Investigating Communicative Strategies in Novice Professional Communities of Practice:

A comparative study of Engineering and Marketing meetings

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Abstract

This study is concerned with the linguistic analysis of a subcorpus of Engineering and Marketing meetings within the context of Authentic Workplace Projects. The study considers the context of Authentic Workplace Projects in higher education settings as providing university students with the opportunity to experience life as professionals in their fields. Considering this, the present study aims to determine how novice professionals develop professional communication skills through examining their use of language in interaction. A comparative analysis of communicative strategies in the Engineering and Marketing meetings is carried out in order to determine the role of key linguistic features in contributing to identity construction, rapport management, organisational culture and conflict negotiation.

Previous studies on institutional and workplace interaction focus on the role of language and communication in professional contexts. Through adopting Wenger's Community of Practice framework, this study analyses the language of two participant groups in order to ascertain the communicative practices employed in constructing novice professional communities of practice. As this study employs an institutional or workplace approach to the data, core areas of workplace communication are considered in the meetings of novice professionals in order to determine how interactional goals are achieved. Through conducting an analysis of the communicative strategies contributing to the development of core communication skills, this study aims to uncover how novice professional communities construct unique identities and establish cultural norms.

This study employs a mixed method approach through the use of Corpus Linguistics, Conversation Analysis and Pragmatics as tools in the examination of linguistic features prevalent in workplace interactions. This includes the examination of pronouns, humour, topic and politeness strategies. The use of these specific linguistic features is considered crucial in underlining the different dynamics and power processes in work-based interaction. The results show that the use of communicative strategies varies in novice professional communities of practice. This is demonstrated in the different cultural norms and values in the shared repertoire of each participant group. The study highlights the dynamic use of language in interaction and demonstrates the effectiveness of communicative strategies in constructing group cohesion, leadership and professional identity.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any other awards at this or at any other academic establishment. Where use has been made of the work of other people, it has been fully acknowledged and referenced.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The concept for this study derives from an avid interest in communication and human interaction. Through many years of travel, working and living in different contexts and countries, I became truly interested in the art of communication. Working in different contexts from sales to teaching, I began to observe the communication strategies and behavioural norms employed by varying groups in society. One recurring aspect in social interaction was that language seemed particularly influential in conveying a sense of cohesion and belonging in different social contexts (Wenger, 1998). The differing approaches to communication, from professional groups in particular, led to the concept behind this study, that groups or communities use unique approaches to communication and language in order to construct identity and belonging (Eckert, 1989). This study ultimately stems from a desire to understand communication in different contexts in order to provide specially designed training for specialised groups and professionals.

The changing nature of organisational culture has contributed to a rise in focus on communication skills across disciplines and professional contexts. Professionals in every type of organisation are now expected to attain a set of key relational skills once prevalent in the management sector (Brooks, 2006). Leadership strategies, team building and rapport management skills are addressed through professional development and training programmes (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999). This focus on interpersonal communication has also influenced university faculties, who now place a greater value on the development of these skills in a bid to develop the professional skill set of students. This can be observed through the introduction of team based projects, seminars and lectures designed to enhance team working and leadership skills from medical to engineering faculties. Although research has been carried out on the linguistic features prevalent in core communicative skills (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003), these studies tend to focus on professional workplace environments. Observation of the university system led to a view that faculties with a definite route to industry place the most emphasis on communication skills. Medical faculties engage students in modules on communicating with patients, business faculties promote effective communication in order to prepare students for team work and management roles, engineering faculties are most recently placing value on communication in team work and leadership skills

(Williams, 2002). The ever-increasing emphasis on communication skills in university faculties has led to the development of projects modelling professional industry in order to provide students with an authentic workplace experience within the university. These projects will be described as Authentic Workplace Projects for the purpose of this study, as they are designed to enhance the professional skills of students in terms of expertise, interaction with external companies and, most notably, communication skills. This study argues that in this context, students are given the opportunity to experience life as professionals in their fields, thus leading to the construction of novice professional identity. Authentic Workplace Projects provides an ideal context for the analysis of the communicative processes of novice professionals. The meetings of novice professionals, as part of the process of these Authentic Workplace Projects, are central to task fulfilment and they mirror real workplaces where meetings are considered a central part of workplace interaction (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Handford, 2010). It is during the course of these meetings that the novices achieve transactional and relational goals, define participant roles and develop communication skills. As the meetings of novice professionals are conducted as part of Authentic Workplace Projects, they will be considered through the lens of institutional or workplace discourse in order to provide a most accurate depiction of the role of communicative strategies in the data.

In order to effectively analyse the relevant issues of communication in novice professional groups, the notion of communicative strategy was developed for the purpose of this study. The term communicative strategy in this study is defined as: aspects of strategic communication in interaction present in identity construction, rapport management, conflict resolution and the definition of organisational culture in group work. These features are considered essential to communication in professional workplace environments. Specific linguistic features such as, pronouns, humour, topic and hedging devices, are considered as contributing to communicative strategy in context. The use of these linguistic elements in interaction is considered strategic as they are employed to achieve interactional goals in workplace contexts. The novice professionals' use of these strategies will be measured in order to ascertain their different styles in constructing and maintaining a community of practice (Wenger, 1998).

This study analyses the meetings of two novice professional groups, a group of six Engineering students and a group of six Marketing students undertaking Authentic Workplace Projects. The areas of Engineering and Marketing were chosen for this study due the contrastive emphasis placed on communication skills in both of these industries. Although students from Engineering and Marketing faculties are encouraged to develop their communication skills through the fulfilment of Authentic Workplace Projects, the manner in which this occurs differs in both groups. During the course of the projects the students develop their own unique working style, reflecting the dynamic way in which identity, language and power are intertwined. This study focuses on the use of communicative strategies in novice professional groups in order to determine the different approaches employed in communication and interaction in different contexts. Through an analysis of core linguistic features in the data, it is aimed to reach a further understanding of how different communities of practice perform identity and construct a set of unique norms required for belonging.

The linguistic features prevalent in communicative strategy will be analysed quantitatively and qualitatively using Conversation Analysis and Corpus Linguistic methods in order to conduct a comparative analysis of the norms and practices conveyed through language in each community of practice. This study is set within the context of Community of Practice framework (Wenger, 1998). As Chapter 3 will outline, this framework considers belonging, identity and different aspects of practice in describing the different stages of community development. This allows for the effective analysis of communicative strategies, in distinguishing how they contribute to the development of group identity, cohesion and culture. In examining the language of both groups, it is expected to gain a comparative insight into how novice professional communities of practice are constructed linguistically.

1.1 Locating the Study

This comparative study aims to address the issue of communicative strategy in the meetings of novice professionals in order to determine its role in building and maintaining a community of practice. The use of language in institutional or workplace

contexts is of core value to this study as it reflects the communicative practices expected in Authentic Workplace Projects. Linguistics studies on business meetings (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997; Handford, 2010) and workplace interactions (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Koester, 2006) highlight the relevance of language in achieving interactional goals in institutional settings. The development of core practices and organisational structures is embedded in the community of practice theory which will be applied to this study, as will be outlined in Chapter 3. In encompassing concepts such as institutional/workplace discourse (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999), community of practice theory (Wenger, 1998) and communicative strategy, this study will conduct an indepth analysis of the linguistic features that contribute to the development of novice professional communities of practice.

1.2 The Rationale of the Study

The topic of this study was chosen due to an avid interest in the area of communication and the varying interactional dynamics that form in each group of interacting individuals. The varying communicative strategies employed in novice professional contexts allow for the construction of diverse communities of practice which adhere to specific codes of behaviour and practice. It is underlining these differences in communicative style that has influenced this study. Through conducting a comparative analysis of the communicative styles of each participant group, it is aimed to obtain a greater understanding of the complexities of different community cultures. The construction of novice professional communities of practice has been difficult to capture due to issues in obtaining naturally occurring data from student groups engaging in work-based interactions. Due to the lack of access to naturally occurring spoken data in this area, the establishment and management of areas such as rapport in student group work interactions have been investigated in online settings (Ädel, 2011). A study by Planken (2005) examines the differences in rapport management between professional negotiators and aspiring negotiators through the use of scripted negotiation scenarios. Although these studies provide insight into the construction of rapport in student groups, they do not consider the role of communicative strategies in the development and construction of novice professional communities of practice in naturally occurring spoken language. This study therefore aims to address this research gap by conducting

an investigation of the core communicative strategies employed by student groups in the construction of novice professional identity and the establishment of unique novice professional communities of practice. It is hoped that insights from this study could lead to further development in the area of enhancing the effective use of communicative strategies across disciplines.

1.2 The Primary Research Questions

This comparative study aims to address the core issues of communicative strategy in novice professional communities of practice. In identifying the key linguistic elements that contribute to the construction of novice professional communities, it is aimed to highlight how different communities define meaning and identity. The core research questions for this study are outlined below:

- **Main research question**

  How are communicative strategies linguistically realised in the meetings of Engineering and Marketing novices?

- **Sub Questions**

  (a) How do these strategies contribute to the development of communities of practice?

  (b) Does the use of communicative strategies vary between Engineering and Marketing communities of practice?

1.3 Overview of Chapters

This thesis is divided into 9 chapters.

Chapter 2:   This chapter deals with reviewing the relevant literature for the present study.

Chapter 3:   This chapter deals with applying the Community of Practice framework to the study.

Chapter 4:   The data and methodology for the present study will be detailed in this chapter.

Chapter 5:   This chapter deals with the notion of negotiating identity in the community of practice. This is discussed through an analysis of pronouns in the data.

Chapter 6:   This chapter examines the role of humour in constructing rapport management and group cohesion in the two novice professional communities of practice.

Chapter 7:   The organisational culture of each community of practice is examined in this chapter through a discussion of prevalent topics in the data.

Chapter 8:   This chapter deals with conflict and negotiation through an overview of conflict dynamics present in both communities of practice.

Chapter 9:   This chapter addresses the research questions and the findings of the present study in order to reach a final conclusion.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This study looks at discourse in a university context. Hence, it can be linked to the wider context of institutional discourse (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999). The notion of institutional discourse is vital to this study, as it allows for the examination of a range of verbal features of interaction and for a description of power structures in different institutional settings. Central to this study also is the area of novice development through work-based projects. The area of novices and how they develop their professional identity has shown to be a valuable aspect of workplace interaction in medical settings (Atkinson,1995; Nguyen, 2006). However, little or no research has been carried out in the area of novice professional interaction and development in the university context. As outlined in Chapter 1, this is due to the difficulty in obtaining naturally occurring data from student group work (Ädel, 2011). Insight into the area of novice professional development can therefore be gained through the examination of student interactions in Authentic Workplace Project meetings. The authenticity of this data can be considered core to uncovering the interactional practices and use of communicative strategies in novice professional communities.

As detailed in Chapter 1, this study focuses on the discourse of students interacting in Authentic Workplace Project meetings in the fields of Engineering and Marketing. The authenticity of these projects as simulations of real life organisational projects, within marketing and engineering contexts, provides a unique focus for analysis. Institutional and workplace discourse studies provide the most coherent approach to the dynamic and interactional features present in organisational interactions. The discourse of novice interactions will therefore be considered using an institutional discourse lens as a means of interpretation. As the modelling of professional tasks and deliverables is a requirement of these projects, the construction and negotiation of professional identities through language is highly relevant to this study. The notion that each organisation and institution employs a different code of conduct, discoursal norms and practices (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999) will be outlined in a survey of literature in order to highlight the different approaches to professional interaction in both participant groups.

Studies on institutional discourse highlight the development of power structures, identity processes and rapport management as core features in understanding workplace dynamics (Holmes and Marra, 2002; Handford, 2010). This chapter will therefore investigate the literature of discourse in institutional and workplace settings in order to clarify the linguistic strategies and features of communication that participants can be expected to model in novice meetings. The chapter will also develop a general view of the area of spoken language studies and subsequent analysis methods before conducting a thorough investigation of the area of institutional discourse and the characteristics of workplace interaction. The chapter will be organised under the following headings:

2.1 Language and Context—detailing the importance of considering context in language studies

2.2 Spoken Language studies—including the development of conversation analysis, pragmatics and corpus linguistics as approaches to analysing institutional discourse

2.3 Language in Institutional Contexts—examining the main areas of research on institutional and workplace discourse studies

2.4 Characteristics of Workplace Interaction—highlighting the main contributing factors to workplace dynamics

2.5 Workplace Communication Skills—examining the core areas of workplace communication skills

2.6 Meetings—surveying the previous research into the discourse of meetings, relevant to the present study.

2.7 Research on Novice Interaction—outlining previous research in the area of novice discourse interaction

By carrying out a comprehensive survey of the literature through a discussion of these fundamental concepts in institutional discourse and communication, it is aimed to produce a concrete context in which to frame this study.

2.1 Language and Context

The area of spoken language has been subject to many forms of analysis, from sociological to philosophical studies; researchers have attempted to gain insight into the inner workings of communicative interactions. This study examines spoken language

from a linguistic perspective, which heightens the need for an understanding of context in interaction in order to provide a thorough survey of the data at hand. Ethnographic research suggests that the setting of an interaction is inextricably linked to the linguistic communication that occurs in it. According to Cicourel (1988):

> Knowing something about the ethnographic setting, the perception of and characteristics attributed to others, and broader and local social organizational conditions becomes imperative for an understanding of linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of communicative events.

> (Cicourel, 1988: 294)

Through this interpretation of linguistic communicative events, Cicourel describes the link between the production of language and the environment and role of the participants where it is produced. This view of context suggests that the social organisation of interaction must be taken into account when unravelling language. The notion of context can therefore be considered crucial when examining different forms of spoken language. Volosinov (1973: 95) argues that 'verbal communication cannot be understood and interpreted without regarding the concrete situation in which it has occurred'. Context based studies consider the many different extralinguistic factors that influence interaction such as setting, participant relationships and goals of interaction, that are not always evident from spoken language excerpts (Halliday, 1978; Fairclough, 1989; Swales, 1990; Duranti and Goodwin, 1992).

Halliday (1978) notes the role of context in uncovering the aims and situational elements of talk in interaction. In his work on the situational aspects of language, he acknowledges that 'all language functions in contexts of situation, and is relatable to those contexts' (p. 32). In describing the role of register in determining the social context of an event of spoken interaction, he draws on Malinowski's (1935) work stating that language should not be merely considered a direct reflection of subject matter. In order to further explore the context of a situation so as to predict the linguistic features attributed to it, Halliday proposes three headings, *field*, *mode* and *tenor*, to describe how situational context determines the kinds of meanings that are expressed (1978: 33). He considers that *field* refers to the institutional setting in which a piece of language occurs and embraces the subject matter at hand as well as the whole activity of

the speaker or participant in a setting. *Tenor* refers to the relationship between participants in terms of variation in formality and issues such as permanence and emotional charge. *Mode* is described as the channel of communication adopted or the role of language in the situation, including issues such as phatic communion (1978: 33).

This suggests that not only is the situational context of verbal interaction highly relevant, but the relationship between the participants in interaction can also provide contextual clues of why one form of language is adopted over another. The mode of communication described by Halliday allows for the distinction between the form and role of language used in certain contexts compared to others. The consideration of these concepts in analysing spoken language can provide an insight into areas of linguistic significance in context. This approach embraces the broader situational frame as well as the more specific subject matter that occurs within it, highlighting the link between the two.

The notion of context is also examined by Duranti and Goodwin (1992), with a view to providing a relevant frame for the analysis of human interaction in different situations. They argue that talk is one of the most pervasive social activities that human beings engage in and discuss the importance of considering talk as a dynamic context based activity. Duranti and Goodwin outline three main approaches to analysing context:

> First, approaching context from the perspective of an actor actively operating in the world which he or she finds him or herself embedded; second. Tying the analysis of context to study of indigenous activities that participants use to constitute the culturally and historically organized social worlds that thy inhabit: thirdly, recognizing that participants are situated within multiple contexts which are capable of rapid and dynamic change as the events they are engaged in unfold.

> (Duranti and Goodwin, 1992: 5)

This approach outlines the dynamic changeability of context where participants adapt their activities in order to correspond with the events they are engaged in. Spoken language is considered a key activity in interaction and it can therefore be noted that types of spoken interaction will contrast and vary depending on the context of the interaction. Drew and Heritage (1992: 19) discuss this dynamic interactive approach as

the abandonment of the "bucket" theory of context. They argue that the CA approach to context is more apt than traditional discourse analysis methods as it:

> …embodies a dynamic approach in which "context" is treated as both the project and production of the participants own actions and therefore as inherently locally produced and transformable at any moment.

<div align="right">(Drew and Heritage, 1992: 19)</div>

This highlights the uniqueness of different interactions and moves away from approaches which rely on a 'preestablished social framework' containing participants' actions (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 19). Studies on spoken interaction traditionally focused on the context of the speaker and hearer (Duranti and Goodwin, 1992), ethnographic approaches on the other hand, consider elements of context such as spatial and temporal dimensions of speech events. These are highlighted in studies of ritual and institutional activities such as classroom interactions and meetings (Bargiela Chiappini and Harris, 1997; Farr and O'Keeffe, 2003; Walsh, 2006; Handford, 2010). The inclusion of these spatial and temporal dimensions of speech events in spoken language analysis means that the researcher can use contextual information to enhance analysis. As speakers constantly negotiate talk in interaction, they also negotiate identity and role in conversation through their use of language in different contexts. Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999) highlight the wider context of interaction as crucial, both for understanding discourse and for defining social identity or "who we are" in any particular encounter. Understanding the context of discourse can therefore provide further background information about participants and the speech activities in which they are engaged, enhancing the researcher's ability to gain a full perspective on the discourse produced. According to Gumperz (1992), the interpretation of what a speaker intends to convey at any one point rests on the socially constructed knowledge of what the encounter is about and what is to be achieved. This applies to language across genres and highlights the issue of variety in different forms of discourse, establishing the notion that different linguistic features can be more common in some forms of discourse than others. This ideology is particularly relevant in the case of institutional discourse as the nature of language changes so frequently depending on participants and the form of work based interaction.

2.2 Spoken Language Studies

According to Gumperz (1972), research on spoken language has become a vital means of understanding social interaction in 'recent' decades (albeit in 1972). Spoken language research derives from an interest in understanding language on an interactional level. Bakhtin's (1986) work outlines the significance of genre in spoken language studies. He states that genres accumulate forms of seeing and interpreting particular aspects of the world (1986: 5). Bakhtin developed the notion of the *utterance* in order to clarify the different genres of spoken and written language. He states that:

> Any concrete utterance is a link in the chain of speech communication of a particular sphere. The very boundaries of the utterance are determined by a change of speech subjects.

> (Bakhtin, 1986: 91)

The identification and examination of different utterances or language patterns in particular spheres is predominantly what language studies are concerned with. Studies on spoken language examine the utterances or language present in different genres and interactions. Bakhtin (1986: 95) highlights that 'each speech genre in each area of speech communication has its own typical conception of the addressee, and this defines it as a genre'. This underlines the role of the participants in determining specific styles and genres in spoken language studies.

Studies in spoken language outline the importance of underlining context in linguistic interpretation. According to McCarthy (1998: 30), 'spoken genres portray a picture of dynamism, fluidity, variability, mixing and negotiation'. This dynamic approach to language allows for the interpretation of spoken language in ever-changing contexts. The dynamism of spoken language is also expressed by Gee (1999: 10) who states:

> Language has a magical property: when we speak or write, we design what we have to say to fit the situation in which we are communicating. But at the same time how we speak or write creates that very situation.

> (Gee, 1999: 10)

In using spoken language in different situations, speakers create and construct different contexts of spoken interaction. One such dynamic area of interaction includes the

context of institutional discourse. Research in the area of institutional discourse provides an indepth insight into spoken language in context. Institutional discourse has been examined from different perspectives including, casual conversation at work (Eggins and Slade, 1997; Koester, 2006), transactional and relational talk (Iacobucci, 1990; McCarthy, 2000; Koester, 2006), and formal business meetings (Bargiela Chiappini and Harris 1997; Handford, 2010). The importance of spoken language in institutional settings is underlined by Boden (1994: 8), who states that 'talk is the lifeblood of organisations'. The push for research using naturally occurring authentic data has led to an array of studies on spoken interaction in different contexts and has become an established form of research across disciplines including medicine and the social sciences. This section will outline three main means of analysing spoken interaction through a survey of Conversation Analysis, Pragmatics and Corpus Linguistics.

2.2.1 Conversation analysis

Conversation Analysis (CA) can be considered a key methodological approach to the study of spoken language. In dealing with the analysis of data on qualitative level, CA essentially allows for the investigation of utterances as objects which speakers use to get things done in their interactions with others (Wooffitt, 2005). The study of language through a CA perspective encourages the use of 'materials collected from naturally occurring occasions of everyday interaction' (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984: 2). This approach to language can include the naturally occurring conversations among friends in everyday life and also the language that occurs in more formal institutional settings.

The qualitative approach to data from a CA perspective ensures that transcripts aim to capture not only what was said in the data, but also how it was said (Wooffitt, 2005). Through a micro analysis approach to data, CA allows for an indepth view of how participants construct interaction through language and create their own relevant patterns of spoken discourse. The origins of CA lie in the area of sociology in the context of institutional settings. Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 89) state that although CA has sparked much interest in everyday talk, its roots lie in the work of Sacks (1967)

study of telephone calls to a Los Angeles suicide prevention centre. This revolutionary work by Sacks underlines the relevance of considering context and micro features of language in analysing spoken language data. The structure and design of spoken language is at the forefront of CA studies, as it provides a framework for analysis which encompasses the relationship between the actions that utterances perform.

Drew and Heritage (1992: 16) define conversation analysis as 'combining a concern with the contextual sensitivity of language use with a focus on talk as a vehicle for social interaction'. Although traditional CA studies centred more on the local sequential organisation of talk (Cicourel, 1988), the use of CA has proved highly beneficial in context based studies, including interaction based studies of institutional settings. As CA examines the specific sequence of talk in different social contexts, it allows for the researcher to highlight areas of interest based on situational contexts and also on speaker roles. Pomerantz and Fehr (1997) state that CA is 'not limited to the explication of talk alone but is amenable to analyses of how conduct, practice or praxis in whatever form is accomplished' (p. 65). The context of interaction and the manner in which participants engage in society can thus be considered a core element of CA studies as it can provide insight into how language is used to perform social actions. In highlighting the importance of context in CA, Drew and Heritage (1992) state that:

> The CA perspective embodies a dynamic approach in which the "context" is treated as both the project and product of the participants' own actions and therefore as inherently locally produced and transformable at any moment.

(Drew and Heritage, 1992: 19)

This CA perspective of context, not only in a broad situational sense, but as a result of participants' actions in society, provides a profound insight into the linguistic and sociological dynamics of interaction. According to Wooffitt (2005), 'when we talk we produce utterances which perform actions, which in turn invite particular next kinds of actions' (p. 8). As CA is concerned with the sequential organisation of talk, issues such as identity and roles in interaction, adjacency pairs and topic are highlighted in determining how a speaker constructs and achieves interactional goals through talk. The analysis of the organisation of turn taking in interaction means that the analyst can

construct a turn by turn account of what a speaker intends to convey through the language they employ. One such element of sequencing can be found in the presence of adjacency pairs. Heritage (1984: 246) defines an adjacency pair as the sequence of two adjacent utterances, produced by different speakers, ordered as a first part and second part, so that a first part requires a particular second, or range of second parts. Adjacency pairs can be observed as invitations, questions and answers and greetings. Schegloff and Sacks (1973) outline the presence of adjacency pairs in conversation. In their work, they define adjacency pairs as conversational sequences where an element of special relatedness operates between adjacent utterances. The three characteristics of such pairs are described as:

(a) Two utterance length

(b) Adjacent positioning of component utterances

(c) Different speakers producing each utterance

(Schegloff and Sacks, 1973)

This theory works on the principal that for every utterance there is a corresponding utterance in the form of a response. As most conversational contexts adhere to certain patterns of adjacency pairs, there tends to be an underlying expectation of what constitutes as a correct response. This notion of response in spoken interaction is referred to as preference organisation (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984). Pomerantz (1978, 1984) describes preferred responses as direct, often abbreviated and structurally simple and typically immediate. Dispreferred responses (Levinson, 1983) are typically indirect, structurally elaborated and delayed. The notion that speakers respond with a preferred response, dependant on the context, is central to theories on face and politeness. An example of a preferred response occurs in the exchange of a greeting in the form of a reply. A dispreferred response would perhaps entail the refusal to acknowledge a greeting. The turn taking system is a central process to CA and its analysis allows for the close inspection of a range of different sequential processes in interaction.

Through analysing these sequences in interaction, other patterns and phenomena can also be observed. The area of topic management is a central process in spoken interaction. Through analysing the turn taking system, topic management can be

observed interactionally. McCarthy (1998) outlines this in his work on spoken language. He states that 'topic is neither predetermined nor singularly defined, but shifts and develops, often without sharp boundaries between topics' (1998: 109). The shifts and changes of topic in conversation have been examined by Jefferson (1984) who describes the complexities of topic management in interaction. Chafe (1994) examines the role of hierarchy and participant roles in topic. As the establishment and uptake of a topic requires the interaction of speakers, the turn taking approach outlined in CA provides a valuable tool for analysis. According to Chafe (1994: 123), 'topic development through elicitation requires a sequence of turns by two or more interlocuters and is driven by the interaction between speakers'. This interaction of speakers in order to produce context based language is at the core of studies on institutional interaction. Studies on institutional interaction highlight CA as a crucial means of analysis as it embraces notions of context and participant roles in interaction (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999). The analysis of talk in context means that it is possible to identify and analyse a range of linguistic features which contribute to talk in these different contexts. The use of CA to examine the turn taking processes, preferential organisation and topic management in institutional discourse, allows for a comprehensive understanding of the interactional processes and use of communicative strategies in institutional contexts.

2.2.2 Pragmatics of Speaking

The relationship between language and context has thus far been rendered inextricable in this chapter. The area of pragmatics encompasses this relationship as a field which requires reference to the users. In his discussion of the definition of pragmatics, Levinson provides the following definition:

> Pragmatics is the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalized or encoded in the structure of a language.

> (Levinson, 1983: 9)

This definition outlines the scope of pragmatics in considering context in determining the meaning of utterances in interaction. Yule (1996: 3) states that the study of pragmatics is concerned with meaning as communicated by the speaker and interpreted

by the listener. He asserts that pragmatics 'has more to do with the analysis of what speakers mean by their utterances than what those utterances or phrases mean by themselves' (*ibid*: 3). The issue of context in language is therefore of central importance to studies in pragmatics. Listeners' interpretation of speech plays a vital role in uncovering speakers intended meaning in an utterance and the area of pragmatics is essentially concerned with uncovering these inferences. It ultimately recognises that what is unsaid plays a role in what is communicated.

The area of deixis, a core concept within pragmatics, is central to studies in pragmatics. Deixis deals with the way sentences are anchored to certain aspects of their contexts of utterance (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 118). According O'Keeffe et al (2011: 36), deixis is fundamental to the study of pragmatics as it enables interlocuters to 'identify people and things in relation to the space they are operating in at the moment at which they are speaking'. Deixis acts as an indicator to the intended meaning of the interaction. The analysis of pronouns in determining speaker role and identity exemplifies the nature of pragmatics and deixis in considering intended meaning in interaction. O'Keeffe et al (2011) state that 'pragmatics has proved inclusive rather than delimiting as a framework for the study of intended meaning in social context'. Through pragmatic analysis, the social elements of interaction can be highlighted. The language of social groups can be examined for areas such as politeness norms and how these are expressed through language. Studies on face and politeness employ a pragmatic approach in analysing deixis to decipher the addressee's point of view (Fillmore, 1971). Distancing oneself from the speaker and taking the role of a speaker form part of politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 119) and outline the relevance of pragmatics in determining politeness and power in social context. This can also lead to its use in areas of conflictual discourse through an analysis of the inferred meaning and hierarchical role of participants (*ibid*). This can be achieved through the analysis of conflictual turns (Maynard, 1985) and through the examination of conflict talk (Grimshaw, 1990). In examining how language is used to convey meaning, role and identity, the area of pragmatics provides the possibility of distinguishing language use across contexts.

2.2.3 Corpus Linguistics

A corpus refers to a large principled collection of natural texts (Biber et al, 1999). Traditional studies in corpus linguistics (CL) focused on written data and dealt with the analysis of written texts. Reasons for this included the difficulty in obtaining spoken language samples before advances in technology introduced the tape recorder. According to Reppen et al (2002), the advances in technology and increasing interest in spoken language among linguists has led to the introduction of a spoken component in many of the modern general corpora. These encompass a wide variety of speech types, from casual conversation among friends to academic lectures and radio broadcasts. The rise in interest in spoken language has increased demand for authentic spoken language corpora. According to Stubbs (1996: 2) the major ideas of corpus linguistics have been clustered around the textual analysis of naturally occurring language and also the importance of language studies in the real world. The introduction of corpus linguistics has represented a change in spoken language analysis. According to Tognini-Bonelli (2010):

> Corpus linguistics represents a definite shift towards a linguistics of parole; the focus is on 'performance' rather than 'competence'. The linguist aims to describe language use rather than identify linguistic universals. The quantitative element (frequency of occurrence) is considered very significant and, depending on the specific approach, is taken to determine the categories of description.

> (Tognini-Bonelli, 2010: 14-15)

The focus on performance and language use highlights the value of CL in addressing contextual issues in language due to its ability to 'freeze' speech (McCarthy, personal communication) across vast areas, participants, time and space. Reppen and Simpson (2002: 92) state that corpus linguistics provides an extremely powerful tool for the analysis of natural language and can provide immense insights as to how language use varies in different situations. According to Koester (2006), the use of corpus-based methods allows for analysis involving quantification to be done very quickly and easily (p. 17). The feature of text analysis using quantitative tools such as *Wordsmith Tools* (Scott, 1999) allows for a wide range of comparative studies to be performed and, more importantly, makes the analysis of language patterns across a large spread of data possible.

The development of spoken corpora has led to the ability for researchers to compare and examine data from different contexts and genres. As previously stated, corpora allow for the indepth analysis of naturally occurring spoken language. Examples of corpora dedicated to spoken language include the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Spoken Discourse (CANCODE; McCarthy, 1998) consisting of five million words of naturally occurring informal conversations of English. The Michigan Institute Corpus of Academic spoken English (MICASE; Simpson et al, 1999) consisting of 1.5 million words deals with academic spoken English and is available online. The Limerick Belfast Corpus of academic spoken English (LIBEL; O'Keeffe, 2007) consists of a million words of academic language in an Irish and UK context. Although corpora of workplace and institutional language are rare, prominent research has been done in the area by Handford (2010), who collected and established the Cambridge and Nottingham Business English Corpus (CANBEC), this corpus comprises of one million words of English in business meetings. These corpora cover a range of genres from academic language to business meetings and have been the focus of many studies on linguistic features in natural spoken interaction. Corpus linguistics allows for the analysis of lexical and grammatical items (Biber et al, 1999, Carter and McCarthy 2006), and for the analysis of language in specialised contexts such as media discourse (O'Keeffe, 2006), business meetings (Handford, 2010) and teacher talk (Vaughan, 2007).

Comparing the study of spoken language in the context of CA and CL, it can be said that CL has allowed for the study of large amounts of recurring data whereas CA analysts often focus on just a short sequence of turns and make generalisations about sequentiality based on these. CL is more powerful in its ability to generalise results because it can test hypotheses about spoken language across many instances and contextual variables (O'Keeffe, 2006). CL has also acted as a complementary methodological tool and we will now look at its complementarity role with Pragmatics and CA.

2.2.4 Using CL in combination with other approaches

The application of CL to areas such as Language Teaching and Learning, Discourse analysis, Literary and Translation Studies, Forensic Linguistics and Pragmatics have been identified by McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2010). According to O'Keeffe and Walsh (2012), this demonstrates the relevance of using CL as an analysis method. They state that, 'The use of CL with other complementary research methods is a testament to the strength and insight that it can bring' (2012: 161). The area of CL as a valid method of linguistic analysis is highlighted by Tognini-Bonelli (2001). She states that 'what we are witnessing now is the fact that corpus linguistics has become a new research enterprise and a new philosophical approach to linguistic enquiry' (2001: 1). Tognini-Bonelli (2001) highlights the differences between a *corpus-based* approach and a *corpus-driven* approach in using a corpus for linguistic analysis. She emphasises that *corpus-based* refers to a methodology that uses a corpus mainly to expound, examine or exemplify theories established before the existence of corpora. *Corpus-driven* approaches on the other hand, are aimed at deriving linguistic categories and theories from the corpus itself. She states that, 'The general methodological path is clear: observation leads to hypothesis leads to generalisation leads to unification in theoretical statement' (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 85). O'Keeffe and Walsh (2012: 162), construct a parallel description of these types of research. They define *Descriptive Corpus Based Research* as referring to 'the corpus as an end to itself' and *Applied Corpus Research* as 'the corpus as a means to an end'. According to O'Keeffe and Walsh (2012: 162), 'the corpus is a powerful methodological tool which leads to greater depth of analysis in combination with another theoretical framework'. This corresponds with Tognini-Bonelli's (2001) view that through *corpus-based* approaches, the linguist applies models of language and descriptions which are considered fundamental to analysis. She highlights that in applying a *corpus-based* approach, linguists 'perceive and analyse the corpus through these categories and sieve the data accordingly' (2001: 66). Although CL provides a method to analyse large data sets, it does not provide a basis to explain the dynamics of the interactions (Morton, Walsh, O'Keeffe, 2011: 2). The use of CL in conjunction with broader theoretical frameworks such as pragmatics or conversation analysis however, allows for the researcher to analyse larger patterns of language while applying a coherent framework (Morton, Walsh and O'Keeffe, 2011; Clancy and McCarthy, forthcoming).

