when you see them. If you 've left cups out they 're  
 159 e showing on the s oh Bobby ! What? Well, will you see them being shown? Oh yes, because we 're  
 160 uses you know that 's why she had a grant? Yeah You see er she can have one because she had un  
 161 t they? Number seven. This is the. ? Yeah. Yeah you see your washing machine. Cooker that Oh I  
 162 ? Yeah. Yeah. It 's quite pleasant that is. Yeah you see it 's bigger cos the bedroom is a bigger b  
 163 ch a decision for twenty two or twenty five years you see? Mm. Whereas you 've had to do that at S  
 164 xpensive. Yeah. It used to be a cheap meal Ann. You see we moan about paying three pound a pound f  
 165 y so often it would burst out would n't it Yeah, you see it 's just got to come away She could n'  
 166 ok to check it I ca n't Mm. I ca n't tell you. You see you can, you get a lot, you can get tax r  
 167 ocks at home and just choosed mine . Oh! You see Mm. And then we would n't, you would n't  
 168 mm. A wordprocessor? A wordprocessor, yeah Mm. You see the beauty of the beauty of the computer  
 169 n hour It 's an hour. Then I could have an hour, you see so it just gives you that extra breathing  
 170 ot that heavy is it? Pull it towards you. Oh. You see we 've got some gentlemen here, they 'll  
 171 ons in buying either of tho either of the flats. You see er that 's the thing is n't it? Mhm. But y  
 172 I I cleared up every day Every day. alright, you see I 'd go in and count everything, do everyt  
 173 e area where the chapels have closed? Well no, you see erm across where actually Songs of Praise  
 174 it finished I did n't realize it was two parts, you see, and I thought well that 's a funny way  
 175 two I think it was, something like that. Mm. You see And the rent was thirty six pound a week.  
 176 wo n't they? It 's winter now like! Yeah but, you see, they get more sun there look, can you se  
 177 d for you! It 's teaching me a little bit, you see. Yeah you 're getting good, very good fo  
 178 d commas. He did nothing for me. Mm. Mm. Mm. You see? And er I knew what Idris was referring t  
 179 t there. And three times it come on on and off! You see, if somebody just come to that corner Yea  
 180 morning for a search. Yeah. Solicitors. Yeah. You see it could be jerry-built. What are you do  
 181 wherever you 're going you 're going this way, you see my watch says quarter to twelve you going  
 182 you got a ruler? Yes. Yes, that 's fine. Yes, you see that screen 's twelve inches and that 's s  
 183 a broker, but it 's a broker, so that 's Yeah. You see, what it is, it 's where they 've been b  
 184 ly looked at. Never used to so much hard work, you see Tina! Well we I were n't feeling very wel  
 185 Prudential When did that start? when have you, you see, there 's two parts to it Yeah, contracte  
 186 er, you know er see that stuff that come away, you see there were still some stuff left to come a  
 187 people who, who like Mm. that sort of thing, you see. And I think Well you do get more modern  
 188 the last ten years. I 'll manage the way I am. You see, that works where I Benjy Aye, Benjy, loo  
 189 the light When it settles , I think. You know, you see it then. When it settles on summat dark.  
 190 looking at. The only thing is though, I mean, you see but I think the church itself and I would  
 191 have a check up. I 'll try again bloody lucky! You see I mean Lunch time is no good! no, you s I  
 192 ne big directory, DOS These two does n't care! You see those two are right at the end, and those  
 193 d to do it quick, we 've got a Yeah bargain, you see. Well yeah. When they want a Near wh  
 194 god. Well hard. That was well funny last time, you see me in a room, we 're playing er games. I,  
 195 You see, 'cos you were n't actually employed, you see, 'cos you say, No. you could n't really  
 196 eties and plans. Well that 's what he 's done. You see that 's what he 's done. No but he had I m  
 197 o'clockish. Oh well. We did n't have to come. you see. We came round to give you a lift. Oh t  
 198 ? Mum, mum. But it 's just like you, ah well, you see an ants ' nest in the room. Watch. There '  
 199 when you turn it off, you turn everything off. You see what I mean? Yes. Er erm there 's a white  
 200 ee them round there do n't we? Wah! Yeah. You see them down here But, we 've seen them on