The use of CL in conjunction with pragmatics is of particular interest to this study, as it allows for the examination of a range of contextual issues in spoken language. Studies combining CL and pragmatics have been slow to come about. According to McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2010: 38), this is due to the fact that 'pragmatic features such as speech acts, politeness, hedges, boosters, vague language, and so on, are not automatically retrievable from a corpus.' Although the presence of pragmatic features cannot be identified, due to the inability of corpus software to identify direct contextual issues in the data, CL can prove highly beneficial in identifying and quantifying individual pragmatic features in interaction. Clancy and McCarthy highlight the benefits of using CL for pragmatic analysis:

> One of the benefits of using corpora for pragmatic analysis is that the seeming disparity among individual transcripts can belie the repeated order and regularity of events which emerges when large numbers of transcripts are brought together.

> (Clancy and McCarthy, forthcoming: 10)

A particular benefit of using CL for pragmatic analysis is that it allows for the quantification of pragmatic markers. Studies analysing the use of pragmatic markers such as deictics, hedges, discourse markers, boosters and markers of shared knowledge (Carter and McCarthy, 2006) can benefit greatly from quantitative analysis. Clancy and O'Keeffe (forthcoming: 11) highlight the use of CL in determining the use of pragmatic markers in discourse through focusing on individual items such as, pragmatic markers, discourse markers and relational markers. The tagging of pragmatic markers in discourse can also lead to enhanced pragmatic analysis (Holmes, 2006). In analysing pragmatic features such as humour and politeness, the notion of pragmatically tagging data can provide a means to quantifying such instances in spoken language (Holmes and Marra, 2002; Vaughan, 2007). Although not all pragmatic features can be accurately tagged in the data, Clancy and McCarthy (forthcoming: 10) highlight the benefit of applying a CL/pragmatics approach as 'repeated actions of a similar nature can be observed across many different speakers at different times and in different places'. A CL approach to pragmatic issues thus allows for the researcher to determine the different contexts and language varieties used to construct meaning and participant roles in interaction, across a wide range of data and participants. This approach is not entirely

quantitative however. The CL software allows for the generation of quantitative results and it also allows for the instant access of source data. Very often, long periods of qualitative analysis is needed to interpret CL findings from any one context (O'Keeffe et al, 2011).

The combination of Conversation Analysis (CA) and Corpus Linguistics (CL) methods in order to construct a detailed analysis of data has proved beneficial to spoken language studies. McCarthy and Handford (2004) outline the benefits of mixed methods approaches in their work on Spoken Business English. In their study, they highlight the benefits of combining the quantitative data of frequency lists, keyword clusters and concordances with insights of discourse analysis and conversation analysis. They state that this approach can benefit the analysis of pronoun use, modality and indices of interpersonal communication (2004: 172). Koester (2006) also emphasises the importance of using mixed method approaches. She states that although CL provides a close up inspection on similar details from disparate parts of the corpus, it does not show the moment by moment dynamics or overall development of an encounter (p. 20). For this reason, CA provides deeper contextual clues in outlining a detailed analysis of the spoken language data. Morton, Walsh and O'Keeffe (2011) outline the benefits of using a CL/CA approach to data analysis. They consider the use of CL to perform word frequency counts, key word analysis and concordances of word patterns on a macro level before using CA to provide insights into the actual interactions that take place on a micro level (*ibid*). O'Keeffe and Walsh (2012: 164), state that CL allows for the context of use of a particular grammatical or lexical pattern to be ascertained in a turn. Their CL/CA framework highlights the significance of the turn as the point where CL and CA meet, emphasising that CA provides a framework within which to analyse the data, whereas CL allows for the examination of patterns of use and larger amounts of data (*ibid*). The ability to examine contextual patterns in language (Morton, Walsh and O'Keeffe, 2011) is therefore a key benefit of a CL/CA approach to language analysis. O'Keeffe and Walsh (2012) summarise this advantage of a CL/CA approach:

> While CA offers an emic, close-up perspective of the data, CL complements this by providing specific information about the 'bigger picture', about which language features occur, where and in what numbers, and how certain words combine in particular ways with other words.

(O'Keeffe and Walsh, 2012: 165)

The use of a CL/CA approach can be considered complementary as it allows for both a depth of understanding and identification of frequency of words and patterns in the data (O'Keeffe and Walsh, 2012) that could not be determined through the use of these methods in isolation.

The use of CL in combination with pragmatics and Conversation Analysis allows for a more comprehensive view of language in context and enables the interpretation of different patterns of language in use on a macro and micro level. The application of these approaches in the present study will be examined in Chapter 4.

2.3 Language in Institutional Contexts

The investigation of institutional discourse has led to a range of studies concerning discourse across workplace and institutional contexts. Key areas in the field of institutional discourse are outlined by Sarangi and Roberts (1999) in the introductory chapter of *Talk, Work and institutional Order*. They propose an interdisciplinary approach to professional or institutional language across a variety of institutional settings. The introductory chapter of *Talk at work* by Drew and Heritage (1992) outlines a range of research in institutional settings from a conversation analysis perspective. Both of these chapters by Sarangi and Roberts (1999) and Drew and Heritage (1992) focus on the discourse of medical, management and legal settings among other institutional contexts. Studies on professional discourse include work by Bhatia (1993), who focuses on written texts in business and legal genres. The talk and interaction that takes place in these contexts can be considered both workplace talk and institutional interaction (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999). Studies on workplace and institutional talk include those in business contexts (Gumperz, 1982; Boden, 1994; Koester, 2006; Bargiela Chiappini, 2009, Handford, 2010), medical and novice medical contexts (Labov and Fanshel 1977; Fisher and Todd, 1983; Tannen and Wallet, 1993, Sarangi and Roberts, 2003; Nguyen, 2006, 2011); legal settings (Conley and O'Barr, 1990; Atkinson, 1979; Drew, 1992; Hutchby, 2005; Ehrlich, 2007), classroom language between teacher and students (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Coulthard and

Montgomery, 1981; Coulthard, 1985; Farr, 2003, 2011) and media discourse (Heritage, 1985; Greatbatch, 1988; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991; Hutchby, 1991; Clayman, 1992; O'Keeffe, 2006). These studies are all considered under the frame of institutional interaction as they include the fulfilment of goals in interaction.

Drew and Heritage (1992: 4) state that the institutionality of an interaction is not determined by its setting but by practices embedded in the interaction. They determine that interaction is institutional insofar as participants' institutional or professional identities are somehow made relevant to the work activities in which they are engaged. In their definition of institutional interaction, they highlight three distinguishing features:

1) Institutional interaction involves an orientation by at least one of the participants to some core goal, task or identity (or set of them) conventionally associated with the institution in question. In short, institutional talk is normally informed by *goal orientations* of a relatively restricted conventional form

2) Institutional interaction may often involve special and *particular constraints* on what one or both of the participants will treat as allowable contributions to the business at hand

3) Institutional talk may be associated with *inferential frameworks* and procedures that are particular to the specific institutional contexts

(Drew and Heritage, 1992: 22)

This definition highlights the importance of frameworks, constraints on participants and the fulfilment of goals in interaction as a core part of institutional interaction. The issue of context has been previously discussed in this chapter as a significant factor in analysing workplace discourse (see section 2.1 on Context). As the frameworks and procedures of each institution can be considered unique in some form, it is vital to take these into consideration in order to fully comprehend the data at hand.

The issue of fulfilment of goals in institutional discourse is highly relevant to this study. Drew and Heritage (1992) state the importance of talk in pursuing these goals:

> Talk in interaction is the principal means through which lay persons pursue various practical goals and the central medium through which the daily working activities of many professionals and organisational representatives are conducted.

<div align="right">(Drew and Heritage, 1992: 3)</div>

This indicates the centrality of goals to the language of workplace discourse. The talk that professionals and organisational representatives use to convey these goals is dependent on the context of the interaction. The issue of multiple goals in discourse is outlined by Tracy and Coupland (1990: 2). They state that people typically have more than one goal when they talk to others. In developing this notion, they state that:

> Understanding communicative action requires bridging two worlds: the world of social actors that with the purposes, concerns and "goals" that motivate their actions, and the world of discourse in which every day actors' goals are expressed and inferred.

<div align="right">(Tracy and Coupland, 1990: 1)</div>

Although it can be considered that institutional and work based interactions are predominantly focused on task based goals, Koester (2006) states that in considering the multiple goals in discourse, it must be acknowledged that in most types of discourse speakers orient to both transactional and relational goals, although one type of goal may be more dominant. This has been highlighted in studies focusing on the interpersonal and relational aspects of talk at work (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Koester, 2006). Handford (2010: 28) details the presence of relational talk in business meetings in assisting the accomplishment of transactional goals. Brown and Yule (1983) outline the transactional and interactional functions of language, they define transactional functions as those involving the transfer of information. Interactional functions of language are considered those which involve the building and maintaining of social relationships. This distinction between different forms of interaction can be outlined in work based interaction through the achievement of different goals. McCarthy's (2000) study on service encounters asserts that speakers can draw on transactional or relational talk depending on the interactional goal at hand. He highlights that even in transactional talk, participants still reinforce the relational context, outlining the importance of context in work based interactions. McCarthy (2000) argues that:

> Genre models based predominantly on transactional achievements cannot account for the kinds of variation immanent in corpus data and cannot account for participants' commitment to relational talk even when such talk may appear unmotivated.

<div align="right">(McCarthy, 2000: 84)</div>

This outlines the importance of considering relational talk in transactional or workplace interaction and also underlines the notion of context in interaction, as transactional achievements alone do not provide a full perspective of spoken interaction. Koester (2006) also discusses the relevance of relational goals in workplace discourse. She states the importance of recognising the fact that relational exchanges can occur within genres with clear transactional goals (p. 53). This distinction between relational and transactional goals will be core to the analysis of topic and organisational culture in Chapter 7. The area of relational talk will be further discussed in section 4.2.3 on rapport management.

2.3.1 Spoken Interaction in the Workplace

The importance of considering different types of spoken interaction in the workplace is addressed by Sarangi and Roberts (1999). They discuss the different relations in the workplace and highlight the context of workplace interaction as an area of importance in understanding spoken language and the interaction order. According to Sarangi and Roberts:

> Studies of workplace interaction shed light on the interaction order, more generally, have a special contribution to make to our understanding of how professions are constituted and relations of power are fashioned out of talk at work.

<div align="right">(Sarangi and Roberts, 1999: 2)</div>

The specific interaction orders that occur in each workplace and institution can vary dramatically (Holmes and Marra, 2002). As each workplace constitutes its own norms and interactional dynamics, it is important to highlight these as features of particular working environments. A major feature of institutional interaction is the distinction between interactions carried out between professional participants and the public, and interactions carried out solely between professionals in a particular institution (see

O'Keeffe 2006 for a discussion of public and private personae in the context of media discourse). There have been many studies done on this issue of power dynamics in the medical context. Fisher and Todd (1983), Mishler (1984), West (1984), Tannen and Wallet, (1987), Waitzkin (1991), Atkinson (1995, 1999), analyse the doctor patient relationship and collegial talk among physicians.

Sarangi and Roberts (1999: 20) describe the difference between professional-client encounters on one hand and communication between and across groups of professionals and workers on the other hand. They draw from Goffman's (1959) work on *frontstage* and *backstage* interaction in order to contextualise different institutional interactions. Sarangi and Roberts (1999), state that although the areas of *frontstage* and *backstage* studies are difficult to define, they can be broadly attributed to discourse that occurs in the public sphere where clients are involved (*fronstage*) and discourse that involves the inner workings of institutional life where professionals and workers interact (*backstage*). Many previous studies focused on *frontstage* interaction in institutional discourse as it appeared to be the most obvious form of institutional interaction. The medical context in particular focuses on doctor-patient interaction in different situations e.g. in order to clarify the communicative skills in delicate circumstances such as death (Sorenson and Iedema, 2006) or in dealing with non-native patients (Garcés, 2000). These studies contribute to the training of novice professionals in the field and aim to develop communication skills (Cegala et al, 2002). The context of *backstage* studies has become an area of great interest to researchers in recent years with studies focusing on the interactions of workers in factory settings (Holmes, 2000a), interactions of workers in office environments (Koester, 2006), business meetings (Handford, 2010) and the interactions of teachers in staff meetings (Vaughan, 2007). These studies highlight the different goals and types of talk that occur in institutional settings. Early management studies of workers on the shop floor by Collinson (1992) were conducted through observational studies. These methods provided an insight into the inner dynamics between management and employees in the context of factory life through observations of humour and power structures. However, they lacked the depth that a thorough linguistic study can offer through the analysis of different communicative patterns and strategies in authentic spoken data. The next section outlines the contributions of

linguistic based studies to discourse in the workplace and highlights the benefits of using linguistic analysis in determine the dynamics of workplace interaction.

2.4 Characteristics of Institutional Interaction

This section will review the different characteristics of institutional or workplace interaction, as outlined in the literature. In an effort to provide a general perspective of important features of workplace interaction, issues such as Power and Identity, Face and Politeness and Rapport Management will be reviewed.

2.4.1 Power and Institutional Identity

The characteristics of institutional settings have been established and developed through the analysis of a range of different contexts and practices, from medical to educational settings, as discussed above. Perhaps the most distinguishing feature between workplace discourse and others is the presence of clearly identifiable power structures (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006). Institutional talk differs from everyday conversation as institutional interactions are often asymmetrical (Heritage, 1997). The role of power and its personification through language has been examined through the context of leadership and power in workplace interactions by Holmes and Stubbe (2003); Holmes (2000b); Holmes (2006); Rogerson-Revell (2007); Bargiela Chiappini (2009); Ladegaard (2011). Ladegaard's (2011) study focuses on the gender dynamics of identity display through leadership in the workplace. In his comparison on male and female managers, he notes similar attitudes in directive styles by both groups. Rogerson-Revell (2007) analyses the role of humour in creating solidarity but also in exerting power over subordinates. Mullany (2007) details how directive language is used in displaying power in institutions. Saito (2011) examines how Japanese male superiors draw on linguistic resources to make to make subordinates carry out their superiors' directives at work. The use of manipulative strategies by individuals in leadership and management positions while considering the face needs of their subordinates in order to achieve transactional goals, yet simultaneously maintain relational objectives, has been outlined by Holmes and Stubbe (2003); Holmes and Marra (2004) and Vine (2004). These studies indicate that communicative strategies are crucial in workplace interaction, as

participants in power positions at work must be aware of the importance of considering the face needs of employees if they wish to ensure a harmonious working environment.

It is clear from the literature that power and identity are inextricably linked in workplace interaction. As participants adjust their power roles and structures, they are constantly negotiating their identities as professionals, be it as experts in specific areas or members of workplace groups. According to Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999), interaction and identity construction are dynamic interactional processes. They discuss the fact that different social identities can be found in different social encounters and state that the participants in an interaction are always, through their behaviour, and especially through their discourse, engaged in a dynamic process of identity construction (p. 351-352). Giddens (1981: 67) argues that 'At the heart of both domination and power lies the transformative capacity of human action'. Benwell and Stokoe (2006) address the notion of institutional power in their research on *Discourse and Identities.* They state that:

> By constructing power as process or action it is possible to analyse it as an interactionally produced moment—by—moment phenomenon. The analyst can chart the way people are 'enlisted' by, demonstrate complicity with, negotiate or resist institutional agendas.
>
> (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006: 89)

In applying a Conversation Analysis approach to institutional discourse, Benwell and Stokoe (2006) outline the form of interaction that takes place as playing a vital role in distinguishing institutional discourse. They highlight the way turn taking systems are managed in institutional discourse and discuss the notion of the standardised relational pair mainly referring to the institutional representative and the client (*ibid*). In this *frontstage* context the institutional representative normally has the right to ask questions. This type of power dynamic is mainly attributed to *frontstage* studies and has been examined linguistically in medical contexts through doctor-patient interactions. These studies provide valuable insight into the interaction patterns between participants in different positions of power with different institutional identities. According to Atkinson (1999: 75), 'the (usually) dyadic interaction between physician and patient provides a key exemplar of the focused encounter in which episodes of spoken and

unspoken interaction take place'. The relationship between doctor and patient in these interactions provides an insightful view of language in work or professional based interaction due to the many differential factors such as role and different access to knowledge between the speakers (Circourel, 2000). The fact that there is such a wide gap between the doctor and patient provides an insight into institutional talk on quite a transactional basis as the doctor is the participant with the power of information and the patient very much has to rely on their good judgment. In a study on the interaction and conversational constrictions between suppliers of services and immigrant users, Garcés (2002) discusses the interaction that occurs between non-native Spanish speakers or immigrant patients (INNSS) and native Spanish doctors in healthcare centres in Spain. In a native speaker context there are already many boundaries due to institutional power structures between doctor and patient, Garcés (2002) discusses the even more complicated reality of interaction between immigrant workers and doctors due to features outside of the power paradigm, such as language barriers. These studies deal with institutional interactions in *frontstage* context and underline the implications of power structures on interaction. The notion that power structures impact on participant interaction can also apply to *backstage* studies where a more senior participant is entitled to ask a subordinate question thus displaying the assertion of power, for example in the position of chair at a meeting (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1995).

Other studies on the expression of identity through power have been carried out by Rees and Monrouxe (2010). In their work on the role of laughter in the medical workplace, they focus on the construction of power through language and the establishment of professional identities in the process. Holmes and Marra (2002) examine the use of humour in constructing leadership identity in the workplace. The use of person reference as a means of enacting institutional identity has been examined by Drew and Sorejonen (1997). They state that:

> Participants may display their orientation to their acting as incumbents of an institutional role… by using a personal pronoun which indexes their institutional identity rather than their personal identity.

> (Drew and Sorejonen, 1997: 97)

The use of pronouns in establishing power and institutional identity at work is also outlined by Handford (2010). He states that pronouns act 'as a central mechanism by which speakers signal the social relationship' (p. 155). Terrion and Ashforth (2002) analyse the use of *I* and *we* in the language of participants at an executive development course and find that both solidarity and exclusion through the use of *I* and *we* forms of humour in putdowns. The issue of language and professional identity is examined extensively by Richard (2006). In this study, he outlines the way in which professional groups develop interactional procedures for conducting and representing their activities, which can be seen to contribute to a distinctive collaborative identity. This notion of developing a collaborative professional identity underlines the divisions of power within different workplace contexts, as acquiring a specific status of expert knowledge places the professional in a position of power over the client (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999). In the case of professionals interacting on a peer level, roles and identities in workplace interaction can be seen as actively negotiated through talk (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999). In workplace situations or meetings where no clear leader is chosen, for example the role of chair, the participants will negotiate in interaction until a participant with leadership qualities embodies the dominant role (Drew and Heritage, 1992). The issue of power and negotiating identity is of key concern to institutional discourse studies. The influence of face and politeness in the negotiation of identities will be reviewed in section 2.4.2.

2.4.2 Face and Politeness

As previously outlined in this chapter (section 2.3), institutional talk is greatly characterised by the high level of transactional goals in discourse (Drew and Heritage: 1992). In defining institutional talk, it was also considered that relational goals also contribute to workplace interaction (Koester, 2006). Due to the high level of transactional interaction and power structures in the workplace context, the notions of politeness and face work are crucial in maintaining good relationships and in the fulfilment of relational goals. The notion of politeness developed by Brown and Levinson (1987) is important to understanding the negotiative structures in workplace interaction. According to Goffman (1972: 319), 'Face is an individual's positive and social value'. In outlining a definition of politeness, the notion of maintaining face

(Brown and Levinson, 1987) can therefore be considered an aid to maintaining the face of the hearer in interaction. Brown and Levinson define face as 'something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction' (1987: 61). Thus, in maintaining face speakers must be aware of the effects of their utterances on hearers. As workplace discourse involves an emphasis on relational practice, the area of *preference organisation* (Atkins and Heritage, 1984) can be considered crucial to maintaining face. According to Brown and Levinson (1987):

> The term preference organisation refers to the phenomenon that after specific kinds of conversational turn, responses are often strictly non-equivalent one kind of response, termed the *preferred*, is direct, often abbreviated and structurally simple and typically immediate; in contrast, other kinds termed *dispreferred* are typically indirect, structurally elaborated and delayed.

(Brown and Levinson, 1987: 38)

Due to the power structures and identity roles played out in workplace interactions (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006), preferred responses (to use the CA term, see section 2.1.2) are usually key in maintaining a balance of power. As maintaining *face* is a major part of most interaction, workplace studies tend to focus on the shift in dynamics when face is threatened. Locher (2004) examines power and politeness in action through the analysis of disagreement in many different contexts including those of managerial and workplace settings. Handford (2010: 36) outlines that the high level of potentially face threatening acts through the implication of transactional talk in workplace interaction can lead to potential confrontation. In his work on *power and constraint,* he outlines face as a strategy in interaction at meetings through the use of both positive corporate face-work and informal self-deprecation. The use of language to strategically avoid face threatening acts is clear from this study and is also outlined by Koester (2006: 112), who notes the use of self-abasement as a form of defensive strategy to ward off possible threats to face.

The loss of face through conflict or disagreement can produce significant effects on participants' in interaction (Sifianou, 2012). Pomerantz (1984) has carried out extensive research on the notion of *dispreferred* responses in interaction, naming disagreement as a typical context in which they occur. His study highlights disagreement as

uncomfortable, unpleasant, difficult, risking threat, insulting and offensive (1984: 77). The potentially face threatening act of disagreement in the workplace has received attention from linguists in recent years (Mills, 2001, 2003; Angouri, 2012; Sifianou, 2012). In a study on the presence of disagreement through the use of *dispreferred responses*, Angouri and Bargiela Chiappini (2011) adopt the notion that disagreements in the workplace may in fact benefit the decision making processes of management and employees. Angouri (2012) also analyses the notion of disagreements in meetings, looking at the management of disagreement in problem solving talk. In this context, the notion of *dispreferred* responses is outlined and argued as being both beneficial and problematic work place relationships. The importance of considering the individual relationships and structures of participants' interaction in determining impolite behaviour is outlined by Mills (2003). She argues the importance of context in establishing what can be considered impolite behaviour, acknowledging the researchers role in interpreting the data. Although conflict and disagreement can be found in workplace interaction, participants tend to work towards saving face (Goffman, 1964), and tend to avoid outright conflict in interaction (Koester, 2006). The constant negotiation of face in workplace interaction can be observed through the use of linguistic devices such as idioms, hedging, modes of possibility and vague language (Koester, 2006).

2.4.3 Rapport Management

The area of rapport management at work has become a key issue in the development of modern organisations. Although transactional talk accounts for much of the discourse in workplace interaction (Holmes and Marra, 2004), the area of relational talk in the workplace cannot be ignored as a key element in underlining the relationships and dynamics in workplace discourse. Research demonstrates the importance of achieving relational goals in transactional settings (Iacobucci 1990; Coupland, 2000; Ragan, 2000; Spencer-Oatey, 2002; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). Core studies in the area of rapport and relational talk in the workplace have been carried out in the work of Holmes and Marra (2004). Using data from the Language in the Workplace project (2000a), Holmes and Marra have outlined a variety of frameworks for analysing relational talk at work. In examining the role of interpersonal relationships and rapport at work, they have

analysed linguistic features such as humour and relational talk (2002, 2004). In a study on relational discourse, Holmes and Marra (2004) discuss the importance of non-task based interaction in the workplace as a tool in promoting rapport and interpersonal relationships. In this gender based study, Holmes and Marra discuss the work of Fletcher (1999) in identifying the different ways in which people do relational practice at work. They identify the following features as manifestations of relational practice in the workplace. In creating an effective team, they found that small talk, social talk and positive humour contributed to constructing and maintaining positive working relationships. Strategies for damage control or conflict avoidance included attenuating disagreements, softening refusals, and hedging directives (Holmes and Marra, 2004). These features are all examined linguistically and highlight the different ways in which relational practice occurs in talk. Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2002) also examines the importance of rapport in maintaining harmony in workplace interactions. In her 2002 study, she examines rapport-sensitive incidents in order to highlight key concerns in management relations. Research by Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009) highlights key concerns in intercultural communication and identifies problem areas in authentic workplace scenarios such as business meetings. They outline the different rapport strategies employed in intercultural settings, and also how these can impact on the effectiveness of the completion of the goal at hand. These studies provide for authentic insight into the shifting dynamics that are affected by rapport management in workplace interactions.

The work of Koester (2006) also emphasises the role of relational episodes in workplace interaction in her studies on relational sequences in the workplace (Koester, 2004) and her work on investigating workplace discourse (Koester, 2006). She states that manifestations of relational goals often involve the notion of 'politeness', or 'face work' (p. 60). She describes other functions of relational talk as invoking common ground, building a positive relationship or creating a pleasant atmosphere or even a feeling of intimacy (p. 62). In identifying these functions of relational talk, Koester (2006) also identifies 'interpersonal markers' and highlights modal verbs and adverbs, lexical nouns and adjectives as being used to express interpersonal meaning. A key finding of this study was the reduction of these 'interpersonal markers' in conflictual discourse. Koester found that in conflictual discourse speakers' use of emphatic markers of

subjective stance increased as did the presence of intrusive interruptions (2006: 134). This highlights the value of interpersonal language in creating rapport as its presence can be seen to ease tensions and aid in the avoidance of conflict.

Handford (2010) also highlights the validity of interpersonal studies in organisations:

> Time and again, research indicates how attention paid to business relationships through effective interpersonal communication can enhance the success of the overall enterprise, or the individual within it.

<div align="right">(Handford, 2010: 150)</div>

As dealt with in Koester's (2006) study, Handford outlines the issues of power and solidarity as a key factor in the social relations of business meetings. He states that interpersonal language has both the effect of constraining and enabling social relations, through the signalling different dimensions of solidarity and the 'negation of power over knowledge and actions' (2010: 178). Handford observes the effect of speaker relationship on the discourse in meetings and states that it can in fact have a constraining influence on discourse. He notes that external meetings contain a higher degree of interpersonal language than internal meetings and this indicates the need to nurture these relationships and pay attention to politeness features such as face (2010: 179). The role of relational talk in workplace interaction has become a crucial element of *backstage* studies and provides a valuable resource in comprehending power structures and the way in which distinct groups perform acts of rapport building and solidarity.

This section has outlined the areas of Power and Identity, Face and Politeness and Rapport Management as core characteristics of institutional discourse. In identifying these features of institutional interaction, a greater understanding of the complex power structures and interactional dynamics of the workplace can be reached. The emphasis on rapport management in workplace interaction is shown to be a crucial component in maintaining group dynamics and enhancing solidarity in the workplace. The notion of rapport management can be linked to the more specific area of communication skills in

organisational contexts. The following section deals with the area of communication skills and its influence on organisational theory.

2.5 Workplace Communication Skills

The concept of communication skills and workplace dynamics are of key importance to this study. As the area of novice professional language is mainly concerned with the development of core communicative skills, it is important to contextualise the research in terms of the areas that have most influenced the application of such skills. Recent trends in management have focused on more organic structures and relationships between employees and management (Rabey, 1997; Sarros et al, 1996; Schien, 1995). This has created a surge of research aimed at uncovering the key skills necessary to become a successful manager and business person. This focus on empowering workers in order to become more productive and competitive derives from the *New Work Order* brought about through changes in industry (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999). This push for a new work order can be linked back to the early 1900's to the field of Engineering where Henri Ford established the new era of manufacturing (Brooks, 2006). This led to hierarchical system of power where managers were put in place to maintain a highlight bureaucratic working environment. Although these bureaucratic structures remain in place, on some level in most companies, there has been increasing emphasis on the wellbeing and job satisfaction of employees in order to promote effective organisations. According to Sarangi and Roberts (1999), the *New Work Order* is conceptualised as a discourse which constitutes emergent work-related positions and identities (p. 9). This empowerment of employees in order to promote organisational effectiveness has led to a variety of training programmes both for management and employees in essential communicative skills for the development of team work and leadership throughout a vast range of national multinational companies in areas such as Engineering, Business, and Medicine.

In perhaps what can be considered a reflection of professional practice in the university context, these communication skills are being taught in universities across faculties including those which could be considered more technically focused, such as

Engineering and Medicine. Students are encouraged to participate in team, group activities and projects at universities, not only to enhance learning skills but also to strengthen students' abilities in areas such as team work and leadership (Ädel, 2011). These areas of leadership, teamwork, rapport building and conflict management are all taught as part of self-awareness and developmental programmes for students. According to Kim et al (2011: 201) 'Leadership is exhibited in the process of influencing members to move toward organizational success'. The rising trend in leadership and team development programmes in industry is reflected in university syllabi and the approach to assessment through the increased presence of team work and group work across faculties (Williams, 2002; Newcastle University Business Game[1]). These projects are assigned to enhance the interpersonal and leadership skills of students thus preparing them for life in industry. The issue with this managerial approach to communication is that they tend to focus on case studies (involving both narrative and general accounts) and theoretical frameworks of management which can be considered dated in today's organisations (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999). According to Sarangi and Roberts (1999: 2), 'the models of communication beloved of workplace trainers and those who produce 'how to' manuals of skills are thin and absurdly simple with models usually borrowed from traditional psychology'. Highlighting the issue of these approaches in the workplace, Sarangi and Roberts (1999) state that:

> In institutional approaches to communication, communication is seen as a straight line in which the message passes from transmitter to receiver Successful communication is thus modelled on much industrial training in which skills are broken down into small sub skills. It is assumed that these sub-skills can be rapidly and unproblematically learnt, and furthermore once learnt can be transferred across a wide range of workplace settings.

> (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999: 2)

There is much room therefore for a cross-disciplinary approach to be applied to workplace communication in order to develop a coherent notion of what constitutes as effective communication in the workplace. Linguistic approaches to management communication issues have been developed and outlined by several linguists in the area of workplace discourse including leadership, Holmes, (2005), relational practices in the workplace, Drew and Heritage (1992); Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997); Sarangi and Roberts (1999); Holmes and Stubbe (2004); Koester, (2006); Handford, (2010),

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[1] http://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/modules/module/BUS3047/

service encounters, (McCarthy 2000), rapport management across cultures, Spencer-Oatey (2000), interpersonal development of novice professionals, Nyugen (2006, 2011). These studies all provide linguistic analysis through CA and CL to deal with communicative and managerial skills in the context of professional language in the workplace. Through examining authentic data and language examples in the workplace, these studies provide a valuable insight into the true inner workings of company life and the dynamics both between employees, and management.

As management approaches to communication skills in the workplace can often lack the empirical approach that language studies centre on, research on communication skills can highly benefit from the analysis of authentic spoken language data. Not only does authentic language data allow for the analysis of communication skills on an interactional level, it also provides the means to uncovering a step-by-step approach to observing communication in action (Holmes and Marra, 2002; Nguyen, 2011). A mixed method approach to dealing with workplace communication can prove highly effective in detailing the issue in communicative strategy and communication skills. Through a CL/CA and pragmatics approach to data from authentic work based interaction sources, key issues of workplace interaction can be examined. Core areas of communicative strategy such as leadership and identity, rapport management and conflict negotiation can be examined through the application of linguistic theory. This could involve the examination of individual linguistic features through the analysis of pronouns, lexical items, deixis, pronouns, humour, topic and turn taking. Further understanding of language in workplace interaction can provide valuable insights into how individuals perform and establish their professional identities and become part of a wider professional community.

2.6 Meetings

The genre of meetings can be considered an integral part of workplace culture and provides a comprehensive view of the communicative strategies and interactional dynamics present in the workplace. As institutions can be composed of different groups of employees in a variety of sections and departments, the institutional meeting provides

an appropriate context for agendas to be discussed and negotiated. In their work on corporate meetings, Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997) define the key characteristics of meetings:

1. Meetings are explicitly task oriented and decision making encounters;
2. Meetings involve the co-operative effort of two parties , the chair and the group; and
3. Meetings are structured into hierarchically ordered units.

(Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997: 208)

These characteristics are predominantly concerned with business meetings. However, the notion that meetings are task oriented and decision making encounters can be applied to meetings across institutions. The issue of formal and informal meetings is also outlined in the work of Bargiela and Harris (1997). They state that a formal meeting can be categorised as a scheduled, structured encounter with a fixed agenda, presided over by a nominated chair. An informal meeting, on the other hand, is more loosely planned and conducted with a flexible agenda with the emergence of a chair spontaneously at the beginning of a meeting (p. 207). It can therefore be considered from these definitions that the underlining element of meetings is the achievement of organisational goals (Bargiela Chiappini and Harris, 1997) through a fixed or flexible agenda. Other studies focus on the interpersonal dynamics of workplace meetings. Holmes and Stubbe (2003) categorise the business meeting as interactions which focus directly or indirectly on workplace business. In their research, they move away from rigid definitions of workplace meetings instead highlighting the spontaneity and openness in specific meeting contexts. Holmes and Stubbe (2003: 60) underline unplanned location, rolling agenda, informal style and natural closings as features of informal meetings. This more organic approach to meetings emphasises the notion of an empowered work force and the cultivation of looser organisational structures. The structure of meetings is of importance when considering the type of interaction and talk that occurs in the workplace. Formal or informal structures may lead to the presence of more or less relational talk in interaction. Koester (2006) argues that relational talk can occur in transactional interactions. It has also been argued however that a more transactional focus presented through a formal interaction in the workplace can determine the level of relational talk present (Holmes and Marra, 2002).

The notion of meetings as dynamic contexts of interaction has been examined by Handford (2010). He describes the uniqueness of meetings both to participants and companies highlighting the diverse factors of appropriateness in different meeting contexts:

> While the particular manifestations of what is acceptable and expected will depend on factors such as national, professional and organizational culture, the relative status and relationship of the speakers, and the goals of communication, meetings nevertheless have structural features that are repeated over different contexts and companies.

(Handford, 2010: 60)

This suggests that the culture of a particular company, the relationship of the speakers and the goals of communication are vital factors in determining the form and structure that a meeting will take. In her analysis of multinational and local companies, Angouri (2012) states that meetings are 'key' events in any small or large firm and outlines the relevance of taking each organisations specific cultures and practices into consideration in order to comprehend the different styles and language use in each different organisational setting. She highlights that the meeting constitutes a 'focal interactional site in which the organisation's norms and practices are negotiated and co-constructed among employees' (2012: 1568). This indicates that the way a meeting is constructed and carried out depends on the practices and work culture of the individuals of each different organisation.

The study of cross cultural differences in business and institutional interaction has become an increasingly relevant issue in recent years. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997) outline the language of business in an international context. In their (1995) study on managing meetings, they examine power roles and indicators of coherence in Italian and British meetings in order to conduct a cross cultural comparison. Other cross cultural studies on business meetings have been carried out by Spencer-Oatey and Xing (1998), Bilbow (1997) and Yamada (1990). These studies highlight the different organisational strategies and linguistic devices employed by managers and employees in their approach to managing meeting activities.

2.7 Research on Novice Interaction

Every industry and organisation deals with the training and establishing of novice members within their professional practice. The approach to training and developing the expert skills and professional identities of these novices is treated differently depending on the institutional context. The area of gatekeeping in institutions is outlined by Holmes (2007). She examines the discourse of gatekeeping interactions between management and subordinates in workplace settings in three different types of encounters. Gatekeeping can be considered a means of defining institutional practice for novice experts (Holmes, 2007). Roles such as managing, mentoring and leading the novice can all be characterised as aspects of gatekeeping. Strategies for workplace learning have been examined from a mentoring perspective by Cadwell and Carter (1992) and the notion of how leaders do mentoring has been examined by Holmes (2005). In their 2003 study, Holmes and Stubbe define the role and discourse of the mentor as:

> Intended to provide support and guidance to a subordinate for the purpose of enhancing the progress of their career, while also furthering the goals of the organization.

> (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003)

Holmes (2005) argues that this definition moves away from the more rigid approaches to mentoring definitions which tend to focus on the intentional pairing of managers to subordinates. She states that this definition is designed more loosely to encompass all areas of mentoring contexts including coaching counselling, role modelling and career guidance (2005: 1782). Mentoring can therefore also be associated with the role of a more senior member of an organisation in aiding the development of expert/professional identity of a novice member. It is the development of the novice member that this study is primarily concerned with.

The area of novice expert research has mainly received attention from medical studies (Benner, 1982, 1984; Mishler, 1984; Cicourel, 1999; Nguyen, 2006, 2011) through research in the area of training residents. As the medical field applies a very concrete approach to the expert-novice paradigm, studies in the area provide valuable insight into

interactional difficulties facing novices and the manner in which they negotiate and eventually construct expert identity. According to Cicourel (1999):

> Expertise can be described by reference to the differential way sources of potential information are perceived and understood by novices and experts, particularly in the way they use language to authenticate their status vis-a-vis one another.

(Cicourel, 1999: 72)

In outlining the differences between novices and experts, Cicourel (1999) states that the language of questions answers and their interpretation is central to comparison of novice and expert knowledge (p. 72). He highlights this process with particular relevance to the field of medicine using the example of doctor-patient interaction to outline this issue. According to Benner (1984: 31), the inexperienced professional or novice expert may have the access to the professional knowledge of the field but still relies on analytical principals and lacks the intuitive grasp of coping in different situations. Benner (1982) proposes a set of definitions to identify the changing roles from novice to expert members in the practice of nursing. Her 'beginner theory' proposes that one could gain knowledge and theory 'knowing how' without ever learning the theory 'knowing that' (1984). She states that there are 5 levels of learning within the nursing experience:

1. Novice
2. Advanced Beginner
3. Competent
4. Proficient
5. Expert

The issue with this definition is, however, that it does not consider the role of the novice expert. As institutional contexts are dynamic settings where identities are constantly negotiated, it can be considered that novice and expert identities are also part of this negotiation process and cannot be completely defined through labelling. Nugyen (2006: 178) articulates this point, she states that 'expert identity is not a static label to be applied to social actors prior to their actions, but it is continually constructed renewed,

and resisted through social interaction'. In her study on the construction of expertness through talk by novice experts, Nguyen (2006) explores the notion of expertise stating that 'a professional's key contribution in institutional transactions is his/her expertise, which is normally not available to the layperson' (p. 147). She argues that it is therefore vital to understand how inexperienced professionals or novice professionals learn to develop the strategies such as interactional competence in utilizing their professional knowledge in communication with laypersons (Nguyen, 2006). The development of this communicative expertise is central to understanding the novice professional experience in interaction either among their peers or with laypersons. According to Cicourel (1999: 79) novices acquire ability to simulate "expertise" to clients or patients early on despite not having the knowledge and experience to match their use of language. The use of talk in constructing expertness and professional identity is therefore a crucial part of learning in interaction. Nyugen (2006) notes that:

> It is important to note here that 'being an expert' in talk involves more than the mere verbalization of professional knowledge, but the strategic use of multiple resources at specific moments in the contingency of ongoing interaction.

> (Nyugen, 2006:178)

She argues that it is crucial to consider the social construction of 'being an expert' or 'expertness' as a 'holistic process of expert identity performance in discourse' rather than focusing on the construction of 'expertise' as the process of professional knowledge display (2006: 179). The development of professional identity, therefore, requires the understanding of issues not just on the level of expertise but also on a communicative level. The ability of the novice professional to interact and display professional identity through language is key to the construction of identity as a full member of a professional community.

Studies in university contexts have not produced the same level of research on novice language or behaviours as those from medical contexts. As students' language in university settings has, up until recently, been difficult to capture, there is a great lack of research in the area of student-to-student interaction outside of the classroom. Reppen (2004: 66) states that until recent years, the lack of corpora of university talk made it impossible to provide a thorough linguistic description of the language that students

encountered in a university setting. Although data from corpora such as the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE; Simpson et al, 2000) provide data from a university context, student interactions tend to consist of students in classroom and contexts where teachers are present and lack the authentic language that students employ when alone with their peers. Ädel (2011) highlights this dearth of research and data in her study on student rapport building in online settings. She states that:

> One factor that has contributed to this lack of attention to student–student interaction is access; it can be rather difficult to obtain data on student–student communication, compared to the more official and ''on-record'' teacher talk or teacher–student talk.

> (Ädel, 2011:2933)

As features of rapport management are more identifiable in instances of relational practice (Holmes and Marra, 2005), it can be considered that the transactional student-teacher interactions cannot provide the same insight into the development of key communicative skills in novice professionals. For this reason, capturing the project work and team-based peer activity provides an extremely rich basis of analysis when examining communicative strategy and features such as rapport building, leadership, topic and power through language.

The interactions of students enacting novice professional roles can be demonstrated in areas where students are required to work on authentic workplace projects, as the expression of professional identity through language can be observed. As students play out a range of institutional activities such as participation in meetings, task delegation, budgeting, and interaction with external companies, they are given the freedom to construct professional identities within their project groups (Newcastle University, Marketing Consultancy Project Module[2]). Although this strays from the conventional approach to novice expert learning through constant interaction with a mentor or expert member of an institution, it can also be considered a vital form of learning expert or professional identities through interaction. As each institution establishes its own set of norms and practices of interaction (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999), the manner in which a novice member learns these interactional practices is key to understanding the

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[2] http://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/modules/module/MKT3097/

development of professional learning. The development of communication skills and the ability to interact effectively using leadership skills and rapport management are central to building expert identity in the workplace (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Holmes and Marra, 2003). The interactions that take place in meetings of these authentic projects can then be seen as aiding the construction of expertness through talk (Nguyen, 2006) as students play out a range of communicative activities. In taking this approach to the analysis of students constructing expert identity, the observation of the modelling of expert or professional behaviour can also be examined through the development of professional practices enacted through verbal interaction.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined that the rise in literature on institutional and workplace interaction in the past decade has accounted for many interesting and highly relevant studies in the area of workplace discourse and communication. Different aspects of discourse and talk have been attributed to workplace interaction, most namely those linked to interactions in *frontstage* and *backstage* contexts, highlighting the role of power and identity (Locher, 2004), rapport management (Holmes and Marra, 2004; Koester, 2006) and politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987) in workplace interactions. The rise of interest in elements of these areas in organisations across disciplines and the implication of this on organisational culture through the use of training and development programmes has a large influence on this study. The present study outlines the interactional processes in the meetings of novice professionals in a university context, from the fields of marketing and engineering. As novice professional studies tend to focus on research in the medical field, there is little knowledge of how students from marketing and engineering faculties construct and negotiate expert or professional identities through language. The specific data used in this study is rare in the area of institutional language in both university and organisational settings as it involves highly authentic data from students modelling a professional project. In doing so, the students also model aspects of professional behaviours, albeit through linguistic features and topics that would potentially not be found in business or workplace meetings. From the literature, the genre of the meeting was considered a dynamic context, where speakers negotiate identities in interaction (Handford, 2010). The context of meetings, therefore, provides a solid base from where to examine the linguistic characteristics of novice professional identity in interaction. In underlining how the novice professionals perform

core communicative strategies, the roles and identities constructed in doing so will be a crucial point of analysis. The professional strategies of interaction performed by the novice professionals modelling a workplace environment through their meetings will also be relevant in displaying the different stereotypical notions of what constitutes as being professional in their fields.

As the area of novice professionals in a university context has not hitherto been analysed through an institutional lens, the data presented in this study will provide great insight into how students construct and play out professional or expert identities in work-simulated projects. In applying a frame for analysis to this study, it is important to note the different approaches and practices that considered necessary and appropriate (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999) in different institutional contexts. As the two participant groups for this study employ highly different approaches to work based interaction, the model for analysis must include the flexibility to encompass a range of different discoursal and identity construction strategies. For this reason the Community of Practice Framework, Wenger (1998), will be implemented as a conceptual framework in the analysis for this study. Chapter 3 outlines this framework in depth and discusses its implementations for present study.

Chapter Three

Theoretical Framework

3.0. Introduction

This chapter explores an appropriate theoretical framework for the present study. As outlined Chapter 2, this study aims to provide an in-depth, linguistic based analysis of the development of two participant groups of novice professionals working as a team on Authentic Workplace Projects. In terms of community frameworks, there are three main concepts associated with sociolinguistics: the speech community, the discourse community and the community of practice. According to Vaughan (2009: 42), these can be considered as 'co-existing on a definitional cline' and can each accommodate the conceptualisation of the other. For the purpose of this study, community of practice theory seems most adequate when applying a framework, due to its flexibility and scope. Community of practice theory has been implemented as a framework in many institutional discourse studies from medical to educational contexts (Eckert and McConnell Ginet, 1992; Roupp, 1993; Coupland, 2001; Meyerhoff, 2002; Holmes and Marra, 2002; Moore, 2006; Vaughan, 2007; Meadows, 2010). As opposed to theories focused solely on discourse in professional contexts, the community of practice framework encompasses the process of belonging, identity and practice and is a vital tool in analysing and conceptualising how these processes are conveyed through language.

In consideration of the data and the research questions outlined in Chapter 1, this chapter will argue the rationale behind applying the community of practice theory as a framework for this study. The community of practice framework will be discussed under three different headings. Firstly, a definition of the theory will be clarified; this will be followed by a discussion of the community of practice and identity. The application of community of practice to industry and university contexts will then be outlined. The chapter will finally demonstrate how the theory will be applied in the present study.

3.1. Defining a Community of Practice

It can be considered difficult to define what constitutes as a community of practice as each community engages in and defines its own values, norms and practices. The term

community of practice was coined by Lave and Wenger in their research on the social theory of learning in 1991, in an aim to understand and define how legitimate peripheral participation takes place. They draw attention to the fact that:

> …learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of community.

<div align="right">(Lave and Wenger, 1991: 29)</div>

In their research, Lave and Wenger (1991) examine the notion of legitimate peripheral participation as a vehicle to describe the relations between newcomers and old timers within an established social group or community of practice, and the process by which newcomers become part of this community of practice (p. 29). The concept of community of practice was originally introduced to describe the learning processes that arise from the relations between these newcomers and old timers. It was newcomers' exposure to superiors that provided the opportunity to learn in context from more skilled experts. Davies describes Lave and Wenger's theory of legitimate peripheral participation as 'the idea that learners need to be allowed to participate in a limited way in actual practice, with only a limited degree of responsibility, in order that the learning context is not unduly pressurized' (2005: 65). This gives participants the opportunity toward achieving full membership in a community of practice through learning the symbols and codes specific to that community. According to Meadows (2010: 90), this advances the view that learning is defined as the increased participation of individuals in specific communities of practice. Davies (2005: 565) summarises this concept in her work, arguing that people learn more effectively through participation in the activity, rather than by first learning theory, and then having to apply it. Through this process of learning through practice, the participants involved are exposed to realistic situations and must apply skill and knowledge at a faster pace than if they were to learn these same skills through theory.

The concept of the community of practice to describe a context where people engage and participate is defined in more detail by Wenger (1998). Wenger details three core features needed for the existence of a community of practice: mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. In other words, interaction and participation must take

place in order for meaning to be negotiated. According to Shreeve (2007: 12), communities of practice are distinguished by local ways of working, 'the way we do things round here', by informal cohesion centred on particular activities or interests. Eckert and Wenger (2005: 583) define a community of practice as an on-going collective negotiation of a regime of competence, which is neither static nor fully explicit. This definition implies that a community of practice is a dynamic context, where values may shift and transform as negotiation takes place.

From the literature it can be established that the community of practice theory takes a range of discourse and identity processes into consideration, and creates space for the exploration of identity, language and belonging. Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999: 75) state that community of practice theory is used to analyse what participants do, and that the practice or activities typically involve many aspects of behaviour, including global or specific aspects of language structure, discourse, and interaction patterns. This highlights the community of practice as a dynamic structure, encompassing many elements of social behaviour and interaction patterns. The theory not only considers community values and behaviours but also the individual's approach to belonging and participating in the community. This is examined in Wenger's (1998) understanding of what is required of a participating member. He argues that in order to be a full participant, 'it may be just as important to know and understand the latest gossip as it is to know and understand the latest memo' (*ibid*: 74). Meyerhoff (2005: 598) also states that individual and group histories are built in establishing a shared repertoire and that these biographies are relevant to the question of whether an individual will become a fully participating member of a community of practice. This emphasises the need for the individual to be aware and capable of understanding what is required in their community in order to be a fully participating member. This knowledge must then be demonstrated through their actions as participants.

3.2 Community of Practice and Identity

The importance of communities of practice in society is emphasised by their link to participation and interaction. Wenger (1998: 6) theorised that participation shapes what we do, who we are and how we interpret what we do. Through developing the notion of humans as social beings who need to have meaningful interactions with others in order to establish meaning and identity, Wenger argues that meaning, practice,

communication and identity are all elements of participation that are vital to everyday life. Using the term community of practice to define this state of participation and belonging, he states that communities of practice are an integral part of our daily lives (*ibid*: 7). Eckert (2006: 686) also argues that communities of practice 'emerge in response to common interest or position, and play an important role in forming their members' participation in, and orientation to the world around them'. The presence of communities of practice in everyday life is highlighted by Wenger (1998: 7) who states that 'communities of practice are so informal and so pervasive that they rarely come into explicit focus, but for the same reasons they are also quite familiar'. This notion that we all belong to different communities of practice in different settings, through different levels of participation, implies that different communities of practice do in fact shape our experience of the world and contribute to how we perceive ourselves, as we associate different identities with different communities. This is argued to such a degree in Wenger's (1998) work that he links belonging to a community of practice to survival. He states that surviving together is an important enterprise, whether surviving consists in the search for food and shelter or in the quest for a viable identity (*ibid*: 6).

The link between survival in this context and skill development in a community of practice cannot be denied. Community of practice theory, and its inextricable links to identity and belonging, highlight its relevance as a tool in analysing learning and the development of the skills necessary to fully belonging in a community. It is through learning to interact and belong in this context that the construction of identity is achieved. This link between learning as a human experience and the community of practice is discussed by Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999). They state that 'the process of becoming a member of a community of practice, as when we join a new workplace, a book group, or a new family, involves learning' (Holmes and Meyerhoff, 1999: 174). Considering that belonging to communities of practice is an integral part of our human experience, it is vital to fully comprehend the linguistic elements at play in forming and belonging to a community, in order to understand the link between language, identity and belonging in participation and interaction.

In describing the formation of a community of practice and what constitutes as a community, Davies (2005: 561) draws on Wenger's (1998) work, stating that for a community of practice to exist, its members must engage in regular interaction with each other. It is evident that more than face to face interaction must take place in order for a community of practice to be formed. Joint enterprise and shared repertoire must also occur, features which in some cases are more difficult to define and observe. Wenger (1998: 149) argues that developing a practice requires the formation of a community whose members can engage with one another and thus acknowledge each other as participants. This leads to the theory that through negotiating and engaging in a community of practice, participants are inevitably constructing a space where identities are formed and played out. This corresponds with Wenger's statement that the formation of a community of practice is also concerned with the negotiation of identities (*ibid*: 149). Studies in nursing and radiography have proven that there are certain elements or features of professional identity required and expected from full members of professional communities of practice (Benner, 1984; Elzubier and Rizk, 2001; Niemi and Passivarra, 2006). These features include elements such as work philosophy, relationships in working environments and ideology. In a recent study on the professional identities of radiographers, Niemi and Passivarra (2006: 259) assert that the notion of professional identity implies that professional identity also defines values and beliefs that guide the radiographer's thinking, actions and interaction with the patient. The individual's professional identity is conducive to forming the professional community of practice. Lave and Wenger's (1991) work explores this area of constructing identity and belonging, they state that:

> as an aspect of social practice, learning involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities – it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person.

> (Lave and Wenger, 1991:53)

It can therefore be understood that fully belonging to a community of practice implies that one must possess certain values, beliefs and qualifications, in essence, 'be' a type of person. In professional communities of practice, the presence of professional identity reflects the views and beliefs that communities demand from their members.

3.3 Community of Practice in Institutional Settings

As outlined in Chapter 2, trends in communication development have encouraged a rise in the importance and awareness of interpersonal skills across professions and industries. Medical, business and, most recently, engineering schools are, more than ever, focusing on the importance of interpersonal interaction in practice, to encourage better relations, more productivity and a more positive working environment. The emphasis on the value of being a 'good people person', communicator and team player, especially in more technical areas, can be accredited to the ever-growing role that companies and businesses have in education and the demand they place on faculties to improve the communication skills of their graduates (Williams 2002: 89). A 2010 study on the new guidelines by the Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology (ABET)[3] highlights the push for the development of such skills in the engineering sector. Under these guidelines the engineering programmes must document that their faculty is adequately qualified and demonstrate that its graduates possess the skills necessary for professional engineering work. It was found that of the 11 student learning outcomes necessary to be deemed a qualified engineer when leaving university, six of these focused on non-technical skills such as team work, ethics and communication (Williams, 2002: 89). This focus on interpersonal skills has had wide implications for technical faculties, as programmes which traditionally had very little communicative basis are now being encouraged to demonstrate a certain level of communicative ability in their graduates. Through implementing these changes in the focus on communication in the curriculum, many faculties have recognised the importance of providing graduates with the opportunity to develop these skills on an interactional level.

The formation of communities of practice has recently been considered a key way of achieving effective interaction and communication in the workplace. Wenger (1998) outlines the usefulness of Community of Practice theory in organisations. He states that:

> Communities of practice exist in any organization. Because membership is based on participation rather than on official status, these communities are not bound by organizational affiliations; they can span institutional structures and hierarchies.

(Wenger, 1998: 4)

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[3] Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, ABET Homepage, http://www.abet.org

In asserting the value of communication and interaction in organisations in order to achieve 'knowing', Wenger states that the construction of communities of practice is central to achieving goals in organisations. He states that the 'informal fabric of communities and shared practices makes the official organization effective and, indeed, possible' (see Chapter 7 on Organisational Culture). This stance has been asserted in technical communication studies by Fisher and Bennion (2005) who outline the benefits of the construction of communities of practice in organisations. They state that communities of practice in technical areas work toward forming specific skill groups. Fisher and Bennion (2005) argue that providing specialists with the space to communicate and co-operate leads to the development of specialised communities. Gee et al (1996) discuss the dynamic of learning within an organisational community of practice, through the transfer of knowledge from experts to novices. It is through participating within the organisation that novices learn the practices and values of the community.

In the university context these benefits also apply in the context of Authentic Workplace Projects. The many benefits of peer learning at university, including the facilitation of generic learning outcomes, and the promotion of skills related to lifelong learning, teamwork, communication, critical reflection, and self-directed learning have been outlined by Boud, Cohen, and Sampson (1999) and Gupta (2004). Group work has been deemed a valid strategy by industry and university faculties due to its role in the development of interpersonal, cognitive and educational skills. According to Gregory (1994: 15), rapidly changing circumstances at work and in society are putting a premium on adaptability, working together and learning from experience. Kimmel and Volet (2009) explore the relevance of context in the development of meta-cognitions in group assignments by university students. They consider the positive and negative impacts of group work and discuss its importance in multi-layered learning while emphasising the importance of multicultural considerations in highlighting group dynamics. The role of social identity and relationship dynamics in group work is at the forefront of these studies. Social identity theory provides a basis for the analysis of group membership and how it leads to self-definition. Studies on social identity and collective self imply that people define themselves not only in terms of idiosyncratic distinctive attributes and interpersonal relationships, but also in terms of collective

attributes of a group to which they belong (Turner et al, 1987; Hogg and Abrams, 1988; Pierro et al., 2008). The influence of group mentality on participants' beliefs and values accentuates the role of group work in consolidating aspects of identity, both within a particular group and in the wider professional context in which the group has formed. According to Pierro et al (2008), the more people identify with a group (i.e. define the self in terms of the group identity), the more their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours are governed by the group membership. This leads to the notion of the development of communities of practice through different forms of group activity in the workplace and higher level education. The development of Communities of Practice can be considered a means to uniting individuals in different contexts, providing the opportunity to develop skills, interpersonal relationships and foster unique cultures.

The community of practice framework encourages participants to learn from context rather than theory and can therefore be associated with the benefits of group work in university settings. Through the use of group work as a means of placing students together to work on Authentic Workplace Projects, it can be argued that the formation of communities of practice is encouraged. The benefits of this to students, in terms of developing communication and personal skills are evident. Through forming a community of practice, bonds between participants are strengthened on various levels. According to Wenger (1998), when mutual engagement is sustained it connects participants in ways that can become deeper than more abstract similarities in terms of personal features or social categories. This highlights the way in which a community can become a very tight node of interpersonal relationships, enhancing the potential for learning of core professional practices and communicative skills.

3.3.1 Community of Practice and Novice Professionals

Lave and Wenger (1991:17) locate learning not in the acquisition of structure, but in the increased access of learners to participating roles in expert performance. A relevant example here would be that, through participating in Authentic Workplace Projects which are realistic and relevant to their professional areas, novices are given the opportunity to learn the correct procedures and behaviours necessary to complete

specific tasks. In allowing the novices to participate in tasks on different levels, within the community, it is argued that a high level of learning takes place. Studies of medical contexts track the progression of novice doctors, pharmacists and nurses (Benner, 1984; Elzubeir and Rizk, 2001; Ngyuen, 2002) and highlight the learning and development that takes place due to enhanced participation. It could also be argued that this type of participation leads to the novices feeling a stronger sense of belonging in the community of practice. The journey that an apprentice or novice makes to integrate and belong to a community of practice is outlined by Lave and Wenger (1991). They analyse the changing forms of participation and identity of persons who engage in sustained participation in a community of practice: from entrance as a newcomer, through becoming an old-timer. The relationship between learning as part of a community of practice and identity are outlined in the study. Through a detailed analysis of the apprenticeship role and integration into a community of practice, Lave and Wenger theorise that:

> In learning, the activities and tasks involved are part of a broader system of relations which arise out of and are reproduced and developed within social communities. Learning thus implies becoming a different person and essentially the construction of identities.

(Lave and Wenger, 1991: 53)

The relationship between identity and learning is clear from this perspective and it can be understood that the process of undertaking tasks and learning through these mould the participants' identity in the community of practice. In being provided with the space to enact professional identities through involvement in Authentic Workplace Projects, novice professionals begin to model the behaviours and practices of their professional counterparts. In participating in regular meetings with set agendas and goals, the novices are already enacting some features of a professional community. Through the duration of their work on these projects, the novice professionals develop their own norms and behaviours in fulfilling transactional and interactional goals. In doing so, they apply aspects of communicative strategies such as leadership and rapport management traditionally associated with professional groups.

3.4 Community of Practice in context

This study deals with comparing the communicative strategies employed in the meetings of two novice professional communities of practice. The novices are aspiring professionals in their chosen fields, and the projects they are working on allow them the space to develop certain key skills required in order to eventually belong to a professional community of practice. This study analyses novice professional communities of practice through a communicative strategy lens, identifying the participants' use of language in constructing professional identities. In other words how the novice professionals learn to 'do' being experts in social interaction (Sacks, 1995).

According to Lave and Wenger, ethnographic studies of apprenticeship emphasise the indivisible character of learning and work practices (1991: 61). In participating in projects realistic to the professional line of work, the students are putting into practice everything they have learned in the course of their time at university. The aim of the projects they have been assigned is to test their skills and competencies in the fields of engineering and marketing while also providing the students with a task realistic enough to provide experience in the fields within the safety net of the university. The engineers must produce a project that could in effect be put into action in the industry; the marketing students must also achieve a realistic consultancy plan which will in fact be considered by a real company. Legitimate peripheral participation is intended as a conceptual bridge - as a claim about the common processes inherent in the production of changing persons and changing communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 55). The students themselves are partaking in legitimate peripheral participation as they are applying their academic learning to pseudo realistic situations, and therefore engage in the process of transforming their identities from novices to professionals in their fields.

3.4.1 Appling the Community of Practice Framework

The community of practice framework consists of three core dimensions. These include mutual engagement, joint repertoire and shared enterprise. These are considered dimensions of practice which are considered the source of coherence of the community (Wenger, 1998: 72). These characteristics are all focused on the interaction and

participation of the community's members, emphasising the relevance of not just belonging to a community but the process involved in building and maintaining one. Wenger (1998) defined these characteristics in his development of the community of practice framework. In analysing the notion of enterprise, as a context where people create and share meaning and identity, he states that, as we define these enterprises and engage in their pursuit together, we interact with each other and with the world and we tune our relations with each other and the world accordingly (1998: 45). He noted that through this activity we essentially learn to belong.

Mutual Engagement

Mutual engagement among participants is the first characteristic as a source of coherence for a community. Mutual engagement encompasses the developmental process of a community of practice including levels of membership, how the community is defined and how the participants engage. Developing a shared practice depends on mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998: 76). In this study the students in both project groups partake in mutual engagement. On a formal level they meet regularly and develop a routine in the format of their meetings. The students partake in mutual engagement in different ways due to their subject backgrounds and even individual personalities. However, both groups successfully partake in mutual engagement through working together towards a common goal and developing habits and routines that include every member in what matters to the community's practice. The diverse and unique practice of each community allows for comparative studies to be carried out in different linguistic areas.

Joint Enterprise

The second characteristic of participation necessary to form a community of practice is joint enterprise. It is through this that roles and meanings are constantly negotiated in the community. Wenger (1998) outlines the difficulty in reducing the principals of behaviour in any one community of practice. He states that in reality mutual relations among participants are complex measures of power and dependence, pleasure and pain, expertise and helplessness and many other contrasting forms of relating (1998: 77). The

students certainly engage in conflict and negotiation through developing their practice and many issues regarding identity, both individual and group, can be found here. Linguistic features such as the use of pronouns in constructing identity can be considered fundamental in observing the novices' use of language in evoking leadership and team solidarity. It can be argued that the individual participants themselves have a part to play in defining their own membership in the community. The role of turn taking and hedging in conflict and negotiation may serve to outline the group dynamics of the community. The different properties that constitute a community do not follow one strict order. They can range from peace and happiness to conflict and tension among the community members. A shared practice connects participants to each other in ways that are diverse and complex (Wenger, 1998: 77). Through achieving joint enterprise, the community of practice in question begins to engage in mutual accountability where every member is responsible in some way.

Shared Repertoire

The third and final characteristic of the community of practice is shared repertoire. This involves the development of a particular code of behaviour and routine, the collection of artefacts and shared points of reference, through a community's pursuit of enterprise. This can be found linguistically though features such as topic, stories and the use of certain lexical items or terms, over others. A key focus of this study when examining shared repertoire involves analysing the role that humour and other features play in building rapport among members (Holmes and Marra, 2002). The community of practice framework allows for the analysis of cultural norms values and beliefs through language. The novice professionals certainly create shared repertoire in the data. They become strongly developed communities where guidelines and codes must be followed, either academically or socially. They emphasise their own taboos and community culture to the degree that members come to expect certain attitudes and characteristics from each other. In both groups there is a delicate balance as to what constitutes as adequate behaviour and participant membership. As Eckert (1998: 36) observes, the identity of a community of practice is constructed as those who participate in it reconcile their individual identities with a shared social enterprise.

3.4.2 Outlining the Study

Figure 3.1 below demonstrates the conceptual basis for this study. Considering the participants as a novice professional community of practice, the diagram demonstrates the links between community, dynamics and culture and highlights the key communicative strategies that will be considered in the study.

Figure 3.1: Communicative Strategy in the Community of Practice
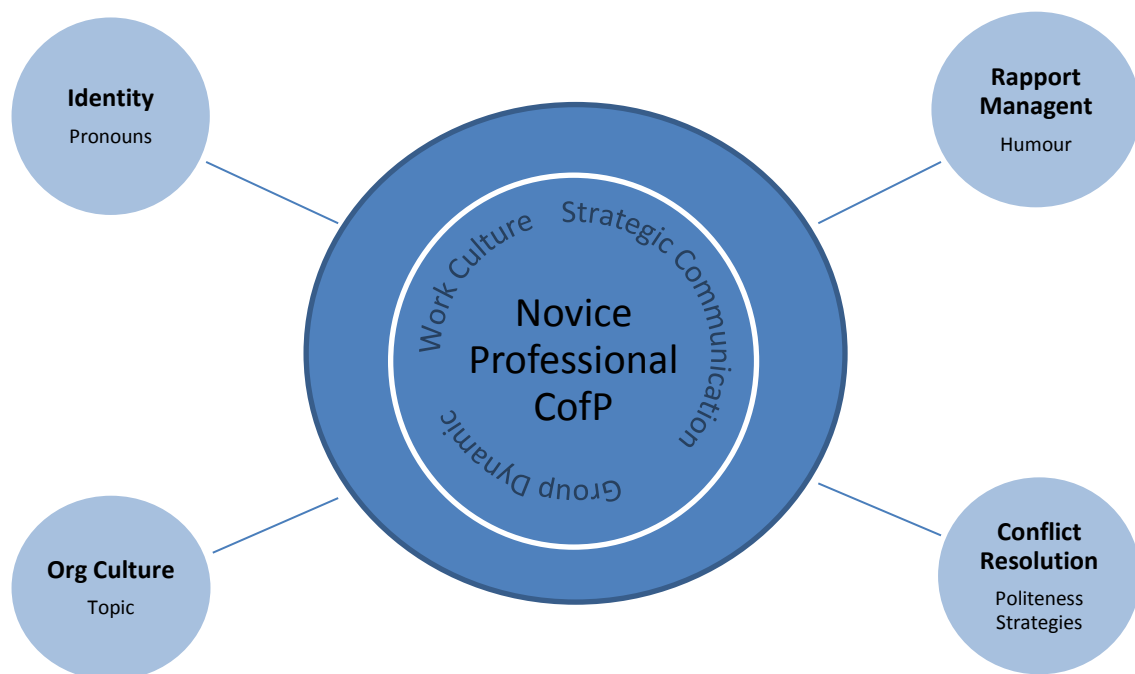
Figure 3.1 outlines the centrality of the community of practice framework to this study. The Novice Professional Community of Practice is highlighted here as the main area for analysis. Factors such as work culture, strategic communication and group dynamics are considered central to the core practices of the community as they represent the identities of the participants, their working styles and the communication they employ to achieve interactional goals. The different features of communicative strategy are outlined on the circumference of the diagram. As detailed in Chapter 1, these are defined as Identity Construction, Rapport Management, Organisational Culture and Conflict Resolution.