## Appendix 7

**You see: Concordance (complete) from Successful User of English subcorpus;  
160,000 words.**

N Concordance  
1 that most couples are trying to have a child and you see all the difficulties around and after her  
2 ? : 'Landa' is a pla...a giant puddle because you see the difference in the height here there we  
3 ' but here 'Muck' A. Because because you see I'm trying you know, to explain. Er, No I  
4 ow, you have one week to do your homework because you see me every Wednesday yeah so you have a week  
5 ost of the - I mean- you can talk to a poor boy, you see, but he at least have a walkman. Well  
6 eah or rifles and guns and this sort of thing but you see it all around, so you kind of get used to,  
7 l copies later. Can everybody see something ? Can you see something in front of you ? Could anyone b  
8 , that's the castle district : Oh, yes, can you see the girl with the : Isn't it beautif  
9 year on it so we might have some changes : You see what I mean ? But it's nice , it's very co  
10 I find this incredible for a four year old child; you see, most parents are annoyed, watching around  
11 my house ?] : [about four thirty five] Did you see the stuff on ...erm...on the Ortero ? :  
12 to use And how to use it because I never did You see I think I've been exposed to so many vario  
13 , crossed ..and we went into Holland : Did you see the X ? : No, I can't remember where  
14 ht call the small languages or ..in one sense, do you see the situation in what... a hundred years' ti  
15 know, he called me and said: 'What's going on? Do you see- did you send us some talks and I said of  
16 -semitism the more anti-semite he will become. Do you see what I mean ? So this cognitive dissonance  
17 Do you ? Yes. I mean I really don't you see the problem is ...er...I get the impression ma  
18 s (switches to Spanish) this was like an epiphany you see and it's...it's ...wonderful because then agai  
19 and large' , er, 'I, I have to be going now,' er you see, that kind of stuff, 'Mind you' , which ar  
20 an I don't know how to phrase it...er...it's er... You see Peter, a lot of this wouldn't matter if it  
21 ause those students are going to sit for the FCE. You see, so that's one of our objectives here in t  
22 possible without email ..completely, Ha, ha. You see, I don't ask for grants in that context so  
23 st be somewhere I often leave it there and then I so...you see to me it happens very often I leave my  
24 fact that you can, you've doubled your identity, you see, you are ...and I am a different identity wh  
25 non-native a non-native and a native a native, if you see what I mean. So it's very difficult to des  
26 ely and we experience life in a very loud way, if you see what I mean... : Yeah, it's part of ge  
27 most women nowadays try harder to look rougher if you see what I mean : I mean in...in the past  
28 : It's not very concrete. I think at least if you see it, at least examples or if you : dem  
29 s I said, I'll be very much interested to know if you see a possible application of this in your fut  
30 two sets of teeth to pronounce the 'th' sound if you see what I mean - so there is a norm however u  
31 ...er..fantastic she's a charismatic woman If you see she's at the same conference where you jus  
32 se you you don't have to know what it tastes like you see some kind of spread on toast...yeah..yummy..  
33 er...you know as I say 'pongo mi dedo en la llaga'; you see, there it's Spanish (laughs) that's a Span  
34 the hotel] : [I'm a soap...soap] opera maniac you see I learnt [a lot of phrases] : [a pape  
35 hat she did and it's incredible it's ..er..I mean you see what these people go through it's incredib  
36 in la Natura, in God but I cannot give it a name. You see I cannot say Jesus it depends on ...  
37 a great talk I never did but that pisses me off. You see what I mean? But Myriam's nervous be  
38 tion, I mean if it is accuracy or just fluency or you see, I mean, because if we just want them to c  
39 this has a lot to do with yeah, all this picture, you see you can do so much with language and a lot  
40 in English you don't say (switches to Portuguese) you see it ...but it's strange ...you know, it's like  
41 fortable. Very comf- as you say t-shirt, pyjamas, you see.. you're still working there but it's got  
42 All I can see is that the tape is rolling. : You see? That's the thing then. : That's ene  
43 y guns ... but when you get used to you don't see you see it like er 'Yes, fine.' Security things bu  
44 with CNN and so on ... sateliti So you see most of our students they have access for  
45 hers' book, cassettes. For the teacher. So, you see, the teacher shouldn't be complaining abou  
46 ion when natives, of course, 'el 'native-speaker'', you see, they found one on the beach and this was  
47 know when you see a footballer on tv and suddenly you see him because is er y'know the er, for me fo  
48 et...at...one afternoon with your family and suddenly you see a wall over there and you have to stop. Th  
49 s a fairly typical image then. I didn't know that you see. I didn't know I just kind of I thoug  
50 mean, placing a very difficult challenge for them you see. But just for that I wouldn't I beli  
51 words when they came across. They never use them, you see. You, they will never say, express or use  
52 technologies in new ways or applying those..we..., you see, if the way it is applied is really radica  
53 and they ...they...get some of them and they tend to, you see ....identification is one thing and actual u  
54 igh mountains you know it's..a thousand metres up you see snow and then you go down to the beach you  
55 can fish if you want .of course, we didn't want...you see they travel a lot they go out on weekends,  
56 tages depending on your...erm...depending on the way you see yourself as a teacher ...er..and depending o  
57 : Have I ? It's always ...(?) : Well, you see, it's all minimalistic this year, very sim  
58 uch about you Well it's suddenly like y'know when you see a footballer on tv and suddenly you see hi  
59 mparative in this life; you may be happy but when you see what your neighbour has you want the same  
60 umbo there would be three-four-three : Yeah, you see, with a jumbo, maybe : Perhaps I got  
61 we have there, five ? : er...well, five, yeah, you see here's where I live they don't ...those hill  
62 : And further up from our grandma's house , you see this is Markoulou's house whose ons is...a...