The linguistic features connected to fulfilling these strategies in interaction are considered to be Pronouns, Humour, Topic, and Politeness Strategies, for the purpose of this study. Chapter 5 will examine the use of pronouns in negotiating identity and participant roles. This will provide an insight into how both novice professional communities of practice construct joint enterprise. Chapter 6 examines the use of humour in rapport management through identifying the functions and forms of humour in both communities. An analysis of humour in the data can allow for an understanding of how both communities construct shared repertoire. Chapter 7 deals with the analysis of topic in the data in order to determine the organisational or community culture prevalent in both communities of practice. Through the analysis of topic in the data, key factors contributing to the shared repertoire of both communities can be assessed. Chapter 8 highlights the different politeness practices prevalent in both groups through the analysis of conflict and negotiation. Through an examination of conflictual patterns in the data, a distinction of the different politeness practices in both communities can be achieved. This contributes to further understanding of joint enterprise and shared repertoire in each novice community of practice. In analysing these linguistic strategies, it is aimed to achieve a further understanding of how communities of practice form participant roles, establish rapport, form organisational culture and deal with conflictual episodes. These issues can all be considered essential to the development of joint enterprise and shared knowledge, therefore leading to the construction of solid communities of practice. This study aims to highlight the inextricable connection between language, communicative strategies and the construction of communities of practice.

3.5 Conclusion

The model used in any analytical study must be strong enough to base a robust and critical argument on. The community of practice framework offers a solid base of analysis for the present study in that it considers the dynamic and diverse qualities of the inner workings of community. According to Davies (2005: 558), the community of practice framework offers a different lens through which to view patterns of linguistic variation and the ways in which individuals construct and maintain their identities. The framework allows the opportunity to not only analyse the language patterns at play in

the data, but also the internal dynamics within a group of participants playing out different roles and identities. Applying the community of practice framework to this study allows for a comparative analysis of the two novice professional groups. Through gaining a perspective of the communicative processes and strategies employed by the two novice professional communities, differences in how areas such as leadership, rapport and culture are constructed can be identified and compared. This can provide an insight into the values and beliefs that each community holds, highlighting the uniqueness of each community as its members negotiate meaning and identity.

Chapter 4 will outline the Data and Methodology for the study and will provide a more detailed view of the data and methods to be implanted in its analysis.

Chapter 4

Data and Methodology

4.0 Introduction

This study aims to analyse the use of language in the development of novice professional communities through the linguistic analysis of communicative strategy in Authentic Workplace Projects. This chapter outlines the data for the present study in terms of the methodological approaches used in its analysis. As outlined in the literature, many studies in institutional discourse employ a conversation analysis approach to data analysis (Drew and Heritage, 1992). The benefits of using this approach include the ability for the researcher to analyse language on a small and detailed scale, considering aspects of context and extra linguistic features such as intonation and pitch. The present study embraces a conversation analysis approach to data analysis, recognising the importance of considering language in context. The study also considers the role of quantitative analysis in order to examine patterns across larger segments of data. This study will therefore employ a mixed method approach to data analysis.

The use of a mixed methods approach to spoken language analysis will be discussed in the conclusion of this chapter with a view to explaining the rationale for conducting a Conversation Analysis (CA)/Corpus Linguistics (CL) approach in the present study. As outlined in the Chapter 2, CA deals with the analysis of smaller more concrete sections of data whereas a CL approach can consider large datasets from a qualitative perspective. This study combines these approaches in order to reach a conclusive insight into the features and functions of language in the data. The use of CL as a methodological tool for aiding linguistic analysis has been outlined by O'Keeffe and Walsh (2012). They state that CL software enables the researcher to automatically find word frequencies, collocations and keyness results (p. 161). This study embraces the use of CL as a tool in aiding the analysis of communicative strategies. The tools offered by CL, such as wordlists and concordances, allow for a greater level of depth to be reached in analysis as they allow for the examination of larger amounts of data. Through the use of these tools in CL, language patterns and the frequency of specific linguistic features can be identified. CA is then employed to examine these phenomena in smaller segments of text where they occur, in order to determine their context and specific function of use across the data. As a context-based approach is vital to ensuring the

correct interpretation of the findings, the results from the CA/CL approach will be considered within a Community of Practice framework (Wenger, 1998), as detailed in the previous chapter. In employing this framework in the analysis of the data, the key communicative practices which contribute to the development of both communities can be examined. This will be outlined in the present chapter with a view to demonstrating the interplay of these paradigms within each analysis chapter.

4.1 Corpus Size

A corpus is a collection of spoken or written texts stored in computer form (Biber et al, 1998). The form and size of a corpus can range from corpora of 1 million words or more (BNC, MICASE, CANCODE) to smaller corpora of spoken language (ABOT). Koester (2010: 67) states that the purpose of research determines how small and specialised a corpus can be. O'Keeffe et al (2007), state that a large spoken corpus usually consists of over 1 million words. Small corpora have been noted to contain up to 250,000 words (Flowerdew, 2005: 19). The use of smaller corpora to analyse spoken language has been recognised as an insightful way of determining key linguistic features and patterns in interaction. The development of small specialised corpora is particularly beneficial in addressing these contextually based issues. In defining the area of specialised corpora Koester states:

> Where very large corpora, through their de-contextualisation, give insights into lexico-grammatical patterns in the language as a whole, smaller specialised corpora give insights into patterns of language use in particular settings.

> (Koester, 2010:66)

These insights into the patterns of language use in particular settings contribute to the understanding of language use by specific groups and can underline the form of language required for group membership. This is demonstrated in studies by Cutting (1999, 2000) which analyse the language of in-group interaction through the use of a small 25,000 word corpus. The analysis of small corpora is very much centred on the importance of the understanding of context in interaction, which, as outlined in Chapter 2, can provide great insights into the nature of language use in specific groups or communities. The use of small corpora for the examination of specialised language has also been highlighted by Tribble (1997) who states that small amounts of data can

reveal language patterns specific to a particular form of discourse. This is highly beneficial when considering the language of particular groups and communities. According to McCarthy (1998), searches for high frequency lexical items in large corpora can provide too much data for qualitative analysis. He therefore suggests that in this circumstance a subcorpus may be more suitable for the purpose of qualitative analysis. This study draws on data from a subcorpus of a larger 1.5 million word corpus of spoken language. As this study focuses on the specific context of project meetings, the data chosen for the study can be considered a specialised subcorpus.

According to Flowerdew (2004), one of the key features in defining a specialised corpus is contextualisation, that is, a corpus that focuses on a particular setting, participants and communicative purpose. As this study focuses on the development of novice professionals through the context of project meetings, the subcorpus can therefore be described as specialised, as it deals with the context based interactions of a specific group of participants. The use of a small specialised corpus for the analysis and interpretation of linguistic features attributed to communicative strategy is core to understanding the practices of a specific community of practice. The different features of communicative strategy under investigation in this study include the use of pronouns, humour, topic and conflict resolution. Although linguistic instances such as pronouns and elements of humour can be examined through quantitative analysis, topic and conflict require the subjective interpretation of the analyst. A small specialised corpus provides the means to conduct this form of interpretative analysis as it allows for the identification of patterns of communication from a specific group of participants in a highly contextualised environment. The use of small specialised corpora to highlight the link between language and context of use (Koester, 2010), indicates that a small subcorpus of specialised data is ideal for the analysis of novice expert development in communicative strategy.

4.2 Corpus of Novice Professional Engineering and Marketing Meetings: Description

4.2.1 Data Collection

The subcorpus for this study forms part of the larger Newcastle Corpus of Academic Spoken English (NUCASE) which consists of 1.5 million words of spoken language from a variety of different setting across university faculties. The NUCASE corpus was collected between November 2011 and June 2012 at Newcastle University. This large spoken language corpus focuses on small group interactions and the data is therefore limited to a maximum of 20 speakers per recording. Due to the small group focus of the corpus, data collected consists of recordings from contexts such as seminars, group work, supervisions and presentations with both teacher and non-teacher presence. Data collected ranged from the recording of undergraduate to MBA and PhD contexts ensuring a wide spread of varying interactions. The corpus is composed of spoken language data collected from Engineering, Business, Informatics, Educational Psychology and Education faculties, and also includes classroom recordings from an English Language Teaching school at the university.

As the research assistant and data collection manager for the NUCASE project, the researcher was in close contact with the participants involved in the recordings over an extended period of time. Throughout the data collection process I attended the lectures and seminars of students from different faculties and was made aware of the validity of peer projects in the engineering and business faculties. The role of responsibility handed over to the students partaking in these projects represents the changing values in universities imposed by industry, where students are expected to obtain a certain level of interactional and team work skills before embarking on a career in a company in their chosen area. The subcorpus used for the present study is therefore a representation of the student meetings for these group projects. In order to conduct a comparative analysis, the project meetings of a group of final year undergraduate engineers were isolated for comparison with the project meetings of a group of final year undergraduate marketing students. The data for the subcorpus consists of six hours of engineering project meetings and six hours of marketing consultancy project meetings. The total of 12 hours of project meeting recordings contributes to a 240,000 word subcorpus. The

data focuses on project meetings from the second academic semester, dealing with interactions in the run up to the project deadlines. This stage in the project was considered key in outlining the norms and practices of the community of practice. At this point in their project work it could be observed that the students had already developed key characteristics of a community of practice through the development of a working style and informal code of conduct in their meetings. The project meetings in both data sets provide a contrastive perspective of the development of novice professionals in higher education settings. Table 4.1 outlines the data for the present study:

Table 4.1 Data

Group	Hours	Words	Context
Engineering	6	120,000	Project Meeting
Marketing	6	120,000	Project Meeting
Total	12	240,000	

The participants for the study were provided with consent forms approved by the university ethics committee. The data for the study was anonymised and all references to names and places that could breach confidentiality were extracted from the subcorpus. The total 240,000 word subcorpus provides an extensive insight into the language and practices of two novice expert communities of practice. As both data sets within the subcorpus amount to the same total of words, a contrastive comparison of linguistic features in interaction can be carried out.

4.2.2 Barriers to Data Collection

Previous spoken corpora in academic contexts have tended to focus on the interactions between teacher and student in classroom environments. This is demonstrated in the Michigan Institute Corpus of Spoken Academic English (MICASE) where recordings tend to focus on interactions where lecturers are present. Interactions solely between students in these corpora tend to be formal and premeditated as they occur in situations

where teachers are present or are recorded by teachers. As outlined in the literature review, few studies have focused on the interaction of student groups. A study by Ädel (2011) emphasises the difficulty in obtaining natural data from students as they tend to be guarded when it comes to the recording of their interactions. Through work as a research assistant on the NUCASE project which dealt largely with student groups, the researcher can attest that the barriers to recording student groups in university settings can be attributed to a variety of factors including:

- Students awareness of using appropriate/inappropriate language—Leading to modified language in recordings e.g. modified use of taboo language
- Fear of retribution for discussion of personal or non-academic issues—Students are reluctant to discuss negative attitudes towards lecturers and university
- General distrust of researchers or lecturers in a more senior position—Students view researcher as being integrated in the faculty and assume that their recordings will be shared with lecturers

These issues ensure that it is extremely difficult to capture authentic student interactions in university settings. In order to overcome these barriers, the researcher was highly aware of the importance of establishing rapport with the student groups to ensure that a relationship of trust was built over time. The importance of establishing a relationship with participants or drawing on previous relationships with participants, before and during recordings to overcome issues such as confidentiality, has been outlined by McCarthy and Handford (2004). According to Sarangi (2002: 116) the manner in which the researcher is perceived by participants is crucial to the development of trust between both parties. Being aware of these issues, the researcher developed trust with the participants in the following ways:

- Highlighting autonomy from the students' university and lecturers from respective faculties—Students were more at ease with the researchers position as an outsider
- Reassuring the students on issues of confidentiality—encouraging them to be natural especially in cases where they feared retribution for use of taboo language and confidential topics

- Drawing on personal student status to relate to the students as a peer—Students were more inclined to trust the researcher when a peer bond was established

In building a relationship of trust with the students throughout the data collection process, the students became very comfortable with being recorded and this contributed to the recording of highly authentic data. The researcher was present for few of the recordings at the beginning of the data collection process in order to observe student interaction and take extensive notes on speaker turns. This process was deemed unnecessary by the researcher in the case of the recurring recording of groups as it was noted that giving students control of the recording process contributed to the development of trust between students and researcher. As the groups meetings consisted of small groups of six students, the presence of the researcher could have been considered too intrusive, considering that many of the meetings took place in student study areas in the library. The role of the researcher in this particular study will be discussed later in the chapter. The effort made in ensuring that students felt comfortable and at ease during the data collection process means that data for the study can be considered as highly authentic. This study can therefore be viewed as ground breaking in terms of its authenticity in capturing the developmental stages of novice experts in peer led group work.

4.2.3 Participant and Project Information

As outlined in the previous section, the participants for this study consisted of final year undergraduate students from engineering and marketing backgrounds. Both groups of students had been assigned to project teams as part of assignments that model authentic workplace situations. The students for both the engineering and marketing projects were assigned to teams of six members as outlined in table 4.2.

Table 4. 2

Students	Engineering	Marketing
Male	5	2
Female	1	4
Total No. Students	**6**	**6**

The following section outlines the individual project groups and the requirements of their assignments.

<u>Engineering</u>

The engineering group consisted of 5 male members and 1 female member. Two of the members of the group were foreign students, both had advanced English skills. The aims of the project were clearly outlined in the module description provided to the students.

Module Aims

A1- To provide an opportunity for students of disparate technical backgrounds, representing different degree streams, to work together on a technical project

A2- To provide the students with knowledge and skills relating to effective teamwork

A3- To provide students with the experience of team building exercises beyond their normal disciplines

A4- To provide the students with the working environment to acquire knowledge and skills in a technical area above and beyond those provided in the rest of the course

A5- To provide groups of students with the experience of producing a high quality technical report and design study

The assignment laid out for this project required the engineering students to research and create a digital model of a structure in concordance with real life dimensions and costs. This required students to frequently interact with members of professional industry in gauging costs for real materials, environmental implications and maintenance of the structure. These interactions with professional industry ensured that the students were confronted with real life issues in the engineering industry when compiling information for the project. The areas for communicative development were outlined in the module requirements as:

> Team roles; Team effectiveness; Team building; Conflict management, and resolution; Problem solving and dilemma methodology; Group management; Time management; Writing group reports; Group assessment

The focus on areas such as team effectiveness, conflict management and group management demonstrates the importance placed on communicative development in

this assignment. These areas are highly reflective of the growing focus on communicative requirements in industry, highlighting the validity of this project in exposing students to enhanced team work to develop key communication skills.

Marketing

The marketing group consisted of six members, 4 female and 2 male. As with the engineering group, this group also had two foreign student members who had an advanced level of English. The participants in the marketing consultancy project group were assigned to a real client and were required to perform a market analysis for the company in question. Through the course of the project the students had to conduct a market analysis which required them to carry out focus groups and interviews with members of the public, much like the work performed by professional marketing consultants. The students also had to interact with professionals in the industry on a regular basis in order to create an accurate budget and develop a marketing plan for the customer.

Module Aims

The module description highlights the main rationale behind the project:

> Experience life as a professional marketer: Undertake primary and secondary market research leading to the development of a strategic and operational marketing plan for a real client.

According to the module description one of the main module aims is to support the Business School's engagement strategy which seeks to support local businesses and other organisations. This module is highly centred on Effective Team Work and the emotional intelligence associated with this area. In the module description students are required to express commitment to the team and other components of the module. The team based aspect of the module is designed to facilitate the development of key skills associated with team work and mirrors the aim of the engineering department in promoting the development of communicative and team work skills required in industry.

The meetings of both groups varied in approach and structure. The engineering group adopt a more formal approach to meetings and appointed a rotating chair system (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997). The marketing group employed a much more informal system in their meetings and tended to discuss issues as they emerged. The issue of transactional and relational talk (McCarthy, 2000) was also a relevant issue in determining differences in the two groups as both groups adopted a different approach to the discussion of relational topics in their meetings (see Chapter 7). The meetings modelled professional arenas through their ultimate focus on the achievement of transactional goals (Koester, 2006). The communicative skills outlined for development in the module aims, allowed for the interpretation of novice expert development through the linguistic analysis of features of communicative strategy associated with team roles, rapport management, group culture and conflict and negotiation.

4.3 Transcription

The central role that transcription plays in research has been underlined by Edwards and Lampert (1993: 3). They emphasise its role in distilling and freezing the complex events and aspects of interaction in categories of interest to the researcher (*ibid*: 3). The ability to highlight areas of interaction and view them in a structured manner provides the researcher with an invaluable resource for discourse analysis. The data was recorded using a Zoom H4n recording device, which ensured for high quality audio data enabling the transcription process. The quality of the audio data proved fundamental for comprehension in areas of multiparty overlapping during the meetings where participants branched off into two discourse groups. Areas in the data where technical language was used, particularly in the engineering group, required the interpretative insight of the researcher. The spelling of a particular technical term was firstly guessed before being entered in an internet search. This process was carried out in order to ensure correct spelling and examine the term in context.

The data for this study was transcribed using a broad transcription framework which considers speaker turns, overlaps and extra-linguistic features. During the transcription process, each speaker was assigned a speaker number depending on their position in the

recording (e.g. <$1> to indicate the first speaker). This was done in order to secure the anonymity of the participants. These numbers were then changed to pseudonyms for the purpose of speaker recognition by the researcher and remain consistent throughout the study. As the participants in the sub corpus were consistent throughout the longitudinal study, the researcher became very familiar with the participants voices which was highly beneficial during the task of voice recognition.

A narrow transcription framework considers issues such as intonation, accent, tone, prosodic lengthening and breathing and other vocal noises (Du Bois et al, 1993). Although these features are no doubt important as highlighted by Brazil (1985), the transcription of these features was not necessary for answering the research questions for this study. Only in the analysis of the area of conflict and negotiation, were issues such as tone and intonation explored. These features were considered by the researcher in the isolated excerpts used for analysis in this area. Table 4.3 details the transcription conventions used in the study.

Table 4.3 Transcription Conventions

Feature	Symbol and comment
Speaker	<$1>, <$2>, <$3> etc. Speakers are numbered according to the order in which they speak in the conversation
Overlaps	<$O> marks the beginning of an overlap <\$O> marks the end of an overlap
Incomplete words	=
Interrupted utterances	+ used to mark the end of an interrupted utterance and also mark the beginning of a resumed utterance
Uncertain or unintelligible utterances	<$G?> used when number of syllables cannot be guessed. <$G1>, <$G2> guessed number of syllables
Extra-linguistic features (laughing, coughing, significant background noise)	<$E> laughing <\$E>

When the transcription process was complete, the data was electronically stored in the form of text files. This ensured that the data was fully accessible for analysis through the use of *Wordsmith Tools™* software (Scott, 1999). The functions of *Wordsmith Tools* employed in this study are outlined in the next section.

4.4 Corpus Linguistic Methods and Tools

This study employs a combined conversation analysis CA and corpus linguistic CL approach to analysing the data. In order to highlight areas of interest for qualitative analysis, the data was initially examined through a quantitative CL perspective in the examination of most features of communication in this study. The use of corpus linguistic methods in the examination of the data ensured that the data could be viewed and analysed on both a macro and micro scale. According to Biber, Conrad and Reppen (1998: 4) the essential characteristics of corpus based analysis are:

1) it is empirical, analysing the actual patterns of use in natural texts;
2) it utilises a large and principled collection of natural texts known as a 'corpus' as the basis for analysis;
3) it makes extensive use of computers for analysis, using both automatic and interactive techniques; it depends on both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques.

4.4.1 Wordlists

Word frequency lists enable the researcher to examine the most frequent lexical items in a corpus. This allows for the comparative analysis of lexical frequencies across different corpora and provides evidence of words common or frequent in specific communities of practice. Table 4.4 details the 20 most common words from the subcorpus of Marketing and Engineering novice communities of practice:

Table 4.4 Word frequency list Engineering and Marketing

No.	Engineering	Marketing
1.	I	I
2.	The	It
3.	It	The
4.	Yeah	You
5.	You	That
6.	That	We
7.	And	Yeah
8.	To	And
9.	We	To
10.	A	Like
11.	Of	A
12.	Is	Just
13.	Erm	So
14.	So	In
15.	Just	Do
16.	What	Of
17.	In	What
18.	Be	They
19.	Do	Have
20.	Can	Is

The wordlist was examined for differences and similarities of particular lexical frequencies. From the above table, high frequency items appear to be similar in both participant groups. This is demonstrated through the presence of *I, you, the, it, we* in the data. These high frequency items correspond with other spoken language corpora where *I* and *the* feature as high frequency items. According to Vaughan (2007: 183), wordlists can contribute to the understanding of shared repertoire and professional practice in communities of practice. This is reflected in the data, particularly in the use of pronouns and the use of 'corporate *we*' (Handford, 2010) to evoke a sense of membership and group solidarity. The use of pronouns in contributing the construction of identity will be outlined in Chapter 5.

4.4.2 Concordancing

The use of concordance lines was prevalent in analysing the data from a qualitative perspective. Concordance lines provide insight into the occurrence of one particular word in the data. Through the use of *Wordsmith Tools*, any word can be searched in order to view its presence and position in the data. The term node is used to refer to the item searched and concordance lines allow for the examination of words that occur to the left and to the right of nodes. The context of use for a particular word can be examined by analysing its presence and position in a sentence. The following concordance example demonstrates data from the marketing meetings.

Table 4.6 Marketing *Right*

N	Concordance
7	got all their graphs in the main bit right? Questionnaire analysis. "The first
8	They're yeah they're just Excel graphs. Right? Yeah. So would you guys be
9	it. It's fine don't worry. No no g= go. Go Right you've got you've got what you
10	text you wh= if= I'll text you if we leave. Right. If not come back erm and I'll text
11	next meeting if we do leave. Yeah? Right yeah. I don't remember the stuff. .
12	for the primary? Each interview yeah. Right. So maybe do you want to read
13	were in on the first one. Yeah? Okay. Right. So. So you basically you've just
14	and then they've just basically said right this is how we've designed our
15	to say why we've done questionnaires right? Conversation divides again Back
16	Yeah. Recommendations and whatnot. Right we still need to do the limitations

The use of the word *right* can be seen to fulfil different communicative purposes from the concordance lines. *Right* is an example of discourse marker in meetings. The concordance list allows for the distinction of where it occurs as a discourse marker as opposed to its occurrence as an adjective. The researcher can then highlight and extract data for further analysis depending on the area in question.

Table 4.7 Engineering *Right*

N	Concordance
7	between the blades. Mm-mm. Right and then you've got the shaft and
8	for the for the for the fatigue . Right okay. This is a yeah I've realised
9	. It's just so we're doing all doing the right thing that we need to be doing erm.
10	. It would be all welded together. Right okay. So basically yeah. It's like
11	picked something arbitrarily and gone right. We use this one we use that one.
12	to pile pile the tripod? Yeah. Yeah right. It would be three piles. It's the
13	dri= driving those piles? Yeah. Yeah. Right er and do we want to fill it with
14	costs equipment or anything but . Cool. Right okay. Tell us a bit about what
15	communicate more cos we need to say right I've got some urgent things I need
16	the final numbers I just put them in. Right okay. Alright. And I'll get my final

Table 4.7 demonstrates the use of *right* in the engineering data. Much like the example from the marketing meetings, the engineering group also use *right* as a discourse marker. There is a higher presence of the use of *right* followed by *okay* in the engineering data highlighting a difference in style, in terms of how this discourse marker is employed. The use of concordances in analysis allows for a comparison to be made between different data sets. This is particularly beneficial when considering communicative strategy as the researcher can isolate words specific to a particular event, such as conflictual interaction, in order to examine the context of occurrence on a closer level.

The use of these corpus tools in data analysis allows for the inspection of data segments from a CL to CA perspective. This dialectical relationship between quantitative and qualitative analysis can be observed, through the use of CL, to identify patterns across larger chunks of data before using CA to examine these occurrences on a closer level. The use of concordance lists can assist in the qualitative examination of the data as they provide a quick view of the context in which the items occurred. The CA belief that context emerges in interaction through unfolding turns is detailed by Drew and Heritage (1992). They state that 'context and identity have to be treated as inherently locally produced, incrementally developed and, by extension as transformable in any moment' (1992: 21). This highlights the belief that context is purely made out of interaction as participant roles and identities emerge. As CA is employed as a tool for the analysis of

the novice professional meetings, this study can be considered CA informed in that it considers the role of unfolding context in interaction. Other external contextual issues are also considered in the analysis. These include the fact that participants' bring identities and roles to an interaction and also the impact that a particular setting has on determining the context. The position of the researcher is pivotal to comprehending these external contextual issues. As corpus studies have been criticised for ignoring the context of language use (Widdowson, 1998), the role of the researcher in the data collection process is key to providing the contextual background needed to construct a complete analysis of the data.

4.5 Position of the Researcher

The position of the researcher in the recording process served in triangulating the study. The researcher's presence in establishing a relational bond with the participants and gaining access to their meetings provided a great level of contextual insight otherwise unobtainable for the study. The importance of understanding the context of language in analysis is emphasised by Rühlemann (2007). He states that analysis of association patterns and discourse factors can show how and why a distinctive feature is used (Rühlemann, 2007: 29). The position of the researcher in the data collection process enabled a high awareness of contextual issues in the data. As argued by Koester (2006), with a small corpus, the corpus compiler is often also the analyst, and therefore usually has a high degree of familiarity with the context. The role of the researcher as both the data collector and analyst contributed to a deep understanding of the context and underlying participant relationships in this study. Extensive field notes were taken on elements of interaction and group dynamics relevant to the study before and after recordings, in order to provide further understanding of the students' interpersonal relationships. This further understanding of context allowed for a more profound examination of the participants use of communicative strategy, particularly in determining the role of a particular speaker within their community of practice. The data for the subcorpus can be considered a rare and insightful window into the development of novice professional communities of practice.

The relationships established with the participants during the process of corpus design and data collection proved crucial, not only in obtaining permission to record, but in ensuring that the participants felt comfortable speaking naturally. This can be observed in the recordings of student groups where a high level of relational talk can be observed among the participants. Although the participants felt at ease with the researcher, it was noted that students interacted more naturally when left to record the meetings alone. This corresponds with Labov's Observer's Paradox which addresses the problem of collecting naturally occurring speech. According to Labov:

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

> (Labov, 1972: 209)

The presence of a researcher in a group's interaction can be considered as unnatural, in the sense that the participants would not usually interact in the presence of an external member. The presence of a recorder however can help to overcome this as it has been argued that participants will often forget about the recording device, hence, allowing for the recording of authentic data. Although the students highlight their awareness of the recording device at various intervals in the data, the authenticity of the interactions and trust in the researcher is demonstrated through the discussion of confidential topics, social topics and use of elements such as taboo language in interaction. These areas are not traditionally associated with academic language and provide an insight into the informal variety of student language of group projects in the institutional context of the university. This provides a solid basis from which to observe the relational and rapport management development of these groups as the authenticity of the data highlights the group dynamics, values, belief systems, professional modelling and work ethics in each community of practice.

4.6 Outline of Chapters

The analysis for this study is divided into four separate analysis chapters, all linked to the area of communicative strategy in group interaction. The community of practice framework connects the analysis chapters in terms of the communicative strategies

developed and employed by the participants in establishing joint enterprise and shared repertoire. The analysis highlights the different approaches of both groups in developing their own unique communicative patterns and community culture. Through the analysis of these strategies, it is aimed to reach an understanding of how they are employed in the meetings of different novice professional groups.

The main research questions for this study are as follows:

- **Main research question**
  How are communicative strategies linguistically realised in the meetings of Engineering and Marketing novices?

- **Sub Questions**

  (a) How do these strategies contribute to the development of communities of practice?

  (b) Does the use of communicative strategy vary between Engineering and Marketing communities of practice?

These questions are addressed in each of the analysis chapters. The way in which communicative strategies are realised in the novice professional meetings, is examined through conducting an analysis of the linguistic features used in strategic communication by both communities. The manner in which these communicative strategies contribute to the development of shared repertoire and joint enterprise is examined through applying a community of practice framework in the analysis. The different practices of each novice professional community are highlighted by determining the different uses of communicative strategy in interaction.

Chapter 5: Negotiating Identity: Leadership and Participant Roles

This chapter examines the negotiation of identity and construction of participant roles in the community of practice through an analysis of pronouns in the data. The need for a community to establish identity and negotiate participant roles is a focal point of

constructing joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998). The analysis therefore deals with uncovering the construction of leadership, expert, hierarchical and group identity through the use of personal pronouns. Pronouns enable speakers to position themselves in relation to others. They may be inclusive, exclusive or generic in their reference and can thus create and sustain a variety of inter-participant relationships (Poncini, 2004, Handford, 2010). The presence of pronouns in the data is firstly examined using frequency lists in Wordsmith Tools (Scott, 1999). The use of concordance lines in Wordsmith Tools (*ibid*) allows for the identification of specific data examples in the case of such high frequency items. Pronouns *I* and *we* are considered particularly influential in contributing to a sense of individual and group identity in interaction, depending on their context of use.

Chapter 6: Humour and Rapport Management

The use of humour as a communicative strategy in establishing rapport and solidarity in the community of practice is at the forefront of this chapter. Humour was chosen for analysis as it can project assumed shared culture. Humour leads to the fulfilment of relational goals through informalising the atmosphere in work-based interaction. The presence of humour in the meetings of both novice professional communities of practice is considered indicative of working style and community values. In this chapter humour is considered a feature of shared repertoire, as its presence in the meetings demonstrates the different beliefs and practices of the novice communities of practice. The data is examined through the analysis of tagged instances of humour. Humorous instances in the data were tagged intuitively as individual or collaborative (Holmes and Marra, 2002). The different functions of humour were outlined and examined in the data in order to compare its presence and use in both novice professional communities of practice.

Chapter 7: Organisational Culture: Topic in Novice Professional Meetings

The role of establishing a group culture in order to become a solid community of practice is outlined in this chapter. As topic is a highly subjective area, the areas for analysis were chosen in terms of transactional and relational topics (McCarthy, 2000).

In this chapter, the presence of relational topics versus transactional topics present in the meetings of participant groups was considered indicative of the community culture of the particular community. This chapter argues that topic is a key indicator of organisational/community culture and highlights fundamental features of shared repertoire in both novice professional communities of practice.

Chapter 8: Conflict and Negotiation

This chapter outlines the presence of conflict and negotiation in the meetings of the novice professional communities. The emphasis placed on politeness strategies by both communities of practice is considered in order to ascertain the causes of conflict in the data. The mitigation and negotiation in potentially conflictive circumstances is also examined in order to address areas where face and politeness techniques are credited with avoiding conflict. In this chapter the data was firstly examined qualitatively in order to isolate areas of conflict and potential conflict. Items which were considered as contributing to conflict (such as intensifiers) were then quantified in order to determine their role in conflictual interaction.

The linguistic features detailed for analysis can be considered as indicative of the communicative strategies employed in both communities of practice. In determining the use and function of these strategies in interaction, an insight into the joint enterprise and shared repertoire of both novice communities can be obtained. This allows for a comparison to be made in the form and use of communicative strategies employed in the construction of joint enterprise and negotiation of shared repertoire in the engineering and marketing communities. An examination of these communicative strategies can therefore lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the different codes and behavioural practice adhered to in each community.

The next chapter examines the use of pronouns as a communicative strategy in the negotiation of identity in engineering and marketing novice professional communities of practice.

Chapter 5

Negotiating Identity:

Pronouns in Leadership and Group Identity

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with detailing the negotiation of identity and participant roles in the community of practice. The notion that language acts as a symbol of social or group identity has been at the forefront of many studies (Fairclough, 1989; Eckert, 2000; Benwell and Stokoe, 2006). According to Benwell and Stokoe (2006), language and identity are inextricably linked. The use of language to convey social identity can demonstrate the different practices of a community. Wenger (1998: 145) states that our identity includes our ability and our inability to shape the meanings that define our communities and our forms of belonging. He asserts that building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities. This chapter aims to address the communicative strategies used by members of both the engineering and marketing novice communities to negotiate identity through the establishment of participant roles. In order to conduct a thorough analysis of participant roles in the data, the role of personal pronouns in constructing group identity and expert/leadership identity will be examined.

5.1 Previous Studies

This section will outline the area of identity within the context of workplace and management studies, before discussing deixis as a means of examining identity through the analysis of personal pronouns in discourse. The relationship between pronouns and identity will then be detailed before outlining a description of the analytical framework for the chapter.

5.1.1 Identity in the Workplace

Studies on institutional identity detail the complex power structures associated with negotiating and displaying hierarchy in the workplace. Benwell and Stokoe (2006) detail the complexities of identity negotiation in institutional discourse in their study on discourse and identity. They state that any analysis of institutional interaction starts with a critique of institutions as structures that embed power relations within them (p. 87). These power relations can be broken down into areas of identity negotiation, where participants are continuously defining their role in interaction. Institutional identity can

therefore be considered a function of these existing power relations. Within each institution, there exist certain codes of behaviour and requirements (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999). This gives rise to the fact that participants in institutions are expected to conform to particular identities depending on the role they perform within the organisation or institution. Agar (1985: 164) outlines the value of professional identity in his definition of an institution as a 'socially legitimated expertise together with those persons authorized to implement it'.

Ige (2010) argues that identity in many respects is shaped by language and conversely, language choices may relate to identity, he also emphasises that identity like language is both personal and social. He continues to develop the notion that apart from the ability of people to choose and use language as an instrument of communication, either to communicate information, and/or for interpersonal relations, language is also a symbol of group identity (*ibid*: 3049). As outlined in the theoretical framework, one of the definitions of community of practice refers to a group of regularly interacting, goal oriented people who share routines and practices (Handford, 2010: 34). Handford relates this description to a company or part of a company, which covers both experts and novice experts in these groups working together. In order to pertain to a community of practice, one must conform to the codes and habits of their particular community, as argued by Sarangi and Roberts (1999). They define the workplace as a social institution where resources are produced and regulated, problems are solved, identities are played out and professional knowledge is constituted (p. 1). This clearly illustrates that one creates and plays out different roles and identities in different communities of practice.

The issue of institutional identity and how employees perform these identities is of key importance to management studies. The construction of group identity and participant roles is considered crucial to the development of a cohesive team. For decades, companies have strived to create an efficient and effective workforce by encouraging professional development in their employees. The focus on teamwork and team roles has been a key focus of management studies (Tuckman, 1965; Belbin, 1981). These studies are dedicated to uncovering the essence of how a team becomes cohesive in order to increase productivity within companies. Tuckman's (1965) model encourages

the notion of group cohesion and communicative effectiveness through the development of team roles and the processes of Forming, Norming, Storming and Performing. These stages in team development promote the development of roles and identities through interaction. Recent developments in team effectiveness focus on the exploitation of participants strengths in a team through the use of behavioural tests. These tests are designed to indicate participants' strengths in particular areas of team work, for example, problem solving, leadership etc. The results yielded then allow for the allocation of team members to different projects. These tests apply particular roles to employees, which are defined differently depending on the model employed. The Belbin © model of team roles is one such model used by companies in assigning team members. These behavioural exercises are regarded as a means of personal and professional development designed to enhance group cohesion and team effectiveness. In these models, every team consists of a group of individuals who must negotiate their identity both as individuals and as part of a community in order to develop cohesion and effectiveness. Researchers in organisation studies, Ybema et al (2009), state that members in organisations either individually or collectively engage in the process of accomplishing identity. Although these models for group development are considered effective in that they highlight individuals' strengths, more than often team roles and identities are negotiated over time by the individual members through linguistic and non-linguistic means. According to Zimmerman and Boden (1991), institutional identities cannot be assumed to be omnirelevant simply by virtue of the setting. This indicates the importance of considering extra-contextual features when examining identity construction in institutions.

The role of leader is considered highly influential in determining the morale and effectiveness of a team. Leadership status is usually attributed to the most senior/experienced participant in workplace meetings (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997). The links between leadership and power are described by Tannen (1998). She defines power as 'the ability to influence others, to be listened to, [and] to get your way' (Tannen, 1998: 317). Baxter (2012: 84) defines 'leader' 'not as a formal role, but as socially situated sets of linguistic practices that are collaboratively enacted on occasions by leaders in team contexts'. This allows for the linguistic analysis of leadership through the understanding that language does in fact contribute to defining leadership in

specific contexts. By analysing the communicative strategies employed in the construction of identity, a profound insight can be reached into how leadership identity is negotiated and performed in the community of practice.

5.1.2 Discourse and Identity

The analysis of discourse can lead to an insight into identity construction. Studies on workplace language highlight the use of communicative strategy in constructing identity. Holmes and Marra (2002), examine the construction of leadership identity through the use of humour in the workplace. The construction of group identity through language has been examined by Ige (2010), who analyses the use of pronouns in student interaction. The analysis of identity through the examination of language is discussed by Ochs (1993), who highlights the concept of identity construction through discourse. She states that 'linguistic constructions at all levels of grammar and discourse are crucial indicators of social identity for members as they constantly interact with each other' (p. 288). In her work on social identity, Ochs (1993) highlights that speakers can use a verbal act or stance in construction not only their own identities but also the identities of the participants around them (p. 289). The issue of language and identity construction is examined by De Fina (2003), who outlines three linguistic levels that contribute to identity construction:

> The lexical level refers to the use of specific words or expressions. The textual pragmatic level refers to textual logical and argumentative relationships both explicit and implicit. The interactional level refers to the devices and strategies used by narrators to index their stances and attitudes both towards their own texts and other interlocutors.
>
> (De Fina, 2003: 23)

The interactional level of identity mentioned here, also details the use of linguistic devices and strategies in conveying stance and identity. The use of pronouns in interaction can therefore contribute to identity construction as detailed by De Fina (2003).

Tannen (2000) analysis identity construction through language in the workplace. She states that, when people talk to each other at work, the hierarchical relations among them are likely to be in focus (2000: 221). The dynamic process of identity negotiation is highlighted here as participants constantly shift and adapt their institutional identities depending on who they are interacting with. Turner et al (1987) state, 'a person has not one self but several selves'. Every individual can adapt and change identity depending on the context and interactive situation they are engaged in. This is highly relevant in the area of work-based interaction as each member may perform a different participant role depending on the context of the transactional goals being accomplished. An example of this would be in the discussion of highly specialised areas of work where a participant who is not usually regarded as indispensable to the group performs an expert identity through displaying specialised knowledge in the area. This could conflict with the participant's role in other areas of interaction such as social or non-specialised issues. The concept of the dynamic nature of identity, depending on context, is outlined by Hall (1991):

> A dynamic aspect of social relationships is forged and reproduced through the agency/structure dyad, and is inscribed within unequal power relationships. In other words identity is not one thing for any individual rather, each individual is both located in, and opts for a number of differing, and at times conflictual, identities, depending on the social, political, economic and ideological aspects of their situation – 'identity emerges as a kind of unsettled space… between a number of intersecting discourses.

(Hall, 1991: 1)

The nature of individual identity as sometimes differing and conflictual is described here by Hall (1991). Emphasising the importance of context in determining the specific identity of an individual, Hall (1991) outlines that identity is an ever-changing phenomenon in social interaction.

5.1.3 Identity in the Community of Practice

The role of identity construction in the community of practice is considered vital to participant and community development. Wenger (1998) addresses this issue in a defining participation in a community:

> Participation refers to an encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities.

<div align="right">(Wenger, 1998: 4)</div>

As active participants in a community of practice, members must negotiate their identity as a community of practice and their individual identity within the community itself. The identities performed and displayed in a community of practice may not always reflect how participants are perceived in other contexts. However, the roles undertaken and performed while participants and members of any one community will define how they are perceived by other members of the group. Benwell and Stokoe (2006) outline that people strive to maintain a positive social identity, partly by making favourable comparisons between in-groups and out groups (p. 5). This highlights the fact that every community of practice has the potential to develop a hierarchical system (Davies, 2005). Studies focused on in-group highlight the language and practices used to emphasise exclusivity from other group members. Cutting's (2002) study finds that as shared interpersonal knowledge increases, so does the implicit vocabulary which forms the code of the in-group. The in-group can be referred to as the group to which an individual belongs and the out-group is seen as outside and different to the group (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006: 25). This different classing of social groups as 'in' or 'out' is reflected throughout society and different communities of practice. From this perspective, members of a community of practice are likely to conform to the requirements of the in-group, or community norms in order to belong. This leads to the negotiation of identity within the community as members strive to define participant roles. A method of linguistically analysing identity construction is through the analysis of deictic features of interaction in the community of practice interaction (Hindmarsh and Heath, 2000).

5.2 Deixis

Deixis refers to the way people orient themselves and their listeners in terms of person, time and space in relation to the immediate situation of speaking (Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 93). Deictics are those linguistic forms which are dependent on context for their (referential) meaning. These are personal pronouns, demonstratives such as this and

that, temporal and spatial expressions such as *here, there, yesterday, now* (Fasulo and Zucchermaglio, 2002: 1121). In signalling meaning in interaction through referring to context, deictic features are valuable in highlighting speaker intention and participant roles. With reference to the role of deictic features in outlining spacio-temporal issues, Duranti and Goodwin (1998) state that *this, that, here* and *there* act as pointers in interaction. *This* and *that* tend to apply to objects depending on different contexts. The identity and placement of objects through deictic features is outlined by Hanks (1990):

> The term deictic in traditional grammar designates (roughly) linguistic elements which specify the identity or placement in space or time of individuated objects relative to the participants in a verbal interaction. English 'this', for instance, in one of its central uses, identifies a specific object given in the immediate spatial proximity of the speaker who utters the form.

(Hanks, 1990: 5)

The role of deixis in identifying and indicating objects in the workplace has been examined by Hindmarsh and Heath (2000). They examine deixis in the workplace in terms of referential practice. Just as deixis is used to indicate specific objects either through language or visual conduct (Hindmarsh and Heath, 2000), it can also function in identifying identity and participant roles through the use of personal pronouns.

Person deixis and the encoding of participant roles linguistically realised in the use of personal pronouns has been outlined by Levinson (1983). He states that 'the single most obvious way in which the relationship between language and context is reflected in the structures of the language themselves is through deixis' (1983: 54). The context in which speakers act out different identities is therefore vital in understanding the role that pronouns play as a deictical feature in conveying different discursive messages and identities. According to Brown and Levinson (1987):

> Deixis has to do with the ways in which sentences are anchored to certain aspects of their contexts of utterance, including the role of participants in the speech event and their spacio-temporal and social location.

(Brown and Levinson, 1987: 118)

The role of participants in interaction is of fundamental value in ascertaining the group dynamics and inner practices of a community of practice. It is through an analysis of the

identities projected by the participants that a conclusive understanding of leadership and participant roles can be reached. This function of deixis in highlighting participant roles has been examined in studies concerning power and distance. According to Zupnik (1994, cf. Handford, 2010: 157), shifts in personal deixis are power-enhancing in the context of political discourse as speakers can shift in and out of various roles and display multiple identities in particular situations therefore displaying and enacting their power status. This ability of participants to display multiple identities in work-based interaction outlines the delicate power processes that define goal focused interaction. The use of deixis in analysis can allow for distinctions to be made between these different roles and identities fulfilled in interaction. Fillmore (1997) describes social deixis as an extra dimension to the role specific category of person deixis. In this sense social distinctions involve coding of social relationships degrees of closeness and distance can be observed and identified. The roles and relationships of the participants in the community of practice can therefore be examined and defined in specific contexts through the analysis of person deixis. This involves the examination of personal pronouns in the data.

5.2.1 Pronouns and Identity

According to Clifton and Van de Mieroop (2010), identity is dialogically constructed through talk. The use of pronouns in constructing identity through talk in interaction cannot be underestimated. In a study on pronouns and identity in student group work, Ige (2010: 3047) states that the capacity of language as a symbol of individual and group identities cannot be overemphasised. As a deictic feature, pronouns can indicate participant stance and the relationship between participants in interaction. Biber et al (1999: 333), state that personal pronouns are the most common type of pronoun in interaction. Research carried out in the area of personal pronouns details the significant link to pronoun usage and identity construction in institutions and the workplace. According to Handford (2010: 155), pronouns act as a central mechanism by which speakers signal social relationships. This serves to indicate the power based relationships constructed and maintained in areas of business meetings and workplace interaction. It is through the use of pronouns that speakers convey their stance and position in interaction. The use of pronouns in signaling institutional identity has been

examined by Van de Mieroop (2007). He states that the pronoun *we* is quite often used to refer to an institutional referent, thus positioning the speaker as a representative of the organisation. While the use of *I* can reflect the presence of the speaker in his speech through which he may present himself as an expert. This use of pronouns in signalling relationships both between participants and institutional entities highlights the influence of language in conveying power and solidarity. According to Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 115), the way in which speakers use pronouns has implications for their interpersonal relationships and the way the receivers are positioned. The use of personal pronouns in defining identity is also examined by Drew and Sorejonen (1997) who state that:

> Participants may display their orientation to their acting as incumbents of an institutional role… by using a personal pronoun which indexes their institutional identity rather than their personal identity.

> (Drew and Sorejonen, 1997: 97

This highlights the role of pronouns in transforming identities, allowing the speaker to appear more or less affiliated with the institution depending on the pronoun used. The contrastive use of *I* and *we* pronouns in identity negotiation in institutional and work based settings can therefore shed light into how participants evoke individual, collective and institutional identities.

5.2.2 Analytical Framework

This section deals with the analysis of personal pronouns in the data in order to determine how participants construct and negotiate roles and identity. Shifts in footing (Goffman, 1979) from the construction of group identity to that of an expert identity and vice versa can be considered highly relevant in the analysis of participant roles. This chapter will therefore focus on the use of *we* and *I* pronouns in interaction in order to determine the different participant roles and identities that are evoked in novice professional meetings. The examination of pronouns will be divided into two areas:

Analysis of *We*

(a) Inclusive *We* in evoking group identity
(b) Inclusive *We* in leadership strategy

Analysis of *I*

(a) *I* in expert identity construction
(b) *I* in exerting power and hierarchy

Inclusive We and Group Cohesion

The use of pronouns in promoting group cohesion and solidarity in the development of group identity is central to this study. Poncini (2002) details the relevance of pronouns to group cohesion. She states that personal pronouns, specialized lexis and evaluative language contribute to the creation of group identity thus enhancing solidarity. The use of *we,* in particular, holds great power in creating group solidarity through evoking a sense of belonging among participants. According to Handford (2010), the use of *we* can be inclusive and exclusive. He states that in business meetings, *inclusive we* refers to all participants, whereas *exclusive we* refers to the speaker's group but not the listeners (2010: 156). Fairclough, (1989) also highlights the use of *we* in conveying solidarity. The use of inclusive *we* highlights a sense of group identity as it references all of the participants.

Strategic use of Inclusive We

According to Pennycook (1994: 176) 'depending on the speaker's intention, "we" is the only personal pronoun that can (a) be inclusive and exclusive and (b) claim authority and communality at the same time'. The ambiguity of *we* as a deictic indicator means that it can be used strategically in interaction. According to Fasulo and Zucchermaglio (2002: 1122), 'the first person singular pronoun, 'I', is in principle the least ambiguous among pronouns from a grammatical point of view: indeed, it refers only to one person (unlike 'we', whose members could be vague, and include or not include listeners)'. Leaders or members in power can therefore strategically use *'we'* to evoke solidarity and cohesion. This can be found in instances where *we* is used instead of *I* in meetings

as it encompasses the group as a whole rather than just the individual speaker. Through the use of a *'we'* form, the speaker shifts responsibility and evokes the wider audience. Handford (2010) states that in business, *we* can act as a replacement for *I* and *you*. This works particularly well in situations where orders are being given or suggested. McCarthy and Handford discuss this softening of directives in business in their 2004 study. They state that:

> Face-protecting and indirect forms for issuing directives are preferred in order to maintain good interpersonal relations and to promote the comity, motivation and stability so necessary in business institutions.

> (McCarthy and Handford, 2004: 182)

This is notion not only applies to business institutions, but also in any institution where leaders wish to convey a sense of group morale and inclusivity. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997: 175) state that 'in a professional business setting, negotiating between "I" as an individual and some form of collective identity "we" is an everyday matter involving tactical choices, whether conscious or unconscious'. This use of *we* as a tactical choice is also outlined by Van de Mieroop (2007), who states that *we* is an ambiguous referent and can be used strategically in interaction.

I in Expert Identity Construction

In their study on the impact of pronouns in Italian organisations, Fasulo and Zuchermaglio (2002) find that *I* utterances are effective in highlighting particular roles played in different contexts. Through the analysis of *I* marked utterances, they identify how role marked identities are are variously manipulated and mitigated through conversational devices such as self-repair, word delay, and metaphorical work. According to Jayyusi (1984), for each identity there is an expectable level of knowledge and identity-related rights to display such knowledge. Clifton and Van de Mieroop (2010), examine the concept of relevance in order to describe the different identities that can be employed by speakers in interaction. Clifton and Van de Mieroop state that:

> Relevance refers to the fact that, considering that each participant has a portfolio of possible identities that can be invoked at any moment in the interaction, by orienting to a particular identity, participants are making that identity relevant.

> (Clifton and Van de Mieroop, 2010: 2)

The construction of expert identity is likely to take place in the context of work-based meetings. The more assertive a speaker is about the level of knowledge he or she has on a particular issue, the more other members in the group will respect the expert identity of the speaker, thus making the identity relevant. The pronoun *I* can be used to express this expert identity by a speaker, through indexing themselves as knowledgeable in a specific area. Van de Mieroop (2007: 1123) states that 'the *I-form* can reflect the presence of the speaker in his speech through which he may present himself as an expert'. An example of this could be: *I think we should design the graph this way because I got a good result in this subject last year*. In this case the speaker uses *I* to highlight ownership of an idea to the group before backing up his statement with background knowledge of the area.

I in power and hierarchy

The presence of power and hierarchy are common elements in the community of practice. Although most working environments should ideally employ a diplomatic attitude to interaction, there highly transactional focus of task-based work can lead to an element of power struggle. The use of the pronoun *I* can be considered relevant in the analysis of the representation of power in identity. The use of *I think,* for example, can be used both to express leadership and to exert power. Holmes (1986: 3) examines the deliberative use of *I think* and states that it can be defined as expressing confidence and adding weight to the proposition. The context of use is crucial for the analysis of this use of *I think*. The use of *I think we should*, for example, could be considered either a hedged mode of leadership/expert talk, or an outward display of power depending on the context and tone of the utterance. This deliberate use of intensifiers in interaction can therefore heighten the level of power identity. This is outlined by Clifton and Van de Mieroop (2010), who examine the deliberate use of *I think* as a booster in the negotiation of expert identity.

We and *I* pronouns will be analysed under these four headings in the data in order to examine these uses in context. The presence of *we* in evoking group identity will be discussed in order to determine the emphasis placed on team work in both groups. The

use of strategic *we* will then be analysed, with a view to investigating leadership dynamics in both communities. The presence of pronoun *I* in displaying expert identity will then be discussed, before examining the presence of *I* in asserting power in the meetings. A comparison will be made between the examples of these pronouns in both groups in order to assert different team working styles and participant roles.

5.3 Analysis

In order to gain an overall view of the use of pronouns in the data, the top 20 words of both participant groups was analysed. In table 5.1, pronouns are highlighted in order to indicate their significance in the data.

Table 5.1: Word Frequency list Pronouns

No.	Engineering	Marketing
1.	I	I
2.	The	It
3.	It	The
4.	Yeah	You
5.	You	That
6.	That	We
7.	And	Yeah
8.	To	And
9.	We	To
10.	A	Like
11.	Of	A
12.	Is	Just
13.	Erm	So
14.	So	In
15.	Just	Do
16.	What	Of
17.	In	What
18.	Be	They
19.	Do	Have
20.	Can	Is

A general view of the data highlights the use of *I* as the most frequent word in the meetings of both the Marketing and Engineering groups. This is unsurprising as many spoken language corpora indicate that *I* is the most frequently used word in spoken language contexts (O'Keeffe, 2006). The use of *I* as the most frequent word in both data sets in the engineering and marketing communities can be linked to the need to establish participant roles within the group.

As the total number of uses of *I* was extremely high in the data of both groups (4,325 instances in the marketing and 3, 979 instances in the engineering data) the concordance lists enabled a helicopter view of the general uses of the personal pronoun. Both groups use *I* to mark different identities depending on the contexts, but the engineers use *I* more frequently in a task-based context. Example 5.1 demonstrates a typical use of *I* in task-based interaction from the engineering data.

Example 5.1

Pete: <$OL> Okay no that's be good. Yeah. See **I I'm** wondering then see it's kind of **I'm** just thinking about from all the last year's reports they tended to put the animations at the end cos it's quite a cool thing to watch to th= th= the kind of the visual sight of it is you can go here's everything **I've** done.

Tim: <$OL> There's no <$=> there's no </$= > point in me talking about the assembly and then leaving the presentation till after Pete's talk.

Pete: <$OL> Well that's what **I'm** saying is do we actually then what we could do?

Tim: <$OL> **I think** it's <$=> **I think** it's </$= > better because it breaks up the presentation if somebody's <$=> if somebody's </$= > bored by it **I'm** not saying they're going to be bored **I'm** saying if someone's bored by the end of the hour and then you throw in a presentation.

This example shows a high frequency of *I* in the negotiation of task-based interaction. In discussing the presentation of the project, the students highlight individual opinions and ideas through the use of *I*. From the data, there is a notable difference in the amount of transactional and relational talk that takes place in both groups (see Chapter 7 on Topic). The engineering students indulge in very little relational talk and tend to keep their meetings strictly work focused. The engineers tend to have a rotating chair and use a formal style meeting method (Handford, 2010: 60), which includes an agenda and minute taking. The marketing students on the other hand, tend to apply a more relaxed, almost spontaneous approach in their meetings. They organise a fixed time and place

like the engineers but do not use a set agenda to organise their points or focus their work. The engineers work as individuals at home and hardly ever together at their meetings, using the meeting to discuss information on their individual work and progress which they tie together as a team. The marketing students also work on an individual level at home but also physically work together as a group at the meetings using computers as an aid. These different working styles are relevant as they partly explain the difference in levels of transactional talk and relational talk that takes place in the data (McCarthy, 2000: 84). The higher level of transactional talk in the engineers' meetings means that *I* is mostly used in contexts relating to work and individual opinions. The high level of relational talk in the marketing data suggests that *I* is highly used in narrative accounts and non-work related conversations. Example 5.2 shows an example of this:

Example 5.2

Charles: **I was** on bing= **I won** roulette.

Sarah: It's in my car that little thing. Little. Called Pete the penguin.

Charles: Yes.

Vicky: Ah your little penguin.

Sarah: Pete my penguin pal.

Charles: **I thought I was gonna** win money. **I had** a quid on that as well. **I had** a quid on a number and it came   in. <$X> That've | That would </$X> have been thirty-six quid in a <$=> in a </$=> casino.

This example demonstrates the use of the pronoun *I* in a non-task-based narrative sequence. The presence of relational talk in the marketing meetings is a significant marker of their community identity (as will be further outlined in Chapter 7). The pronoun *I* is employed in narrating relational accounts as well as task-based interaction in this group. The pronoun *we* occurs in the top ten words in both data sets highlighting the group work context of the interactions. Although *we* is also used in relational talk by the marketing students, both groups tend to use *we* in its inclusive form when addressing group identity. The use of *we* is more frequent in the marketing meetings. This could indicate that the marketing students place a higher emphasis on a collective identity. The use of *we* in its inclusive form will be discussed in the next section.

The use of *I think* as a booster (Clifton and Van de Mieroop, 2010), and as expressing confidence and adding weight to a preposition (Holmes, 1986) can be observed in both communities of practice. Figure 5.1 illustrates the use of *I think* in different clusters in the two participant groups.

Figure 5.1: *I think* clusters
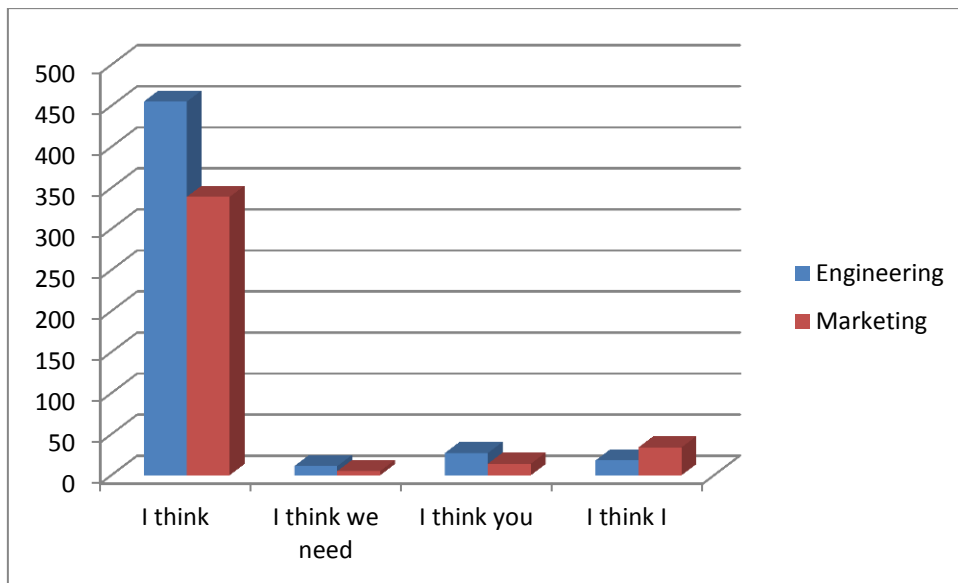
These particular clusters were chosen for quantification in order to exemplify the different forms of interaction in both groups. The high use of *I think* in the engineering data indicates its use as a booster in interaction. An examination of the data in context highlighted that *I think* is mainly used by the engineers to achieve transactional goals through asserting expert knowledge and confidently expressing opinions (Van de Mieroop, 2007). The marketing community also use *I think* as a booster, but they also use it in expressing personal opinions in relational topics as outlined in the concordance list in figure 5.2:

Figure 5.2: Marketing concordance *I think*

N	Concordance
36	. Said she doesn't tan very much to m= I think she said that to make me feel
47	this might be a bit controversial but I think the best British show is Top Gear.
48	people don't like him right? I don't know I think they're just very entertaining.
49	like who? Which one? I don't know like I think James May is the funniest guy

This use of *I think* is common in the marketing data and can be attributed to the higher level of relational talk present in the meetings (See Appendices A and B). The use of *I think we need* is considered stereotypical of business meetings (Handford, 2010) and demonstrates the use of hedging by a leader or manager telling subordinates to do something. The use of *I think we need* is relatively low in both data sets occurring 5 times in the marketing data and 11 times in the engineering data. This could symbolise a lower level of hedged orders in the novice meetings than in professional meetings. The use of *I think we need* can be considered indicative of a hierarchical structure, the higher presence of this cluster in the engineering data can therefore be linked to a potential display of power in the engineering data. This will be further discussed in the analysis of inclusive *we* and pronouns in hierarchy. The higher presence of *I think you* in the engineering data (27 occurrences), can be linked to the notion of hierarchical displays of power in the engineering data. This cluster was prevalent in suggesting actions to be carried out in the group and indicates the presence of hierarchy in the group meetings. The marketing students used this cluster in providing opinions in both transactional and relational topics. Finally, the presence of *I think I* clusters were significantly higher in the marketing data occurring a total of 34 times compared to 18 times in the engineering data. The use of *I think I* clusters occurred 19 times in relational episodes in the marketing meetings. This indicates an emphasis on relational talk through anecdotal sequences in the marketing community (see Chapter 7 for relational episodes). The use of *I think* clusters can be seen, at a glance, as evoking different participant roles and identities. The higher level of *I think* clusters in the fulfilment of transactional goals in the engineering community highlights a hierarchical structure in the group. The high use of *I think* clusters in expressing opinions in the discussion of relational topics demonstrates the use of language in belonging to the in-group as members construct relational identities in this community of practice. Further examination of *I think* as a booster in displaying identity will be discussed later in this chapter.

Another prominent pronoun in the word count is the use of *they*. *They* appears 18th in the marketing data but does not appear until the 52nd most frequent word in the engineering data. This could be attributed to the discoursal practices of the different groups, which will be outlined in the analysis. Topics in the marketing meetings will usually refer to a third party external to the meeting, whereas topics in the Engineering meetings tend to focus around the students present and very occasionally an external body. The marketing community make references to their clients at different intervals and the presence of *they* as an external group is ever present in their meetings. The marketing group also conduct focus groups and interact with other students as part of their consultancy project. This suggests that references to *they* could often refer to participants in their focus group and phone interview studies. Example 5.3 demonstrates the use of *they* in the marketing meetings:

Example 5.3

Charles: Or yeah or do you think there could be more er if if do you think **they** could give you more information on where your money goes or how your donations are used or where's.

Sarah: <$OL> Do you feel sufficiently thanked?

Vicky: Yeah.

Nita: <$OL> Yeah all of that incentives thank yous.

Sarah: Bes= yeah best way to get in contact ask them if **they** use charity shops.

In this example, the marketing students discuss the questions they will ask the participants of the focus groups for their consultancy work. This perhaps outlines the social working nature of the marketing groups' work, as the high frequency of *they* in the dataset symbolises a certain level of communication with outside parties.

5.3.1 Inclusive *We* in leadership strategy

The use of inclusive *we* in leadership strategy differed in the data from both groups. Extract 5.4 details and example of the strategic use of *we* by a prominent group member from the marketing community, in conveying an idea to the group.

Example 5.4: Inclusive *We* in Marketing

Charles: Basically **I** mean obviously **we** don't have to go through with it but wouldn't it be good to like if it was for **us** to do it would be good to get like uni and Northumbria really involved with St Joseph's. Just posters everywhere and like fundraising events and like stuff outside the union and all sorts. Cos **I was at the Metro Radio Arena** and noticed they had something on there as well but obviously **we** don't **we we've** been given a brief by **them** eh on the like pro= on the whatever you call it. That wi= that **they're** not doing anything so **we've** been given the task. Obviously **they** the all the time **we've** spent doing the work **they've** also got a marketing team in place doing all the stuff **we're** doing anyway.

In this extract a member of the marketing group Charles discusses a new idea for the consultancy project with his teammates. He begins by highlighting the idea as his own *I mean* but then swiftly hands the power of decision to the group in saying *we don't have to go through with it.* Charles generally acts as a main contributor in the group and gains the respect of his fellow teammates in a leader-like way throughout the process of the project. He is very quick to turn the power over to his teammates in this instance with the decision on advertising their charity in big venues. By making the idea slightly negative, by hedging *obviously we don't have to,* he makes the team feel secure in that he is not imposing his idea on them or wielding power as a leader by stating they should go through with it. A similar trend can be observed in the second part of the extract where he demonstrates further knowledge of the area backing up his idea, *I was at the Metro Arena*, but hedges by saying *obviously we don't have to* once again. Through this approach Charles derestricts the team members and leaves them free to decide what action to take while at the same time implementing another idea of how they as a team could proceed. This indirect form of *we* can therefore be considered strategic as it is used in a face protecting way (McCarthy and Handford, 2004).

In the case of the engineering meetings the use of *inclusive we* in managing ideas and work in the group is slightly different and is very often used after a speaker gives his/her opinion on an area as a very direct way of implementing their idea in the meeting.

Example 5.5: Inclusive *We* in Engineering

Simon: You know like **I'm** trying to be serious cos when **I actually think** about it this is a smarter option because it quotes in a lot of papers that monopiles just are not good over twenty-five thirty metres. Erm to do with the loading on them. The way they are supported in the ground. It doesn't matter how deep you drive it there's gonna be so much loading on the monopile. And **we we're** still considering it as these are standards from wind turbine. **We** haven't even included the massive surface area of a tidal turbine which is gonna change it massively. Erm so

>   **I think we need to** over compensate and go for a tripod structure. And it'll save expenses when it comes to **we'll** just have to pile three monopiles rather than drill a thirty metre hole.

Pete: Yeah. The thing about piling is like so many companies know piling. There's not a lot of companies that know drilling. Cos **I** looked into the er German company that does drilling and the best that they could get was four metres **I** think.

Simon: There **you** go. Well that there **you** go. There's a professional source that **you** want

In this example (5.5), Simon discusses an element of the work he has been assigned to do by the group at the beginning of the meeting. His use of ***I'm trying to be serious cos when I actually think about it this is a smarter option*** suggests a very strong sense of ownership over the work he is performing. He constructs expert identity in his area through referring to background reading and structural information. When considering the efforts that have been made in identifying the problem, Simon evokes the group through the use of inclusive *we* and does not take the responsibility for the lack of decisiveness on this area, ***And we we're still considering it as these are standards from wind turbine. We haven't even included the massive surface area.*** Through his use of inclusive *we* in this instance, Simon shifts the level of responsibility from himself to the group. He is then very direct in his use of ***I think*** when suggesting what should be done next. The use of ***I think we need*** as a booster in this instance highlights his stance on the matter, placing himself as the deciding member in the area, it also demonstrates his role as leader in this instance as he hedges an order. Unlike the more diplomatic use of language by Charles in the Marketing group, Simon goes straight to suggesting that his idea needs to be taken up by the group, ***Erm so I think we need to over compensate***, ***we'll just have to.*** Simon's expression of *we'll just have to* conveys that he has already made the decision for the group and expects them to take up his point of view. He does not focus the group on thinking about his approach for themselves, rather stating ***I think, we'll have to***, this enforces a sense of leadership over the group. As he is discussing the area the group considers him 'expert' in, he is given more freedom in asserting his leadership at this point. Pete, who is acting chairperson, justifies Simon's position by supplying information from his personal research findings and agrees that drilling a thirty metre hole is unrealistic. Simon is glad to take this support and praises Pete's findings, ***Well that there you go. There's a professional source that you want***. Through praising the findings through the use of ***there you go***, he takes credit for his original idea in the groups presence and also evokes the group in emphasising ***There's a professional source that you want.*** This use of ***you*** implies the group and suggests that

they should take note and follow Pete's example in providing professional sources for their ideas. Simon also displays a desire to be considered a professional in this extract as he praises Pete's source, the source which justifies his idea, therefore deeming his idea as professional. Simon's directness in conveying his message, backed up by his use of *I* and *we* in the contexts outlined in this particular case, differs greatly to the more cautious approach taken by Charles in the marketing group.

The members of both communities draw on the use of *we* when they want to evoke the identity of the group. The use of *we* occurs when a person acting as leader wishes to appear less authoritative when designating tasks or managing team members. This function of the pronoun *we* to downplay individual identity is highlighted by Drew and Heritage (1992: 20). They state that the use of *we* can lessen the identity of the individual speaker and therefore his or her responsibility for the action or decision in question. This could also be interpreted as avoiding officialdom as the decision is objectified of course of action in question (Fairclough, 1989: 7). The use of *we* in avoiding officialdom was demonstrated in extract 5.4 where Charles put an idea to the group in a very diplomatic way. Although extract 5.5 demonstrates an attempt by Simon to evoke team identity in outlining a point of action, he has already highlighted his individuality through the use of ***I think we'll have to*** which strongly enforces leadership and officialdom. The use of *inclusive we* in demonstrating the emphasis on group identity in the data can be seen in the meetings of both groups. Extract 5.6 highlights data from an engineering meeting:

Example 5.6: Inclusive *We* in evoking group identity Engineering

Tim: <$OL> **I think** cos **I mean** l= **I'm being** really picky here but **I'm saying** do **we say** on slide three **we decided we** were going to it'll all be th= eh j= the vote that **we chose** was justified eh everybody had to be in agreement **we couldn't** have anyone who didn't like it otherwise **we'd** go back to the drawing board. Having discussed with it **we came up with** three ideas and then **we** chose this idea. Or do **we say we chose** this idea **we** think it's really important in industry and to help get to this idea **we identified** three problems initially **we decided** that m= there's going to be no voting everybody had to have a justified agreement and that's why **we** came to this conclusion because everybody could pick something from it. So that's that's my question is th= on the third slide do you say **we chose** the tidal turbine because of this reason and from that or not from that reason but helped with that reason you have the reason as to **we wanted to** justify everything **we don't want** to vote?

Pete: <$OL> I agree with you. Yeah.

In this extract Tim discusses the slides for the group's final presentation. The question of what to put on the slides is raised as group members discuss the outline of the presentation. Tim begins his turn by stating that he's being picky on the issue of how the members chose their project, ***I'm being really picky here but I'm saying***, before engaging in a lengthy turn detailing the different options available by using *we* as an indicator of who the project was chosen by. The use of inclusive *we* is prevalent in this turn and occurs a total of 17 times. This is due to the fact that Tim is employing an almost narrative form in discussing the different decisions of the group, however, the constant use of *we* indicates that the inclusivity of all member is essential to the project, not just in terms of morale, but in terms of the assignment itself. As the presentation will be observed and graded by a group of lecturers from the engineering department, the focus on appearing to be a cohesive team is fundamental. This could be a factor in the high use of *inclusive we* when discussing what should go on the slides. This case demonstrates that although the team is the main focus of this expert, it could also indicate a level of strategy on Tim's part in highlighting just how cohesive the team was in making decisions during the project.

The marketing group employs a different use of *we* in evoking group solidarity. In an extract from a similar context of the discussion of tasks to 5.6, extract 5.7 deals with the delegation of tasks in a marketing meeting:

Example 5.7: Inclusive *we* in group identity Marketing

Charles: Seems like quite a big task doesn't it.

Jairul: Should come together alright though.

Jodie: I r= I just.

Jairul: If **we** can have all this research stuff done by the end of the week I think **we'll** be pretty sweet.

Jodie: Yeah.

Charles: Yeah. Recommendations and whatnot.

Jodie: Right **we** still need to do the limitations and conclusion and the meeting and the minutes **don't we**.

Sarah: **We** need to decide what they are don't **we**.

Charles: Minutes **I'll sort them**. **I'll have** minutes minutes minutes.

Jodie: Wait was was a Gantt chart the month's progress forming <$G2>. **We** could always get uh Vicky could do that Charles cos you're doing so much and **we need to share it out** equally.

In example 5.7, the group is constructing a broad view of the research section of the project and discussing what needs to be done. The whole group engages in this discussion. The use of *we* throughout this extract indicates the strong sense of team developed by this group. Even when delegating a task, the acting leader of the group emphasises this by stating: ***We could always get uh Vicky could do that Charles cos you're doing so much and we need to share it out equally.*** This demonstrates that the marketing group works in a very collaborative fashion where all members are encouraged to share opinions on the project. The group always refers to the project and opinions suggested for the project in terms of *inclusive we*. This contrasts with the engineering group, as although they use *inclusive we*, they are also very individually focused which is highlighted in the following section.

5.3.2 *I* in Expert Identity

Pronouns can be highly influential in demonstrating expert identity through positioning speakers in a position of authority (Clifton and Van de Mieroop, 2010). The use of the pronoun *I* in constructing expert identity can be seen in extract 5.8 from the engineering data:

Example 5.8: Expert Identity Engineering

Tim**:**   **I know you've said that you don't particularly view this Gantt chart as urgent**. **I think in reality we need to get it done.** But **I'd much rather we** get it done sooner rather than later. It will give us longer to talk about and work out dependencies and critical paths. Highlighting any areas that **we've** missed where people are dependent on each other and also it makes us do it. Because in a nicest possible way **I know** that if someone says to me it's not due for another three weeks. **I'm not going to** concentrate on it. **I'm going to carry on** doing turbine stuff. So in a way **I'd rather** half our meeting later this week probably two days time where **we've** gone away. **We've had time** to sit down think about it and come back. And just gets the work done and gets it out the way. **Erm but I don't know** how everyone else feels about that.

Simon: Erm.

Pete: Well yeah. Can do.

Simon**:**   **I don't mind** doing that.

In this extract a prominent speaker in the group discusses the importance of deadlines and targets. In giving his opinion on the issue, Tim vocalises his reasons for wanting to get it done. He is responding to the previous comments of another speaker on the issue on Gannt charts. Tim immediately emphasises his stance on the matter in a direct way: *I think in reality we need to get it done*. The use of *I think* begins as a hedge, however, the rest of the sentence conveys a sense of urgency on the matter. He reinforces this urgency in the following sentence: *But I'd much rather we get it done sooner rather than later.* The sense of urgency is also conveyed in Tim's vocal tone in the extract. As he emphasises his point in a very 'matter of fact' way, he conveys a sense of authority over the other participants, this leads to a sense of enforced expertness (Van de Mieroop, 2007). Tim appeals to the group using *inclusive we* before once again expressing his personal preference on the matter. In ending the turn in: *Erm but I don't know how everyone else feels about that* he places the responsibility of the decision back on the group, even though he has made it very clear that he believes the Gannt chart needs to be done. This use of authority to convey expertise on an issue highlights the participant in a particular role of power as he confidently asserts his views to the other members of the group.

The marketing meetings do not contain instances of such a level of authority. In analysing the data for expert identity examples, it was clear that even where prominent members express ideas, they are conscious of including other members. The use of *I* in backing up expert identity was very rare in the marketing data. Extract 5.9 demonstrates the construction of expert identity by a member of the marketing group:

Example 5.9: Expert identity Marketing

Jairul: <$OL> **I think** you still have to reference it. As a source.

Charles: <$OL> As in so so like Google survey monkey. But it did the work f= it did the work for us.

Vija: <$OL> Yeah. No you don't. I don't know why they did that. So just like. It's easy to like put all the charts it's not a problem.

Vicky   <$OL> Yeah but a source <-> where you got your information from.

Sarah: <$OL> Yeah sure.

Jairul: <$OL> **No cos like for for one of our classes if you used computer programs** you have to write like the computer output was given like. **Or we could say like survey monkey gave us this output and then we have to put like survey monkey comma two thousand and ten and then we have to like reference it at the bottom.**

Vicky: <$OL> Oh right okay. Okay well at least it's it's something else to put in as well.

In this example the students discuss referencing in their project. Jairul, a member of the group who does not usually fulfil a leadership role, states: *I think you still have to reference it. As a source.* In using *I think* as a booster, he indicates his stance on the issue. The use of the pronoun *you* is vague here as it does not directly refer to a particular member of the group. Jairul backs up his statement by making reference to information on referencing in computer class. What is interesting in this display of knowledge is that he does not use *I* or *my* to exert ownership of the knowledge, instead he uses *our classes* to contextualise the classes. He then uses *inclusive we* to suggest how the group could reference stating: *we could say like* this acts as a hedging device and highlights Jairul's intention to maintain cohesion and rapport in the group (Brown and Levinson, 1987). This extract serves to reinforce the focus that the marketing students place on group cohesion as even through the use of *I think* can be linked to display expertness (Clifton and Van de Mieroop, 2010), the member does not enforce his point of view in an authoritative way through the intensified use of *I think*. The emphasis on group identity can also be seen in the amount of turns taken by the marketing community. Turns tend to be short and highly alternating, highlighting a level of inclusivity in interaction and a more symmetrical power semantic, where the floor is yielded more than held by one speaker.

5.3.3 *I* in Power and Hierarchy

The use of the pronoun *I* in exerting power and hierarchy can be examined in the engineering data. Extract 5.10 demonstrates the role of the pronoun in asserting stance and maintaining a position of authority over another speaker in the engineering data.

Example 5.10: *I* in power Engineering

Simon: <$OL> Well **I think what we need cos we need to do** more than you need to some background work first to see what a management report needs before we write it so **I think you need to go down the mass library and start reading the   management reports.**

Maneeb: Well that's is gonna be part of that day **we'll** just come **we'll** do the work **we'll** sit down we'll figure out what we need to do. It's part of that day it's we come in the morning we come and we take it.

Simon: <$OL> Oh yeah yeah **I know that**. I don't <$=> I don't </$= > n= eh a= eh **I don't want you coming in on one day thinking I'm gonna have a management report by the end of the**

day if it takes longer to get a better report I want you to do that do you know what I mean.

Maneeb: <$OL> No no it's no. **I know**.

Simon: Right okay.

Maneeb: I'm not saying and one day and have to finish it in one day at all so.

Simon: Yeah yeah yeah yeah. Alright okay. No that's fine.

Maneeb: <$E> Laughs </$E>. Eh **I** said if **we** have one day and at least at the end of the day **we know** where **we're doing we** know what **we're** doing and then **we understand** each other what what **we doing** that **we** produce something that we give it to **you guys** you have it if you.

Simon: <$OL> Well remember. Cos you don't know if there's things you're gonna forget about meetings or anything like that **so make sure you talk to us as well.**

In this extract, the issue of management report is being discussed by two group members. A group of three participants has been assigned the task to put together the management report. Extract 5.10 deals with the interaction between Simon, a prominent member in the engineering community and Maneeb, a mature student. Simon asserts his dominance of the situation early in the extract: ***Well I think what we need cos we need to do more than you need to some background work first to see what a management report needs before we write it so I think you need to go down the mass library and start reading the management reports.*** Simon opens his turn with ***I think what we need,*** which implies that he is hedging an order to Maneeb. He then directly tells Maneeb what to do ***I think you need to go down the mass library*** in a highly authoritative tone. Maneeb reacts in a diplomatic matter and emphasising that he and the other two participants will do what it takes to get the work done: ***we'll just come we'll do the work we'll sit down we'll figure out what we need to do.*** In evoking the use of *inclusive we,* Maneeb contests Simon's authority by highlighting that he and the other participants have the area covered as it is their job. Simon overlaps Maneeb's turn before he can finish stating: ***Oh yeah yeah I know that. I don't <$=> I don't </$= > n= eh a= eh I don't want you coming in on one day thinking I'm gonna have a management report by the end of the day***. The beginning of this turn once again evokes the use of the pronoun *I* in asserting authority over the situation ***I know that***. Simon continues to aggressively enforce power over Maneeb by stating: ***I don't want you coming in on one day thinking I'm gonna have a management report by the end of the day***. In this utterance, Simon directly addresses Maneeb's working ethic in this statement and engages in a potentially highly face threatening act (Brown and Levinson,

1987). The use of: ***I don't want you coming in*** can be considered highly authoritative and face-threatening and demonstrates a low emphasis on rapport management on Simon's part. In trying to ensure that the management report is done to a high standard, Simon jeopardises team morale. Maneeb reacts to this by assertively stating: ***No no it's no. I know***. His final use of *I know* in this utterance demonstrates a struggle for power in negotiating identities. Through his aggressive approach Simon has places himself in a higher hierarchical position and Maneeb must reassert himself as the person in charge of the management report. Simon's reaction to this: ***Right okay*** is almost dismissive of Maneeb's assertion of power to which Maneeb responds again: ***I'm not saying and one day and have to finish it in one day at all so***. The use of ***I'm not saying… at all so*** in this instance directly contests Simon's previous statements and concerns of the management report being done in one day. Simon once again dismisses Maneeb: ***Yeah yeah yeah yeah. Alright okay. No that's fine***. The potential for conflict is once again diffused by Maneeb, who interjects with laughter (Holmes and Marra, 2002), before reasserting his position: ***I said if we have one day and at least***. The use of ***I said*** here clearly indicates Maneeb's position on the matter as he does not want to surrender power to Simon. Maneeb once again evokes inclusive *we* to include other members of the group in asserting their capability on putting together the management report. Simon responds by marking hierarchical roles once again: ***Well remember. Cos you don't know if there's things you're gonna forget about meetings or anything like that so make sure you talk to us as well.*** In this statement he directly belittles Maneeb and the others capabilities by stating that they might not remember things from the meetings. He does not use the pronoun ***I*** to assert power in the end, however, his use of ***us*** highlights a clear distinction between Maneeb's group and his group. By stating that Maneeb's group should talk to them first, he once again asserts his position of power. This example indicates that pronouns can be used to indicate power and hierarchy (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006).

There are no evident displays of power struggle in the marketing meetings. As the meetings tend to employ a highly collaborative approach to group work, students rarely express overtly individual or authoritative opinions. Extract 5.11 demonstrates a mock power display through the use of ***I***:

Example 5.11: *I* **in power Marketing**

Sarah: +done. Already done this. See those tables **I've** done it.

Via: That done done.

Sarah: It's already done.

Charles: Alright. **I'll look it**. I'm **I'll look it over and make it a bit better cos**.

Sarah: **Shut your face I've got so many references in there.**

Vicky: <$OL> Team morale Charles. Team morale.

Charles: Sarah's. Sarah's is like. She's struggling to be above average. You know.

In this extract, the students have been discussing work that needs to be done. Charles brings up the methodology section and Sarah tells him that she's already done it: *See those tables I've done it.* Her us of *I've done it* emphasises ownership of her work. Charles responds by jovially stating: *Alright. I'll look it. I'm I'll look it over and make it a bit better cos.* In this utterance he intentionally uses the pronoun *I* to assert mock dominance over Sarah in highlighting that her work needs looking over. In using humour to convey a sense of mock power, Charles positions himself as the more expert member. Sarah responds to his remarks by stating: *Shut your face I've got so many references in there* jokingly reasserting her position of ownership over her work once again through the use of *I*. The humour of the situation is outlined by Vicky who mockingly berates Charles: *Team morale Charles. Team morale.* This utterance, although used in a humorous way, highlights the group's consciousness of issues of team morale and rapport management and could serve to explain the lack of outward expressions of power and authority in the group.

From the examination of the data it can be considered that both communities of practice use pronouns in very different ways. *Inclusive we* was used in both groups to convey group cohesion and solidarity in both strategic and non-strategic fashions. With regards to the pronoun *I*, this varied greatly in the data of both groups. The engineering group used this personal pronoun to express power and individualism to a high degree. The use of *I think* as a booster (Van de Mieroop, 2007), for example, was prevalent in the engineering data where prominent members were very vocal of their opinions on what the groups should do. *I* was also used to assert power and hierarchy over other members

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of the group. The marketing students did not engage in such outward projections of power, instead focusing on hedging their language in order to ensure equality and rapport. The use of *I think* in the marketing data was used as a hedging device in expressing ideas (Koester, 2006), however it did not have the same authoritative effect as in the engineering data. Approaches to leadership differed in both communities of practice. Leadership was evoked through the use of *I* in asserting power in the engineering data and conveyed a more individual working style. Whereas, the marketing students tended towards a more inclusive form of leadership by constantly evoking team cohesion through *inclusive we* forms.

This chapter has outlined the use of pronouns in the two novice communities of practice. In examining the presence of *I* and *we* in constructing group and individual identity, it can be considered that pronouns serve as indicators of joint enterprise in each community of practice. The negotiation of identity plays a fundamental role in the development of any community of practice (Wenger, 1998). The analysis of personal pronouns proved effective in demonstrating the different communicative strategies employed by both novice professional communities in negotiating identity. This was observed through the very differing use of personal pronouns in both participant groups in establishing individual and group identity. At this point in the analysis, a general perspective of the different communicative strategies present in each community can be highlighted. The marketing group display a sense of team morale and group cohesion through the use of inclusive *we* in the data. The engineers adopt a more individual working style using the pronoun *I* in areas where inclusive *we* could be considered more appropriate for evoking group identity. These approaches demonstrate the different uses of pronouns as a communicative strategy in the meetings and provide an insight into how both novice communities create and share meaning and identity.

5.4 Conclusion

The view of identity as ever-changing and dynamic applies in both the engineering and marketing communities of practice. In the data the use of *I* and *we* pronouns were seen to have a strong impact on the identity and sense of group cohesion evoked in both

communities. The use of the pronoun *I* was seen to have a considerable effect in evoking authority (Van de Mieroop, 2007) and the use of *inclusive we* outlined a sense of rapport management and group identity (McCarthy and Handford, 2004). The analysis of pronouns in the data highlighted the different communicative approaches employed by both communities of practice. The presence of both individual and collective identities can be observed in the communities and both groups display a strong sense of group identity in terms of the projects they are working on. The participant role of leader was seen to develop through the use of pronouns, albeit through different styles in both groups. This highlights the use of pronouns in negotiating identity and participant roles as participants strive to establish footing in interaction (Goffman, 1979). The focus on team roles and rapport management could be outlined as different in both communities of practice through the use of pronouns and identity. Chapter 6 delves further into the area of rapport management through analysing the presence and use of humour in both communities of practice.

Chapter 6

Humour in Rapport and Group Cohesion

6.0 Introduction

The role of humour in society has been of great interest to sociologists, linguists and psychologists alike. As an interactional feature, humour is an essential ingredient of everyday interaction and of socialisation (Boxer and Cortés-Conde, 1997: 275). It can lead to establishing the nature of an interaction and contributes to setting a tone in conversation. Humour is a dynamic process which speakers use either wittingly or unwittingly to entertain, reassure, assert power and determine social standing with others. The use of humour in workplace settings combines all of these factors and has been deemed key in creating rapport and happiness among employees (Duncan and Feisal 1989, Collison 1994, Boxer and Cortés-Conde, 1997). Humour can act both as a natural cohesive in interaction and as a marker of distance or social boundary. This chapter examines the use of humour in rapport, through analysing the different forms and rapport building functions of humour present in the data. In distinguishing between individual and collaborative uses of humour, the chapter will also deal with the social management functions of humour to highlight the presence of rapport and group cohesion. Although indepth studies have been carried out in the area of humour in the workplace (Collinson 1988; Holmes and Marra, 2002; Mullany, 2004), there is little or no research available in academic contexts and the role that humour plays in the meetings of novice professionals. One potential reason for this is the dearth of authentic data from student meetings as highlighted by Ädel (2011). This chapter on humour in the novice professional communities of practice of engineering and marketing students aims to deepen awareness and understanding of humour in rapport building dynamics.

6.1 Previous Studies

This section will outline previous literature in the area of humour and rapport. Firstly, the literature on humour in a workplace context will be discussed in order to provide a detailed introduction to the area. The use of humour in meetings will then be examined in order to contextualise the present chapter before providing an in depth discussion on humour and rapport in the community of practice.

6.1.1 Humour in workplace interaction

The form of interaction that takes place in the workplace provides a dynamic basis for sociological and linguistic studies. The constant negotiation between different individuals who would perhaps not ordinarily engage in interaction outside of the workplace provides rich and interesting data. As relationships and dynamics are constantly being negotiated, the issue of rapport in the workplace has become highly significant. The presence of rapport among work colleagues has received much attention in the past fifty years. Management literature highlights the importance of establishing rapport between management and staff and also among staff themselves (Gregory et al, 2009). Managers who use humour well are perceived by their employees as being more relationship-oriented (Decker & Rotondo, 2001). Organisations are now focusing on becoming more organic (Brooks, 2006) in order to enhance creativity and create a more dynamic workforce. In order to promote these more organic workspaces, companies have taken different approaches to encourage rapport and happiness among employees. Kodak, for example, created a 1000 square foot 'humour room' for employees to take a 'fun break', while at Sun Microsystems, April Fool's day pranks are positively encouraged (Caudron, 1992). Companies such as Google and Pixar encompass a dynamic approach to company life and encourage employees to build on their creativity through promoting extracurricular activities at work through creating a more social atmosphere at the workplace. Social theorists (Blake and Mouton, 1964; Hersey and Blanchard, 1988) argue that a happy workforce is more productive and enhances a company's profits. This is highlighted by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), who suggest that for firms, internal relationships can affect organisational advantage since these relationships are central to creating intellectual capital.

The relationship between management and employees is more than ever considered crucial to building a dynamic and content workforce. This is highlighted in the importance placed on good rapport between management and employees in many companies. This drive for promoting rapport and learning to manage appropriately is also evident in the higher education sector (Williams, 2002). More than ever, students are being encouraged to participate in team and group activities and projects at universities, not only to enhance learning skills but also to strengthen students' abilities

in areas such as team work and leadership (Ädel, 2011). These types of group-based projects provide the students with a basis to engage and interact in a model professional way and enhances learning in rapport management through developing skills in group cohesion. Establishing good rapport in a group is vital to group cohesion. It has been argued that the more cohesive a group becomes, the more effective productivity will be (Tuckman, 1965). The area of rapport is of vital importance to the present study as its presence, or lack of, underlines the dynamics and behaviour of a community of practice.

Humour can be considered a solid form of creating rapport in workplace environments. The notion that humour contributes to bonding in a group or team is highlighted in the research done on humour in the workplace (Duncan and Feisal, 1989; Collinson, 2002). Literature in the area of management highlights many communicative strategies for promoting rapport. Humour is considered a valuable feature of interaction in the management sector, underlined by the rise of humour consultants for companies in the US (Collinson, 2002). Dealing directly with the issue of humour in workplace interaction, Duncan and Feisal (1989), state that humour acts as a lubricant that keeps the machinery of interaction running smoothly. They argue that jocularity is a pervasive feature of organisational life, being present 'virtually everywhere that people congregate to earn a living' (1989: 19).

Linguistic studies highlight the relevance of rapport and humour in interaction. Tannen (1990: 77) describes the language of rapport as a way of establishing connections and negotiating relationships in which the emphasis is placed on displaying similarities and matching experiences. Ädel states that rapport building is likely to exhibit regular patterns not only in sequencing, but also in linguistic form (2011: 2946). An example of these regular patterns can be found in the shared repertoire of a community of practice. The ritual habits of communities of practice can be analysed linguistically and the presence of rapport can be examined through reoccurring patterns in conversation. According to Jakobson (1990: 75), the phatic function of rapport may be displayed by a profuse exchange of ritualized formulas. Humour has been recognised as a pragmatic device to fulfil many communicative purposes across disciplines. Studies on humour highlight its relevance in promoting leadership and team building emphasising its

importance in group cohesion and power structures (Rodriguez and Collinson, 1995; Romero and Cruthirds 2006; Cooper, 2008). Humour is a dynamic and social feature of interaction. Collinson (1992) highlights the functionalist influence of humour in the workplace and addresses the reproduction of humour through power relations and of management control through joking relations. He states that, far from the traditional depiction of bureaucratic organisations, workplaces are frequently characterised by multiple forms of humour and laughter. His study on the use of humour on the shop floor demonstrates the relevance of humour in the workplace as a means of social interaction.

Through analysing the presence of humour in interaction, it can be determined that it frequently acts as an important communicative strategy. Studies on humour in work based interaction highlight its role in group dynamics, not only as a mechanism to strengthen ties, but also as a motivational tool, functioning as a means of repair in conversation and also as a means of establishing group roles and identity (Holmes and Marra, 2002; Terrion and Ashforth, 2002; Koester, 2006). Holmes states that humour can function to construct and sustain relationships which contribute to workplace harmony by expressing solidarity (2002: 1687). This is linked to Duncan and Feisal's view that joking behaviour is a universal response to the need which most people feel to be a part of the group (1989: 29). This highlights the role of humour in rapport as it can act as a solidifying feature in groups and teams leading to greater cohesion. Barsoux (1993) suggests that humour can make managers more approachable and provides a discrete way of sanctioning deviant behaviour whilst disarming aggressors. It may also help to defuse tense situations, reduce stress, make difficult messages more agreeable and build teamwork (Kiechel, 1986). In on-going research into workplace interaction in New Zealand, Holmes and Marra (2002) analyse the presence of humour in the natural interactions of employees from different organisational backgrounds. This research has paved the way for humour research in the area of workplace interaction and provides detailed examples of how to analyse humour data through a mixed method approach. The use of humour in groups and meetings will be highlighted in the next section.

6.1.2 Humour in meetings and group cohesion

According to Cooper (2008), humour dynamics can facilitate or detract from the formation of new relationships, as well as strengthen or destroy existing relationships (p. 1088). This implies that the presence of humour in the interactions of a specific group can highlight the inner working dynamics and level of rapport and cohesion amongst members. Humour has been examined in groups in the workplace, through data based on workplace meetings (Holmes and Marra 2002; Vaughan 2007; Handford, 2010) and general group interactions (Holmes, 2002; Terrion and Ashforth 2002; Davies 2003). Duncan et al (1990) note that research on humour in organisations has concentrated on four major issues: group cohesiveness, communication in group settings, organisational culture and leadership, power and status relationships. The variety of functions that humour plays in group work interaction can vary from jocular rapport building humour to power related direct humour, as although humour is related to solidifying relationships (Holmes and Marra, 2002), joking is often found to be the prerogative of those in authority (Goffman, 1961). The delicate balance of humour use in specific groups is highlighted by Holmes and Marra (2002). In their research on workplace meetings, humour is proven to act as a solidifying feature within a community of practice when used in a participative way, however, it can also symbolise power structures within a particular community of practice when used more individually (*ibid*). The use of humour in exercising power can create tension in groups when performed by a speaker who considers himself/herself to be superior to the rest of the group. Duncan and Feisal (1989: 24) found that a joke told about an employee is more offensive to others if it is told by the arrogant executive than if it is initiated by any other member of the group. This highlights the impact that the 'in group' has on the use of humour as the speakers' role in the group determines how humorous utterances are received by the rest of the group. This is relevant in the use of teasing to create rapport in a group. Humour and joking are appropriate in cases where the joke is made by a respected member of the group. According to Duncan and Feisal (1989):

> When employees are targeted as butts by managers whom they neither like (the arrogant executive) nor respect (the benign bureaucrat), they take offense. But when a friend and respected peer jokes about them (the solid citizen), the joke is considered to be a compliment. Trust, respect, and friendship determine a group member's position in the pattern of joking behaviour far more than official status does. In short, joking plays a greater role in reflecting and illustrating an individual's status than it does in determining it.   (Duncan and Feisal, 1989: 29)

This discussion of humour in the workplace serves to illustrate the intricate power processes at play within a group or community of practice. According to Boxer and Cortés-Conde (2007: 283), bonding with participants against others perceived as different, allows us to become a unit without having to define what we are for each other. They state that what makes us part of an in-group is having a common 'out group' (p. 283). This use of humour in distinguishing speaker groups can also serve to highlight the dominant speakers within a particular group or community of practice. The popularity of the speaker within the group determines how much humour is tolerated and encouraged by the other speakers. If the more dominant or popular members of the community of practice use humour as a frequent form of expression in creating rapport, humour then becomes a solid feature of maintaining cohesion within that group.

The use of humour as a solidifying feature in groups has also been observed by Holmes and Marra (2002), who state that the main benefit of humour in group interaction is that it increases opportunities to develop rapport and strengthen group bonds leading to cohesion. The benefit of the use of humour in intercultural meetings is discussed by Handford (2010), who argues that although humour is regarded as highly culture specific, it can also allow for the successful convergence between international participants. This highlights that the use of humour in temporary situations or groups can be highly effective in creating rapport. In studies on the behaviour of temporary groups, Terrion and Ashforth (2002) found that humour helps to foster group identity and cohesion. Through their observation and interviews of Canadian police officers during a six-week executive development course, the researchers studied how putdown humour helped a temporary group become a cohesive unit, finding that the increasing use of such humour signalled growing trust and solidarity as the group progressed through various stages. The presence of humour in meetings can signal the end of a meeting (Handford, 2010) or the presence of a bond between participants (Boxer et al 2007). Koester (2006) examines the link between relational talk and humorous episodes in workplace interaction. She highlights that humour can serve as a bonding feature in workplace settings. Humour can also serve to alleviate tension or to hedge an otherwise serious request. When examining the use of humour in groups to develop rapport and group cohesion, it is important to consider the relationship and dynamic of the participants in the group in order to understand the humorous patterns present. This

chapter will discuss the use of humour in the community of practice and examine the use of collaborative humour and individual humour respectively in order to determine the role of humour and its importance in creating cohesion in the two participant groups.

6.1.3 Humour and the Community of Practice

The relationship between humour and the community of practice has been examined by Holmes and Marra (2002) in their research on humour in the workplace. They define the process of becoming a member of the community of practice:

> The process of becoming a member of a community of practice, as typically happens when we join a new workplace, involves learning the appropriate behaviours, including verbal behaviours, that characterise this group and distinguish it from others.

> (Holmes and Marra, 2002: 1685)

The community of practice framework provides a basis for analysing how group dynamics differ in varying contexts. Research on workplace interaction has aimed to uncover the dynamics present in different industries. This provides a relevant framework from which to base the students' interactions. There has not been a model specifically designed to analyse students in this type of work position that does not draw on the notion of expert novice relationships. Learning to become a part of a community of practice involves learning to adhere to the norms and values of that community. Attardo (1994: 319) states that social and cultural norms have great significance in deciding where and when it is appropriate to joke. Different communities of practice use different levels of humour in interaction. An examination of the use of the humour present can indicate the different rituals and routines within different communities.

The community of practice theory demonstrates the benefits of establishing positive relations within a group. A group becomes a community of practice when mutual engagement, shared repertoire and joint enterprise are met (Wenger, 1998). The role of humour in achieving shared repertoire is evident where it becomes part of the ritual and routine of a particular community of practice. In looking at the role of humour in organisations, Holmes and Marra (2002) determined that a significant amount of humour in a community of practice reflected the organisational culture of a particular

environment. They examined the use of humour in achieving an interactional need in members of different communities of practice and found that humour was significant in creating rapport and cohesion. Communities that used higher levels of humour were deemed to be more interactional and cohesive whereas communities where humour was lower tended to be more transactional. According to Holmes and Marra (2002), humour is a manifestation of the discourse of the community of practice. They state that learning to belong, involves learning whether and how humour is used in the verbal practices of the community of practice (*ibid*).

The notion that communities of practice establish shared repertoire can be examined through the use of humour where participants draw on shared knowledge and relationship bonds in order to create humorous sequences. People need to feel that they are accepted members of the groups to which they belong, and joking is effective in satisfying this need (Duncan and Feisal, 1990). According to Mulkay et al (1993), humour is an important emotion, the study of which is a valuable way of exploring recurrent, structurally-produced organizational problems. The presence of humour in the community of practice can highlight group bonds and enhanced relationships. However, the lack of humour in the community of practice can also indicate the lack of rapport and cohesion amongst members. Tuckman (1965) argues that group members need to discover what interpersonal behaviours are acceptable, to express their individuality and resist the incipient group structure, and ultimately, to accept the group and the idiosyncrasies of individual members. The lack of humour in a community of practice may be indicative of the working style of a particular community. However, if the presence of humour is highly individual and used in contexts that do not contribute to rapport, the lack of humour can highlight a lack of rapport or power struggle within the group. According to Tannen (1984), humour makes one's presence felt. As referenced in the previous section, this can be both positive and negative within a community as depending on the popularity or status of the speaker in the group. Putdowns thus become a social marker of status and acceptance (Terrion and Ashforth, 2002). Gruner (1997), states that the most successful disparaging jokes are told by and for people of the in-group (p. 78). This indicates the level of power associated with performing humour in the group. This notion of humour and power will be discussed in the next section on the functions of humour. This chapter focuses on the issue of humour in

building rapport and group cohesion in the community of practice. This section deals with breaking down the different functional elements of humour that contribute to this.

6.2. Functions of Humour

The functions of humour are varied and cover many communicative purposes (Attardo, 1994). In his work on the linguistic theories of humour, Attardo (1994) defines the many different characteristics of humour in different contexts. The definitions that apply to this particular chapter lie in the function of humour in social management. Attardo applies the social management function of humour in all the cases where humour is used as a tool to facilitate in-group interaction and strengthen in-group bonding or out group rejection (1994: 323). The different elements of humour which contribute to this social management function are: Social Control, Conveying Social Norms, Ingratiation, Discourse management, Cleverness, Social Play and Repair (Attardo, 1994). These social functions of humour account for its use in a variety of different contexts and are mainly linked to rapport building in interaction. This in-group interaction provides insight into the use of humour in the community of practice as it defines speaker roles through their use of humour. Tannen (1990) shows that the use of humour by a speaker affects the overall communicative image presented to other speakers. These different functions of humour in social management serve to explain the conversational dynamics and ritual linguistic processes in the community of practice. Functions that are particularly relevant to this study are humour in ingratiation, humour in repair, humour in social play and humour in social control.

Humour in Ingratiation

Humour in ingratiation involves instances where the speaker tries to garner attention and foster liking (Long and Graesser, 1988: 54). This highlights the role of humour in asserting popularity. In the study by Tenrrion and Ashforth (2002), they found that participants were more likely to engage in humour and teasing with certain members of the group over others, highlighting humour as very much an in-group activity.

Humour in Social Play

The use of humour in social play is also relevant to both communities of practice in the study as it deals with the role of humour in strengthening social bonds and fostering group cohesiveness (Long and Graesser, 1988: 57). This function focuses on the use of humour in building rapport at work, through engaging participants in relaxed jovial interaction.

Humour in Repair

The function of humour in repair is extremely relevant in work-based interaction. As speakers tend to engage in more stressful interactions in these contexts, the use of humour to lighten the tone or to convey a message in a softer manner proves highly beneficial. As humorous communication is retractable the speaker may back off from his/ her utterance without the loss of face (Brown and Levinson, 1978: 229). Attardo (1994: 324) defines humour in repair as the defusing of unpleasant situations through humorous comments, connoting positive attitude, in-group bonding, and levity.

Humour in Social Control

Finally, the use of humour in social control is also relevant to the area of work based interaction as power dynamics are played out. The use of humour by in-group members insinuates the presence of a leader in this type of interaction. Whether that leader be officially positioned in power or chosen by the group, the use of humour by this individual will play an important role in defining the social norms of the group. Although these functions of humour are mainly concerned with contributing to rapport building and social cohesion, the function of humour in social control is key in the study of work-based interaction.

The functions of humour in social management serve to highlight the extent to which humour affects the rapport building process of a group of community of practice. As humour can greatly influence the speakers' attitudes towards each other through

inclusive and exclusive humour (Attardo, 1994), it serves as a strong basis for analysis in uncovering the routines and linguistic rituals of a community of practice. In highlighting the type of interaction that takes place in a community of practice through its use of humour, the personal dynamic of the speakers can also be gauged, providing a wide scope of the presence or lack of cohesion amongst community members.

Humour and Identity

The importance of considering humour in power relationships is evident from previous research. Humour is often used in identity construction at meetings, highlighting the leader in the group. It is important to consider any patterns where a single speaker opens and closes a humorous sequence as it indicates a sense of power over the other members in the group. This is seen to be true in studies on the workplace where members of management open and close humorous sequences (Holmes and Marra 2002; Handford 2010). This is emphasised by Morreall (1991), who states that many commentators take a functionalist approach to humour and advocate that managers use humour strategically to promote organisational goals. Collinson (2002: 279) argues that humour frequently expresses aggression and hostility; this reinforces the issue of humour and power. Identity display in humour has also been examined by Boxer and Cortés-Conde (2007: 288). They state that strangers can present themselves in a certain way by joking to show their highly developed sense of irony. It tells the hearer that the speaker has a sense of wit and thus has the potential of functioning to create a momentary bond. This use of humour in power to develop rapport is crucial to understanding the complexity of competitive humour. Teasing and banter may be a source of confusion for some participants in a community of practice, however, for those who are part of the in-group this form of jocularity provides an important basis for rapport building interaction. Boxer and Cortés-Conde (2007) examine the role of positive teasing in interaction. They assert that teasing requires that the conversational joking be directed at someone present. Bradney (1957) highlights that those who joke readily are obviously very much more popular than those who do not (p. 186). Boxer et al (2007: 279) state that the person being teased is either the addressee or a hearer and becomes the centre of an interaction in which a humorous frame has been set up. This stance on the use of humour and the popularity of those who engage in it has also been examined by Terrion

and Ashforth (2002). They found that participants would only engage in put down humour in bonding with certain members of the group. Those who were not chosen as targets for put down humour included:

> (1) a person with attributes that are potentially stigmatizing (e.g. physically unattractive); (2) a person who is not liked; (3) a loner or outsider; and (4) a person who is related to someone else in the group.
>
> (Terrion and Ashforth, 2002: 74)

This classification of participants who do not qualify for teasing or put down humour enhances the notion that humour is very much associated with the in-group or more popular members of a particular community. According to Terrion and Ashforth (2002), this list of 'untouchables' explains why popular and well-respected candidates were regarded as safe targets in their study. In order to be a target of humorous put downs the participant must be a strong member of the group who is liked by others. Otherwise, the use of humour may be considered as an attack or even distasteful by other group members. This use of humour to establish a hierarchy or in-group in the community of practice reinforces the idea that humour is of core importance in a group's identity due to its obvious cohesive effects.

6.3 Individual vs Collaborative Humour

In order to distinguish between constructive humour in creating rapport and humour in more hierarchical areas such as social control, the humorous sequences found in the marketing and engineering data for this study were analysed in terms of collaborative and individual utterances. For the purpose of the analysis, collaborative instances of humour are defined as: Instances where speakers work together in an effort to 'do collegiality' (Wenger, 1998) through humour. According to Holmes and Marra (2002) adopting this style of collaboration in construction humorous sequences, 'participants tend to integrate contributions tightly, using devices such as echoing, mirroring or completing another's utterance.' (p. 1688). Example 6.1 outlines an example of collaborative humour:

Example 6.1

Vicky: <coll> <R> Obviously. You know what you need to do so j= just please.
Charles: It's fine. If you don= if you don't leave we'll like.

Sarah: Piss off. <$E> Laughs </$E>

Jairul: Why did you guys like chasing me away.

Charles: We're pretty good erm I'll text you wh= if= I'll text you if we leave.

In this example of collaborative humour, the marketing students tease a group member for leaving early. What begins as a humorous utterance by Speaker 3 ***Obviously. You know what you need to do so j= just please*** is taken up by the other speakers in a collaborative sequence of 'friendly banter' (Attardo, 1994). The utterances are stated through the use of ironic intonation and are aimed at teasing Speaker 5 as he feels guilty for leaving. By engaging in mock annoyance that he has to go, the group encourage him to leave by collaboratively highlighting their indifference through irony.

In this analysis, Individual instances of humour were categorised as: Instances where speakers uttered one liners in single turns. One liners can be considered as one line jokes characterised by brevity (Attardo, 1994). These instances of humour were categorised as collaborative where the speakers worked together with a sequence of one liners to create a humorous sequence albeit in a competitive manner. According to Holmes and Marra (2002: 1688-9), individual instances of humour occur where there are extended sequences of humour involving a series of loosely semantically linked one-off quips or witty one liners. For the purpose of this study, one liners that did not occur in a sequence were also considered as individual instances of humour. Example 6.2 demonstrates and example of individual humour:

Example 6.2

Charles: <$OL> What are you doing? I know the sound of your own voice is so horrible   is
           i=. My voice is really bad **<ind> y= you guys all know that already.** Right.

In this example, the marketing students have been discussing the sound of their own voices on the recording for their focus groups. The leader of the group, Speaker 1 states that his voice is really bad, before humorously stating **y= you guys all know that already.** This individual use of humour serves in self-mockery (Attardo, 1994) as the speaker insinuates that the group have to listen to his 'horrible' voice. The use of individual and collaborative instances of humour serve to fulfil different communicative functions in the data, which will be demonstrated in the analysis.

6.3.1 Data and Method

In order to quantify the different levels of collaborative and individual instances of humour in the data, a definition of what constitutes humour had to be reached. When theorising the appropriate method to measure humorous instances, it could be considered that measuring laughter would be a clear indicator of humour. However many previous linguistic studies contest this point of view. Due to the complexity of functions which laughter fulfils in discourse, it cannot solely be treated as indicating an instance of humour (Attardo, 1994). According to Jefferson (1976), laughter is used to indicate many linguistic characteristics including termination of talk, hedging an uncomfortable situation, covering delicate passages and showing understanding. In order to come to a more coherent understanding of humour, humorous instances were not measured by quantifying laughter. Instead Holmes and Marra's definition of humour in conversation was followed:

> Humorous utterances are defined as those which are identified by the analyst, on the basis of paralinguistic, prosodic, and discoursal clues, as intended by the speaker(s) to be amusing and perceived to be amusing by at least some participants.

> (Holmes and Marra, 2002: 1693)

This meant that instances of humour were considered through examining many different discoursal clues in the data including the context of the conversation, the speaker's intonation and an overall sense of humorous intent in the utterances. As humour is a subjective area, the use of this particular framework for analysis assured that the humour tagged in the data met the same requirements across all recordings. The data was tagged in order to address the issue of humour in the groups' interactions. The tagging process was carried out through extensive listening of the data in order to ascertain humours utterances. The main forms of humour taken into consideration for tagging the data were individual and collaborative instances of humour as defined in the previous section.

In order to analyse the data, both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis were used. The corpus software *Wordsmith Tools* (Scott, 1999) was employed to find and

quantify the tagged instances of humour in both data sets. All of the instances of individual and collaborative humour were categorised and quantified in order to construct a comparative analysis. More sections of data were then extracted in order to construct a more qualitative analysis. These examples provide an insight into the inner workings of each community of practice and the role of humour in establishing group cohesion.

6.4 Results and Analysis

The perspective that communities of practice establish different norms and behavioural practices through the use of a variety of linguistic features, shared knowledge and other interactional features is a focal point of this chapter. Table 6.1 presents the level of humour in both communities of practice.

Figure 6.1 Instances of Humour
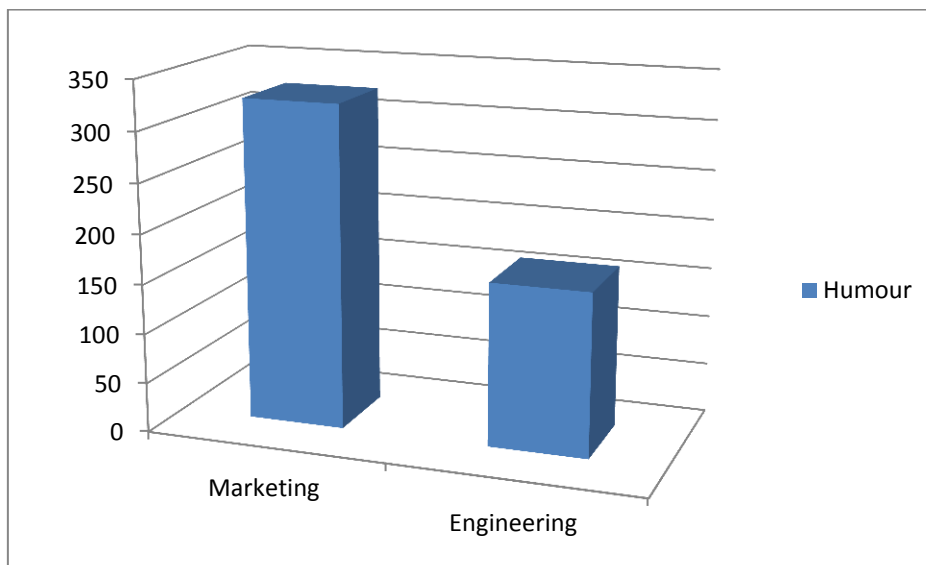
The different emphasis placed on humour by both groups in table 6.1, highlights its very unique role in the interactions of both novice communities. The difference in the amount of overall humour is considerable occurring a total of 325 times in the Marketing data and 139 times in the Engineering data, all within the same amount of recorded data. This highlights the more frequent usage of humour in the marketing community. The decision to tag humour using discoursal features rather than measuring

laughter proved valid as the instances of laughter in the data did not reflect the total amount of humour. This is illustrated in figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2: Instances of Humour and Laughter
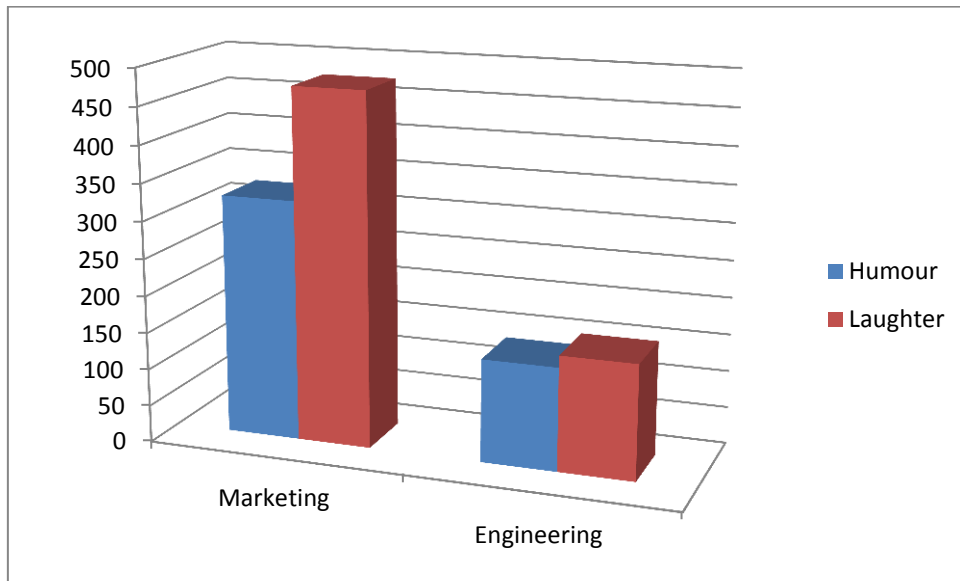
When quantifying laughter, the results showed that laughter occurred 155 times in the engineering data while 475 instances of laughter occurred in the marketing data. This demonstrates the fact that laughter is not always an indicator of humour as the amount of laughter is more frequent that the amount of humour in both communities of practice. The higher level of laughter in the marketing data (475 instances) suggests that it can be associated with the high level of humour in the meetings. However, only 325 instances of humour were found, indicating that laughter is used for purposes outside of humour (Jefferson, 1976). A more in depth view of the form of humour present in the data can be seen in figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3: Individual and Collaborative Humour
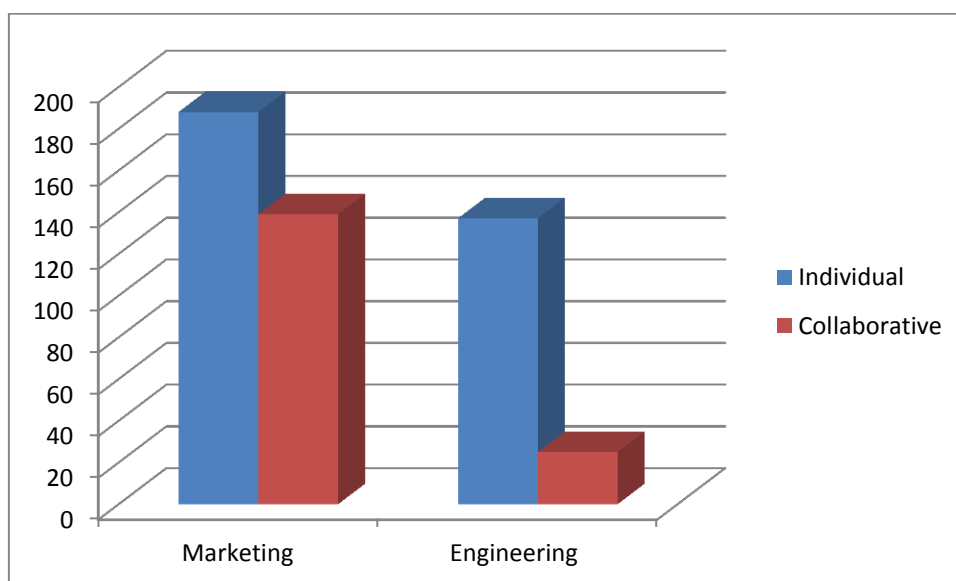
Figure 6.3 shows that the use of individual humour is highest in both groups indicating a sense of competitiveness albeit friendly, perhaps due to the work-focused dynamics in both groups. The presence of collaborative humour (sequences of humour where speakers work together to contribute to extended humorous utterances), however, varies greatly between the engineering and marketing group. Collaborative instances were found 139 times in the marketing data whereas only 25 occurred in the engineering data. These figures display striking differences in the usage of humour in the two communities of practice. It would appear, from a quantitative perspective, that humour plays an important role in the inner workings, particularly of the marketing community. The use of collaborative humour in particular is very high in comparison to that of the engineers. The marketing students are constantly reminded of the importance of generating rapport in team work and improving interpersonal skills. As humour has been attributed with encouraging rapport and solidifying relationships, its high frequency in the data suggests that the marketing students are in fact a solid team. The engineering students, on the other hand, engage far less in humorous sequences. Most of the humorous utterances in the engineering data are individual and occur mid turn. The collaborative sequences that do occur are limited and tend to happen at the end of meetings or in the last meeting when deadline pressure is lower. This corresponds with data taken from business meetings where the humorous instances occurred at the close of meetings indicating the end of formalities (Handford, 2010).

The high level of collaborative humour in the marketing data highlights the importance of engaging in banter and humour in their community of practice. Many of the individual instances of humour led to collaborative efforts, where most speakers in the group contributed to long sequences of humour involving elements of shared knowledge and recurring topics. The few collaborative sequences in the engineering data highlighted an effort towards building rapport however they mainly occurred at the end of the meetings and in the last project meeting when deadline pressure had eased.

6.4.1. Humour in social play

The social management functions as defined by Attardo (1994) are highly prevalent in the use of humour in both groups. Humour is sometimes used as a kind of social play in the data, in that it strengthens bonds and fosters cohesiveness (Graesser and Long, 1989). The presence of collaborative humour in the community of practice indicates a high level of rapport among the students. As previously mentioned, the humour patterns in the marketing data differ greatly from those in the engineering data. The high level of humour in the marketing discourse could be associated with the high level of relational talk that occurs in the meetings. The marketing students are very focused on social life and image (see Chapter 7 on topic). When a humorous utterance is made by an individual, other members collaborate and sustain the humour in the discourse. There is however, a high level of group cohesion in this particular community of practice, which can be observed through their ritual use of humour in their meetings. The students tend to discuss many social topics outside of work-based interaction and many of these topic shifts occur through the use of jovial language and result in humorous sequences.

Another explanation for the high level of humour in this group is the importance placed on forming part of the in-group in the community. Although all members engage in humour at different stages in the data, three core members initiate and perform most of the humorous sequences, one of which could be considered the leader of the group. Two female members in particular form a strong bond within the group. They can be disruptive to work sequences and frequently introduce relational talk in serious parts of the meetings (see Chapter 7). However, although they disrupt the flow of the meeting,

they still form a core part of the group's identity. They are important to the community's focus on image and tend to depict an image that a blasé attitude to work is acceptable and 'cool' in the community. Their behaviour is accepted and entertained, to a degree, as other members join in. The persistent use of humour in the data exemplifies Terrion and Ashforth's (2002) observations that humour in terms of mutual put downs increased as group members developed strong bonds and trust. Interestingly, the international students seem more reluctant to condone this behaviour and tend to be more focused on the assignment. This could be due to the cultural boundaries of humour and the issue of humour being used exclusively among members of the in-group (Cutting, 2002). Example 6.3 outlines humour in social play in the marketing data. Here the students veer off work related topics and engage in a humorous sequence.

Example 6.3 Humour in Social Play Marketing

Charles: <ind> I think you look more like Aladdin.

Sarah: <$E> laughs </$E>

Nita: <$E> laughs </$E>.

Vicky: <coll> You look more like Jafar.

Charles: Jafar?.

Sarah: <$E> laughs </$E>

Vicky: <$E> laughs </$E>

Charles: You look like the little monkey.

Sarah: Yeah I was just going to say that. Damn it.

Nita: <$E> laugh </$E>.

Vicky: <$E> laughs </$E>. He was annoyed with the parrot. You are actually the parrot cos
            you won't shut up.

In this extract, the students discuss what *Disney* character they would be. One of the female contributors has been compared to *Pocahontas*[4] by another female contributor. As this can be taken as a compliment the male contributor in the group teases her and states ***I think you look more like Aladdin.*** Teasing ensues between both speakers and a sort of competition for the best humorous phrase is evident. Sarah, realising that she has been slow to make a joke states: ***Yeah I was just going to say that. Damn it*** the

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[4] In this extract, Pocahontas is a Native Indian Disney Princess considered beautiful by the group members.

importance of being able to engage in humorous exchange is evident in the extract. There are two international students present in the meeting but they do not contribute in the fast-paced teasing that occurs between the other members. They do, however, express their solidarity with the group through laughter. This highlights the notion that humour is culturally bound, emphasising that it may not be as easy for non-native speakers to keep up with the teasing pace of the native students (Davies, 2003). This sequence demonstrates the rapport and bond that exists between the group members. They are able to, and in fact expected, to partake in teasing and there is a sense of pride associated with the contributors of witty exchanges.

One of the few collaborative humorous sequences that occurs in the engineering data is found where the students are distracted from work by a bag of sweets given to them by the researcher. As it is one of the final meetings, the students are more relaxed than previous meetings and concentrate on organising a PowerPoint presentation. The interruption to work discourse is an unusual instance in the engineering data.

Example 6.4 Humour in Social Play Engineering

Simon: <coll> <$OL> Fine it's mine she won't <$=> she won't </$= > know.

Tim: <$OL> She won't know.

Charles: <$OL> She won't know.

<$M>   <$E> Laughter </$E>

Pete: The microphone knows.

Simon: Hm?

Pete: The microphone knows.

<$M>   <$E> Laughter </$E>

Tim: Just say thank you to Tania it's alright.

Simon: Pete said that.

<$M>   <$E> Laughter </$E>

Tim: There's no video you can't see it. <$E> Laughs </$E>

Simon: I am Pete.

<$M>   <$E> Laughter </$E>

Here the male engineers collaborate in a humorous sequence as one member decides to eat the last sweet which was meant for his absent female team member. In an exaggerated attempt to steal the sweet the others joke stating *the microphone will know.* The students proceed to laugh at the presence of the recording device and joke about tricking the machine so that the person stealing the sweet will not be recognised. The mood is light in this section of data and the engineers are jovial and relaxed. The presence of humour in this instance highlights its value in easing tension and creating a lighter mood, a rarity in other recordings from the engineer meetings which are usually very focused and work oriented. Although the sense of rapport is present in this extract, Tim's statement of *just say thanks to Tania it's alright* indicates a sense of leadership in the groups as he decides the adequate action that should be undertaken in this circumstance.

6.4.2 Humour in Ingratiation

In the area of ingratiation the speaker tries to garner attention and 'foster liking' (Long and Graesser, 1988: 54). In extract 6.5, James tries to get the group's attention by pretending to be a wind farm.

Example 6.5 Humour in Ingratiation Engineering

William: <$OL> I like the idea of the animation like you could <$=> you could </$= > do it as zoomed in and then you zoom out at each stage and then you say look this is our wind farm <->.

Tim: Yeah.

Simon: <ind> <$OL> <$E> Blows pretending to be wind </$E>

Maneeb: <$OL> I I I I b= I personally think we should maybe spe=.

Simon: <ind> <$OL> **This is our wind farm**.

<$M>   <$E> Laughter </$E>

In this extract the engineers are mid-discussion on a model they can use to display their wind turbines. Simon interrupts the conversation with a humorous utterance which is not immediately taken up by the group. When he reinforces the humour by adding a second utterance ***This is our wind farm***, his efforts are marked by the groups laughter. The use of humour in this case can be considered as highly individual, seeking approval from the group. The speaker is trying to bring a sense of lightness to the conversation.

As with many of the humorous utterances in the engineering data, this sample is directly linked to the work being performed, unlike the marketing students where most utterances are based on social and personal topics (see Chapter 7 on topic).

Ingratiation in the marketing data is common through the use of humour in cleverness by the participants. The three core contributors to humour in this community of practice engage in frequent jocular abuse with each other, heightening rapport and creating a solid bond between the speakers.

Example 6.6 Humour in Ingratiation Marketing

Vicky: <ind> Exciting that woman. I'll never forgive my mother for one year on my birthday she made me pork chops and hate pork chops. Never forgive her for that.

Sarah: <ind> <$OL> Ooh. Controversial pork chops eh?

Charles: <ind> Did you make a status? "OMG pork chops. Ugh. Ew. Unhappy face."

Vicky: <$E> laugh </$E> I hate you Charles. <$E> laugh </$E>. You just encourage him.

In this extract the students are discussing food. Vicky emphasises her dislike of pork chops stating that she'll never forgive her mother for making her pork chops on her birthday. This humorous utterance is not followed by laughter but by a sequence of humour utterances by her peers. There is a sense of competitiveness in the sequence as the other members engage in a short sequence of witty comments. These witty one liners are characteristic of competitive humour (Holmes and Marra, 2002). Charles refers to the group's shared knowledge by asking if Vicky made a status[5] about the pork chops. This use of shared knowledge to highlight his previous teasing of Vicky's use of Facebook updates indicates the positive response received to his earlier jokes. Vicky responds by laughing and expressing mock hatred for Charles, *<$E> laugh </$E> I hate you Charles.* It is common for these three participants to engage in a sense of competitive humour in the data and they play on shared knowledge to enhance teasing. Example 6.7 demonstrates the presence of humour in ingratiation through a sequence of joking by the marketing students. In this example, the students engage in what appears to be a canned joke competition.

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[5] The social networking site Facebook includes a status bar which allows members to share their activities, mood and personal opinions.

Example 6.7 Humour in Ingratiation Marketing 2

Charles: What do gay horses eat?

Sarah: <$E> laugh </$E> I know <$E> laughs </$E>.

Vicky: Hey.

Vicky: <$E> laugh </$E>. I'm using that one again. Like that one.

Chares: Good isn't it?

Sarah: <$E> laughs </$E> I'm shaking.

Vicky: I made another one up but I can't. Oh. Um.

Charles: You made another one up?

Vicky: Where do monks go when they're tired? Tibet. <$E> laugh </$E>.

Sarah: <$E> tut </$E> aaw you made that one up too <$E> laugh </$E>.

Charles: That's really good.

Vicky: Thank you.

Charles: That took me a while to get it though. Like three seconds. Tibet.

Vicky: Instead of "to bed" "Tibet".

Here the speakers tell each other jokes they claim to have made up in order to impress each other in displays of cleverness and wit. This highlights the importance of humorous exchange in this community of practice as the speakers take great pride in being funny, a feature which also contributes to gaining status in the group.

The high level of humour in ingratiation in the marketing data suggests a need to be accepted and valued by the other members in the group. This corresponds with Duncan and Feisal's (1990) view that humour encourages a sense of belonging in the group. This sense of belonging is highly important in the marketing community, which can be seen in the data through their use of relational talk, emphasis on social topics and humorous sequences while working.

6.4.3 Humour in Social Control

The use of humour in conveying leadership can be found in both communities of practice. In the marketing group the main team player throughout the project meetings tends to initiate sequences of relational talk where many humorous instances occur. Although he initiates the sequence, he is also the one to end the sequence, bringing the other students back to the reality of work. An example of this is demonstrated in example 6.8. In this example, Charles has been teasing Vicky about her Facebook status updates.

Example 6.8 Humour in Social Control Marketing

Vicky: I actually hate you. I <$E> laughs </$E>.

Charles: Alright sorry let's crack on.

Sarah: Oh curse you oh that was not.

Charles: <$E> laughs </$E> Right sorry come on. Let's crack on. Come on you've gotta look back and think "Oh my god cringe did I write that?" Which you just have done so okay we <$X> y'know | you know </$X> that's enough.

Vicky: <$OL> <$E> laughs </$E>. It won't stop me.

Charles: That's enough. That's enough name and shame for today.

This extract highlights that although Charles has initiated a sequence of collaborative humour through teasing Vicky, he is also the speaker to terminate the humorous sequence. This demonstrates his role as group leader as he decides when the group members need to get back to work. He concludes the humorous sequence by stating ***That's enough. That's enough name and shame for today.*** In this utterance, Charles not only concludes the humour but also addresses the fact that he has been teasing Vicky: ***name and shame.*** Through this act he demonstrates his focus on group rapport as he acknowledges that Vicky has been the target of the jokes. This also demonstrates Vicky's status as a popular member of the group as she has been the target of friendly humour (Terrion and Ashforth, 2002).

The engineers do not engage in humour in the same way. The use of humour to display power can be found to occur when speakers use it mid-turn, often not waiting for a

response from the others present at the meeting. In this case, humour can be used to express assertiveness or display power. Extract 6.6 provides an example of this:

Example 6.9 Humour in Social Control Engineering

Tim: <$OL> **I'll I will <$E> Laughs </$E> I plan work during my holiday.** Um this is eh M= my concern is I read slowly my biggest concern and I need time to read erm and I I think I don't know if you all plan to read everybody else's part of the report that's the other thing. I plan to read everybody else's part of the report it's going to be a three or four hundred page report+

In this extract, the speaker is a key contributor in the group. In asserting the importance of meeting the group's deadline, he plays on his own work plan to highlight his dedication to the project. He uses humour at the start of the turn as a strategy to draw his superiority in commitment stating his willing to sacrifice his holiday in order to work on the project. The rest of the turn continues in a more serious tone where he states that he is planning to read everybody else's part of the report. By insinuating that the other speakers should work through their holiday too, he demonstrates his perceived leadership attitude and focus through trying to establish a norm of discipline regarding deadlines in the community.

6.4.4 Humour in Repair

The higher level of humour in repair in the engineering data symbolises the speakers' capacity to hedge uncomfortable situations or difficult messages. This is also true in the marketing data. Certain participants use humour when delegating tasks in order not to appear controlling in particular situations. The use of humour in repair to defuse an uncomfortable situation is used more in the engineering group than the marketing group. Example 6.10 from the engineering data demonstrates the use of humour in alleviating a tense situation.

Example 6.10 Humour in Repair Engineering

Maneeb: **<ind> <$E> Laughing </$E> You've scared everybody nobody <$E> Laughs </$E> nobody wants to say I'm gonna be one week. <$E> Laughs </$E>**

Tim: <$E> Frustrated breathing </$E> No I'm s= I'm just saying it's i= the reason we put deadlines in there is to meet them not to just kind of go <$E> Sharp exhale of breath </$E> say oh but if you because I know you.

This extract presents the aftermath of a serious moment of conflict between two potential leaders in the engineering community of practice (see Chapter 8 on Conflict). After a very direct situation of conflict between these two main contributors over meeting deadlines, the other members are asked to state when they will meet the deadline. In an evident attempt to make light of the situation, Maneeb directly accuses Tim, who initiated the conflict, of having scared everybody out of talking **You've scared everybody.** The humorous manner in which he states this, however, leads to relieving the situation slightly as he acknowledges the obvious tension. If he had stated this point in a non-humorous fashion, it could have potentially led to further conflict. However, as the intonation and wording is adjusted in a humorous way, the speaker who has created the tension must assume some responsibility for his approach. This approach to diffusing conflict through humour can be linked to Mulkay's (1983) cited in Attardo (1994: 328) statement that humorous discourse carries less responsibility for the speaker in the sense that its eventual serious content can always be denied. The tension in the situation can be clearly observed through Tim's frustration as he tries to recover stating 'I'm just saying'. As Maneeb has used humour to address the tension in the room, he also forces Tim to acknowledge his approach and defend his stance on the issue of deadlines. The retractability of humour is important in this sequence as the speaker can convey a serious message to the instigator of the conflict without running the risk of losing face (Brown and Levinson 1987: 229).

As there are very few direct moments of tension in the marketing data (see Chapter 8 on Conflict), the use of humour in repair is almost non-existent. Example 6.11 demonstrates and awkward moment when the students have finished their meeting and are engaging in small talk.

Example 6.11 Humour in Repair Marketing

Vicky: <ind> <P> You gonna ask her for her number now?

        <$E> Sarah and Charles laugh. Five second pause. </$E>

Vicky: <ind> I'm sorry I've got a younger brother I just.

        <$E> Laughter </$E>

Charles: What?

Sarah: Is that your excuse?

Charles: Can we turn it off now.

Sarah: Charles don't be embarrassed.

Charles: It's g= this is getting out of hand.

Sarah: That's enough Charles.

Charles: <ind> I get shy. <$E> Loud scraping noise </$E>

In example 6.11, Vicky mocks Charles about asking a girl who they have been discussing, for her phone number. This is followed by laughter and a five second pause by the participants. This awkward silence leads an attempt of humour in repair by Vicky who states *I'm sorry I've got a younger brother I just.* This humorous excuse for embarrassing Charles provokes laughter from the other members in the group. The students are very aware of the presence of the recorder at this point and Charles asks to turn it off. Charles attempts to hide his embarrassment through humour stating *I get shy,* in a mocking tone. This leads to a shift in conversation by the group members. The use of humour as a repair strategy in this extract did not immediately function to alleviate the situation, however, the sequential use of individual humour by Charles allowed the speakers to move on from the issue.

6.5 Conclusion

The use of humour in the data is a strong indicator of the specific personalised dynamic of each community of practice. The notion of building a shared repertoire and joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998) is evident as both of these novice communities develop their own styles and norms regarding the use of humour. The engineering community focuses on being more transactional, professional and focused as a group whereas the marketing students prioritise belonging in terms of the in-group, engaging in high levels of relational talk during work based activities. Both of these groups display a level of cohesion on some level. The engineers are consistent in their work and meet deadlines ahead of schedule, however, there are instances of tension and an underlying tone of power struggle depicted by their use of humour in highly individual instances. The marketing students could be considered more disorganised regarding work focus and appear to be readily distracted by each other's anecdotes. This high level of humour contributes to a sense of belonging among some speakers, however, it can be seen to

isolate participants who are more concerned with work and are not part of the in-group. However their overall system of practice involves working together as a team and this can be observed through the use of humour in the many collaborative sequences present in the data. The different values and norms of both communities highlight the very different interactional process that contributes to making a community of practice unique.

The functions of humour are many and varied. The use of humour in rapport is a dynamic and complex issue, present in virtually every working and social environment. As stated in this chapter, humour serves to keep the machinery of interaction running smoothly (Duncan and Feisal, 1990). The use of humour in the data demonstrates this statement solidly and humour can be observed playing a vital role in group cohesion within the marketing group in particular. The functions of humour in this area of rapport as social management were evident as participants used humour to create a shared repertoire and joint enterprise. In defining their community culture and behavioural norms both groups took different approaches to the use of humour in their meetings. This demonstrates the highly contextualised nature of different communities of practice, highlighting the different role that humour can have in each specific environment. The cohesive dynamic of the marketing students allows for a high level of humour in different forms, competitive and collaborative. The engineering data indicates a different group dynamic, with a stress on transactional talk. Power struggles are more evident through the use of humour mid-turn in this group, however, humour in rapport was also evident. The examination of humour in the community of practice allowed for a clear distinction to be made between the two particular groups and the different interactional and working styles of both. The linguistic and cultural routines of both communities were determined by their use of humour, a means which provides an accurate picture of the dynamics within the different groups. Chapter 7 will further discuss these issues of culture in the community of practice through analysing the use of topic in both novice professional communities of practice.

Chapter 7

Organisational Culture:

Topic in Novice Professional Meetings

7.0. Introduction

As outlined in Chapter 6, the area of organisational culture has been examined in studies in workplace language by Holmes and Marra (2002) in their analysis of the presence of humour in the workplace. As the analysis in Chapter 6 demonstrated, different levels of humour in the novice professional meetings not only highlighted a certain level of rapport among participants, but also demonstrated the different working cultures and dynamics of both groups. This chapter aims to delve further into the notion of organisational culture in novice communities through examining the role that topic plays in expressing the beliefs and values of each group. As the participants of the novice communities control the topics and type of talk in their meetings, the different topics present provide a means to highlighting the core cultural practice or value systems of the groups. In order to clearly identify the different organisational cultures in each community, the role of topic in phatic communication (McCarthy, 2000), relational episodes (Koester, 2006) and in displaying hierarchy (Handford, 2010) will be at the core of analysis for this chapter.

7.1 Previous Studies

This section aims to outline previous literature in the area of organisational culture, topic and relational talk in order to provide a background for data analysis. The area of organisational culture will be discussed with a view to comprehending culture within the community of practice. This will be followed by an overview of topic in discourse and its relevance in highlighting the core values of any given community of practice through developing an understanding of the presence or lack of relational talk in work based interactions.

7.1.1 Culture in the workplace

The concept of organisational culture has become a model for identifying different socio-structural components within companies in management theory. It is defined as a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that are shared by members of an organisation (Schein, 1985). The notion of organisational culture was established as a means of

measuring organisations strengths and weakness in areas such as leadership, group work and organisational effectiveness. Workplace culture has been defined by Smircich as:

> revolving around the shared values and attitudes and the shared experiences that validate them. A culture includes everything that is learned and shared by its members: its social heritage and rules of behavior, its own customs and traditions, jargon and stories.

(Smircich, 1983: 339)

According to Kim et al (2011), organisational culture is formed as a result of a series of interactions between the leader and members of the organisation as they try to adjust themselves to the external environment (p. 201). As members establish a particular way of working and interacting with one another, they also build up a set of shared beliefs, ideals/values and knowledge in selected areas. Workplace culture generally refers to a wider organisation and the beliefs and value systems that exist within a particular company or department of a company. It refers to the principal values in terms of appropriate structure and behaviour expected in a company. The changing organisational structure of companies has been outlined by Vaara et al (2004) who examine the organisational structure of airline alliances through an examination of discursive strategies. They highlight the restructuring of the airline industry through a critical discourse analysis approach examining strategizing in the industry. This study demonstrates the benefits of applying a discourse analysis approach to analysing organisational culture on different levels.

Different workplace communities of practice develop and acquire different approaches and ways of dealing with specific circumstances in the workplace. An example of the effects of strict behavioural norms in workplace practice can be found in the safety management culture on oil rigs. Ely et al (2010) carried out a study on the effects of organisational incentives implemented to enhance health and safety for employees on off shore rigs. Through extensive research, they found that these incentives created a culture that unintentionally released men from societal imperatives for "manly" behaviour, prompting them to let go of masculine-image concerns and to behave instead in counter-stereotypical ways (2010: 4). This indicates that the wider organisational culture enforced by higher management has a profound effect on smaller communities

of practice that form within organisations. If the wider company culture can affect a workforce, it can also be considered that the stereotypical values of any profession can affect how novice professionals behave. If novices believe that certain behavioural attributes are valued within their professional communities, they are more than likely to emulate these at different stages of their development. This is highlighted in studies on role models and mentors in the medical profession. According to Elzubier et al (2001), role models are a powerful force in the learning process and identifying positive role models and emulating them is a significant component of medical education (p. 272). As students, ideals of professional practice are greatly influenced by role models in their fields, professional stereotypes can be considered to influence their behavior when emulating professional meetings. The position of role models and mentors as providing novices with insight and notions of stereotypical professional behaviour highlights the power of organisational or workplace culture in any given workplace as it defines a set of norms to be followed. As an organisational culture can be made up of a number of subcultures, these cultures are all unique to their participants but intertwined and connected by a greater organisation.

The concept of organisational culture can be linked to community of practice theory (see Chapter 3). The aspects of organisational culture in companies as developing shared beliefs and values have been applied to communities on a smaller scale by Wenger (1998) as representing shared repertoire in his community of practice framework. In this stage of community of practice development, participants have created a set of norms and standard ways of behaving and practicing that are deemed standard and appropriate. These attributes may include aspects such as vocabulary (slang, technical language), shared references to common colleagues or friends, dress code, hierarchical structures (members assuming positions within the group) and topics discussed on a regular basis (personal, social, work based). All of these different stylistic features form part of a set of norms established by any one community of practice. Blommaert (2005) describes the connection between identity construction and semiotics. He states that:

> People don't have an identity, but that identities are constructed in practices that produce, enact, or perform identity- identity is identification, an outcome of a socially conditioned semiotic work.

(Blommaert 2005: 205)

The construction of any community of practice involves the development of distinct participant identities both individually and collectively. Within a Community of Practice model, shared repertoire is defined as the stage when a community assumes a common practice and develops a shared sense of belonging through defining a set of linguistic and social practices that defines them as a community (Wenger, 1998). This is true in the workplace as different communities of practice can be defined as a set of people working together in groups, or simply a group of people who meet socially on a regular basis who define a set of norms attributed to the way in which they interact and behave. These norms are defined by the community itself over a period of time and any disruption of these norms can be considered taboo within the community. In defining shared repertoire Wenger states that:

> The repertoire of a community of practice includes routines, words, tools, was of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice.

(Wenger, 1998: 83)

This demonstrates that the shared repertoire of a community of practice is highly contextualised and personal to each individual group of people. It also highlights that all communities of practice define a regime of competence. Whether this competence qualifies as 'knowledge' in the broader world (and even in the eyes of members) is a more complex political question (Eckert and Wenger, 2005: 589). Legitimacy in any community of practice involves not just having access to knowledge necessary for 'getting it right', but being at the table at which 'what is right' is continually negotiated (Eckert and Wenger, 2005: 583). These complexities of belonging to a community of practice are discussed by Wenger (1998) who states that, in order to be a full participant, it may just be as important to know and understand the latest gossip as it is to know and understand the latest memo (p.74). From this it can also be considered that those who do not adhere to group norms risk being ostracised by the in-group of the community (Cutting, 2001). The importance of understanding and adhering to cultural

norms in order to belong also applies in communities outside of the workplace. Teenagers provide an ideal platform for study in terms of group culture as their peer interactions are laden with norms and practices which must be adhered to.

A study by Eckert (2000) highlights the segregation culture of American high schools through an analysis of the behavioural codes of different groups. Eckert deals with the different requirements of belonging in each group including dress, academic achievement and language style. The language employed by a group can be considered an important aspect of understanding a group's culture. According to Eckert, while styles are constructed within communities of practice, the success of the global stylistic enterprise depends on the clear establishment of social meaning (2000: 217). This indicates that the communities themselves establish appropriate behavioural and linguistic codes. These can be observed in features such as lexis, discourse markers and topic choice and management. As topics discussed in different cultures are highly contextualised and vary dramatically, they are crucial to understanding groups' values and outlook on social structures. The topics discussed on a regular basis by any one group highlight their values and shared knowledge.

This chapter aims to address the relevance of topic in the meetings in constructing a coherent understanding of the different cultures present in each novice community of practice. As topics of conversation vary greatly from one community to another, the frequent presence of certain topics can provide a detailed insight into what a community values thus enabling a comparative analysis of different working cultures.

7.1.2 Defining Topic

The definition of topic is a controversial issue among linguists. As topic, and what is being talked about in conversation, can be perceived differently by the speakers themselves (Brown and Yule, 1993), it is difficult to place a set definition on the notion. Linguists maintain varying perspectives as to what constitutes a topic in conversation. According to Chafe (1976), topic is what sets a spatial, temporal or individual

framework within which the main predication holds (p. 50). The notion of topic as a dynamic feature in conversation has been outlined by McCarthy (1998), who states that 'topic is neither predetermined nor singularly defined, but shifts and develops, often without sharp boundaries between topics' (p. 109). Topics are controlled by the participants, who decide whether a raised topic is to be developed or abandoned. Rühlemann deliberates that topics in conversations are not a given; they need to be raised and developed by the participants (2007: 41). In a similar vein, Abu-Akel (2002) states that topic is not textual, rather it is a human agenda and notions of topic restricted to linguistic elements disregard the contribution of the human element in the construal of conversational topics (2002: 1789). This highlights the role of the participants in choosing the topics they discuss. It can also be assumed that there may be underlying reasons as to why certain topics are more relevant than others. Abu Akel (2002) exemplifies this notion in the way he defines and identifies topic in his research:

> That is, from the analysts point of view, deciding what a stretch of talk is about requires, in addition to the appreciation of the semantic content of the conversation, an understanding of what speakers do bring into the conversation which includes their personal background, history and the nature of their interaction as topics are developing in the course of the conversation.

(Abul Akel, 2002: 1789)

Brown and Yule (1983) highlight the intuitiveness factor present in defining topic as the unifying principle which makes one stretch of discourse 'about' something and the next stretch 'about' another (p. 70). There are of course linguistic cues which support this type of analysis. McCarthy (1991) highlights the presence of key lexical items in determining topic. The position of different topics within a conversational sequence can also serve to indicate a shift or change in topic. For instance, Gardner (1987) discusses the presence of six categories of topical development in spoken interaction. These serve to identify areas where different topics should occur in conversation and can be used to identify topic areas. However, the presence of non-linguistic factors must also be considered in order to explore the significance of topic choice in conversation. The importance of considering these factors is argued by Abu Akel (2002), who emphasises the relevance of psychological, cognitive and aesthetic factors in uncovering different topics in conversation. He defines topic accordingly:

An actualization of a topic, introduced in conversational settings, requires at least two participants and two turns, where the first turn serves to initiate the topic and the second serves to either acknowledge it or to respond to the issue raised in the first (i.e. topic up-take).

(Abu Akel, 2002: 1789)

This definition emphasises the role of the speakers themselves in creating, accepting, maintaining and terminating topics. It also highlights the different hierarchical structures present in interaction. The role of hierarchical structure is vital in determining how a topic is constructed and received in specific contexts. Handford (2010) discusses this presence of hierarchy in business meetings and the effects it has on the topics discussed in relational episodes. He discusses this in his approach to turn taking and topic management, stating that even in meetings in particular communities of practice where communication may appear relaxed and unconstrained, the members may in fact be conforming to and replicating the expectations and practices of the unfolding dynamic context (2010: 220). This reveals the need to consider the influence of shared repertoire on the topics of conversation that participants discuss. The particular relevance of topic in highlighting the values and beliefs of a community can therefore not be undermined as topics (particularly reoccurring topics) can indicate the core culture of a community of practice. The reoccurrence of topic in conversations between a group of speakers may symbolise the presence of shared knowledge through a mutual understanding of a previous context. A reoccurring topic can therefore also highlight the inner culture of a group as it can indicate important points of discussion in their community. Eckert and Wenger (2005) highlight the importance of possessing the ability to engage in the discussion of certain topics in order to belong to a community of practice and describe this as achieving cultural competence within a community. This ties in with Handford's (2010) notion of displaying hierarchy in interaction. Participants who are more confident in engaging in the discussion of topics and practices at the core of community culture will be considered senior members in the group hierarchy. The notion of hierarchy in communities of practice therefore leads to the conclusion that topic can be manipulated by the participants in order to achieve different goals in conversation.

Through their work in analysing workplace discourse, Holmes and Marra (2004) state that people are very skilled in exploiting the multifunctional aspects of human communication systems, including language (p. 380). This highlights the importance of topic patterns in uncovering the shared repertoire and communicative dynamics that a community has built over time. The present study will therefore consider topic as a dynamic feature of interaction that indicates different subject areas where participants control their uptake or termination. The analysis in this chapter will consider different topics intuitively (Brown and Yule, 1983); however it will also consider non-linguistic factors such as hierarchy and participant roles in identifying culture. The next section will discuss the notion of transactional and relational talk in terms of topic analysis and distinction.

7.2 Workplace topics

The language of workplace and professional discourse is most usually associated with achieving transactional goals. Drew and Heritage (1992: 22) have defined institutional talk as informed by goal orientation, of a relatively restricted conventional form. This issue of goal orientation has also been examined by Holmes and Stubbe (2003), who state that the language of workplace meetings can be considered to have a purpose reason or goal. Traditionally, workplace meetings tend to be semi-structured and focused on transactional goals. Participants tend to engage mainly in the discussion of work related topics. The time restrictions and goal-oriented dynamics of meetings indicate that the topics discussed in this arena could be considered work focused and structured. Although the level of transactional talk in meetings is high, the presence of relational talk in this structured environment is vital to establishing rapport and leads to the fulfilment of non-transactional goals. The presence of non-work based talk in interaction in meetings and the workplace has been documented in studies by McCarthy (2000), Bargiela-Chiappini (2003), Holmes and Stubbe (2003), Holmes and Marra (2004), Koester (2006), and Handford (2010). According to Handford (2010), transactional talk tends to take up most of the language and time in meetings. The presence of relational talk in work-based interaction can therefore be considered highly relevant in ascertaining the key features of belonging to a particular community. Topics in meetings tend to occur in different types of talk. The presence of different types of

talk in work-based interactions is examined by McCarthy (2000) who identifies four different types of talk in service encounters:

1. phatic exchange (greetings, partings)

2. transactional talk (requests, enquiries, instructions)

3.transactional-plus-relational talk (non-obligatory task evaluations and other comments)

4. relational talk (small talk, anecdotes, wider topics of mutual interest)

(McCarthy, 2000: 104)

This provides a valuable framework from which to base a study on topic in work-based interaction. Although the presence of transactional talk in service or workplace encounters is to be expected in fulfilling transactional goals, the presence of relational talk is highly relevant as it functions in promoting rapport through establishing a common ground between participants. The topics discussed in these instances of relational talk can provide the insight needed in order to comprehend a community's culture.

7.2.1 Relational Topics

In her exemplary work on relational talk in the workplace, Koester (2006) highlights the presence of relational talk as a natural and sometimes necessary part of transactional and workplace interaction. According to Koester, relational talk in meetings and workplace interactions can take place in the form of:

1. non-transactional conversations such as office gossip and small talk
2. phatic communication: small talk at the beginning or end of transactional encounters
3. relational episodes: small talk or office gossip occurring during the performance of a transactional task
4. relational sequences and turns: non obligatory task-related talk with a relational focus
5. interpersonal markers: the use of modals, vague language in transactional genres

(Koester, 2006: 137)

Due to the nature of most work environments as work focused and disciplined in nature, most relational talk tends to be highly contextualised and to occur in more relaxed contexts or in circumstances where small talk or relational talk is considered polite (Brown and Yule, 1987). This section will outline the presence of relational talk in these different areas of workplace language and address the notion of relational talk as a positive feature in workplace communication.

According to Koester (2006), relational talk seems to occur frequently between co-workers who have developed a close relationship and engage in frequent banter (p. 138). This indicates that there can be a higher level of small talk and banter within communities that have developed stronger relationships. Koester outlines this in her study where she found that there was more of a 'joking culture' in some offices than others (2006: 139). She also highlights that the use of intensifiers is higher in relational talk than transactional talk. Words such as *very, real, really, so* and *all* are used more frequently to provide emphasis in small talk conversations. This emphasises a level of rapport among speakers, which is not as immediately evident from purely transactional interactions. Holmes and Marra (2004: 381) discuss relational practice as constructing and nurturing good workplace relationships, to establishing and maintaining solidarity between team members, and to networking and creating new work relationships. Relational talk provides a basis for the development of rapport through the use of small talk, humour and banter (Holmes, 2000). These provide a relief from transactional talk in meetings and allow participants to establish stronger bonds as a group. Tannen (1998) notes the importance of informal talk to getting work done and receiving opportunities needed for advancement. The group benefits of relational talk in terms of creating solidarity and meeting an individual's need to feel accepted are outlined by Holmes and Marra (2004). They state that:

> In the workplace context, relational practice is often appropriately oriented to people's need that their special skills or distinctive expertise be recognised, and it also crucially involves people's need to feel they are valued and important components in a team or a group.
>
> (Holmes and Marra, 2004: 379)

As relational talk can be considered a feature of relational practice, the significance of the topics participants discuss when engaging in this type of interaction cannot be ignored. From a cultural point of view, the presence of relational talk may be indicative of a culture that is highly focused on the social aspect of rapport. The lack of relational talk may symbolise less rapport yet may also symbolise a focus on task-based interaction in a community. The difference in the amount of relational talk in the meetings of a community of practice is determined by the members who essentially decide how much relational talk is appropriate in their work-based environment, which inevitably links topic to shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). This tends to be subconsciously (or consciously) monitored by leaders in the group hierarchy. The manner in which they speak and behave influences the attitudes of the other participants in the group.

7.2.2 Analytical Framework

This section outlines the main framework of analysis for this chapter. The present study will analyse the participants' use of topic in three areas:

(a) Phatic communication—In order to construct an image of the openings and closings of the meetings

(b) Relational Episodes—In order to establish level of rapport and interpersonal relationships between participants.

(c) Hierarchical Displays—In order to ascertain how topics are introduced and maintained by participants in the group

Phatic Communication

Since Malinowski first coined the term *phatic communion,* there have been many studies focused on developing this interactional phenomenon in everyday language, (Lyons, 1968; Laver, 1975; McCarthy, 2000; and Koester, 2006). Lyons (1968: 417) defines phatic communication as serving to establish and maintain a feeling of solidarity and wellbeing. The presence of relational talk in phatic communication at the beginning and end of meetings, where it does not necessarily occur throughout the meeting,

highlights the goal-based transactional focus of this environment. Unless otherwise indicated by a senior member of management or a leader figure in the group, a high presence of relational talk is not normally appropriate in the genre of meetings. The presence of relational talk in business meetings has been discussed by Handford (2010), who affirms that it occurs during phatic exchanges at the beginning and end of the meetings. This tends to symbolise a genuine effort at establishing rapport yet it could also be considered protocol and structured due to politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Handford (2010) states that relational talk or humour tends to occur at the end of a meeting to symbolise closure. In analysing the topics discussed in the phatic communication of both groups in this study, a conclusion can be reached about how the meetings are structured by participants in terms of openings and closings.

Relational Talk

Relational topics serve to indicate the community's values by displaying how the participants negotiate values and in essence 'do' shared repertoire. These can be found both in relational episodes and relational sequences. Relational episodes are defined by Koester as instances of small talk or office gossip occurring in the middle of, and temporarily interrupting, transactional talk (2006: 58). Relational sequences on the other hand, involve a switch out of transactional talk but consist of task-related remarks. Both of these areas will be considered as containing relational topics in the data. As relational topics can be focused outside of the task that participants are working on, they allow the researcher to gain valuable insight into the personal values and social attitudes of the participants within the community. As novice professionals do not have the same restrictions as exist in professional workplaces, they are freer to discuss personal and social topics that would not be appropriate in a professional workplace environment. The manner in which they discuss these topics will be highlighted by their presence in relational episodes and relational sequences. A high presence of relational topics can be as symbolic of community culture as a low presence of relational topics. This is demonstrated in episodes of relational talk where certain topics are repeated or follow a particular pattern. As knowing how to interact in all aspects of community life is vital to being accepted as a full member (Eckert and Wenger, 2005), knowing how to engage in the community's preferred speaking style, be it transactional or relational, is highly

relevant for the novice professionals. Members construct their own way of distinguishing what topics are appropriate to discuss in different conversational context due to cues and topic shifts, generally maintained by a key member of the group.

Displaying Hierarchy

The culture of a community of practice is negotiated by its participants and it is through examining the speakers who frequently introduce or maintain topics that the hierarchical structures of a community can be explored. The hierarchy in a community of practice can be observed through the interactions that take place in its meetings. As outlined in chapter 5 on pronouns, linguistic strategy can be seen to have an effect in marking boundaries and ascertaining leadership; this is also true in the case of topic. As meetings tend to focus on transactional topics, the shift between transactional and relational topics, how it is instigated and how the relational topic comes to be terminated, can provide key insight into the hierarchical power structure of the community. According to Gardner (1987), shifts in topic are rare and generally indicate the level of power of the speaker who changes it. As Handford (2010) highlights in his analysis, the most senior person in the meeting signals what topic is to be discussed, and for how long. He also notes that the senior member in the meeting frequently asks the questions (2010: 155). As outlined in the section on culture and community of practice, in order to become a full member of a community, it is vital to become competent in the communities culture. Eckert and Wenger (2005: 583) point out that some members gain legitimacy by redefining the competence, not merely through compliance, but they do so by building an identity in the community. As discussed in chapter five on pronouns and identity, the language the participants use in their meetings is highly symbolic of their power roles and identity. As topic is indicative of community culture in terms of displaying the core values of its members, it can be considered that members who are more competent in introducing topics that are maintained and taken up by the rest of the group tend to have stronger power roles. As hierarchy is a pyramid of meaning-making rights, then those at the top are obliged to assert their place at the top by continually reaffirming their right to establish those terms (Wenger and Eckert, 2005: 585). The members at the top of a community's hierarchy therefore have an effect on what topics are considered appropriate by the rest of the group. As topics tend to reoccur when a

community develops shared repertoire, they hold an important key to understanding the core culture of the any given group. Discourse management has to do with the dynamic segmentation of the text. Chafe (1994: 121) points out that naturally-spoken discourse is hierarchically segmented: "the most typical kind of topic is probably best regarded as a basic-level unit. There may be super topics that tie together a group of basic-level topics, which may in turn contain subtopics within them".

The main areas of analysis for this chapter consist of three core features of meeting communication. In order to examine the differences in communicative styles in both groups, the topics presented in phatic exchanges will be discussed. The occurrence of relational episodes and sequences within the meetings will also be analysed to highlight differences in community culture in terms of interpersonal approaches. Finally, the use of topic in establishing hierarchy through self-appointed expertise will be detailed in the data.

7.3 Analysis

In order to gain a full perspective of the topics discussed in the data, topics were labelled and categorised in the meetings of both communities. These were defined in terms of transactional and relational topics (McCarthy, 2000) and divided into topic areas and embedded topics. Figure 7.1 illustrates the quantity of transactional and relational topics in both communities.

Figure 7.1 Transactional vs Relational Topics
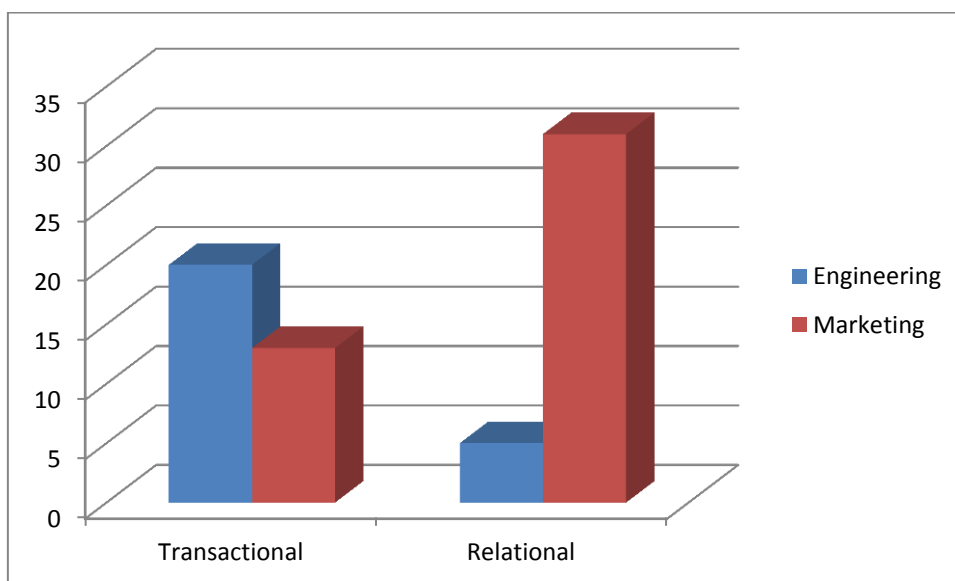
The different emphasis placed on transactional and relational topics in both groups is demonstrated in Figure 7.1. From the data, it can be observed that both communities are transactionally focused. The engineers engage in the discussion of 20 different transactional topics over the duration of the project. These topics reoccur in different contexts and account for most of the discourse in the engineering meetings. 13 different transactional topics were observed in the marketing data and these also reoccurred during the course of the project meetings. The different amount of transactional topics could be attributed to the type of project undertaken in each community of practice. The considerable difference in the levels of relational talk in both communities of practice is indicative of community culture and working style. The engineering community engage in the discussion of 5 relational topics in their meetings, these are not repeated and indicate a low level of emphasis on interpersonal interaction. The marketing group on the other hand, engage in the discussion of a total of 31 relational topics in the data, some of which are repeated at different stages in the meetings. This different approach to relational talk demonstrates the highly organic structure of the marketing community of practice as opposed to the more structured transactionally focused engineering community. Table 7.1 outlines the different transactional topics in the data in more detail.

Table 7.1 Transactional Topics Engineering and Marketing

Engineering	Marketing
Tasks	**Tasks**
Progress Report	Interviews
Referencing	Questionnaires
Gantt Chart	Consent Forms
Literature Review	Data Collection
Management Report	
Presentation	
Deadlines	
Assessment	**Assessment**
Peer Assessment	Peer Assessment
Exams	Exam Results
Grading	
Project	**Project**

Animations	Fundraising
Gearbox	Emails
Hub	Donations
Turbines	Fairs Events
Monopile	Marketing ideas
Bed Rock	
Drilling	
Meeting Structure	**Meetings**
Deliverables	Designating Tasks
Task Designation	Schedules
Chairmanship	

The transactional topics present in the meetings of both novice communities highlight a strong focus on task orientation and goal fulfilment. Both groups discuss topics relevant to their areas of study. Technical topics on wind farms and turbines account for much of the engineering data with strict work patterns set in place by its members. The issue of chairmanship is a recurring topic in the meetings of the engineering community as members adhere to an organised routine of turn taking in chairing meetings. An overall view of the data suggests that this process is successful on a superficial level as all members are given the opportunity to act as leader. However, a closer inspection leads to the view that a few key members generally take over the role of chairperson. This is highlighted in topic management where certain speakers dominate turns. Example 7.1 is taken from the beginning of a meeting. In a very formal tone, Simon opens meetings proceedings. This extract is an example of the pattern that takes place at the beginning of every engineering meeting.

Example 7.1 Meeting Opening Engineering

Simon: Good afternoon everyone erm no apologies for absence but Ahmed is running a little late so that's an apology in itself. Eh sign off minutes from the previous meeting Maneeb. Thanks very much. Eh seems to be getting smaller <->.

Tim: <$OL> Is it the fifth today.

Maneeb: Say so sorry.

Tim: Fifth?

Ahmed: Fifth.

Maneeb: Fifth yeah.

       <$E> Shuffling papers </$E>

Simon: Okay it's I think it's just a standard recap meeting really isn't it. So just a little progress report from each person and then we'll get to the Gantt chart stuff after that so eh Maneeb how's the work going?

This example demonstrates the extremely punctual and systematic structure of the engineering meetings. The chairperson begins by dealing directly with transactional topics and begins the line of business in a very formal way. The community model a very professional meeting structure from the outset and this sets the tone for the duration of the interaction. The marketing community do not adhere to a chairing system as discussed in Chapter 4. Instead, they come to the meetings prepared with work they have completed since the previous meeting. The meetings do not follow a system and in a more relaxed manner deal with transactional goals as the members negotiate ideas as a team. Example 7.2 is representative of the opening exchanges in the marketing meetings. Charles begins proceedings by addressing the rest of the group.

Example 7.2 Meeting Opening Marketing

Charles: So how's things?

Sarah: Eh Jodie's not coming cos she's been in bed all weekend with flu and she's really ill so she apologises and she said just there's work for her to do just let her know but she's not going to be able to make it.

Vicky: Oh yeah sh= sh=. She wasn't feeling well on Friday so yeah.

Charles: <$OL> Okay cool.

Sarah: <$OL> No she wasn't well. No. I think she spent all weekend in bed so that's fair   enough I think

Vicky: Poor girl.

The marketing meeting opens with an open question from one of the key participants. In a similar situation to that of the engineering example 7.1, one of the group members is absent; however, two of the other group members vouch for and justify her absence. This highlights a certain level of solidarity among the group as they view their project as a team effort. The marketing community work together on their project while at their meetings, not just bringing work they have completed to the meetings, but working on how to improve these together. The engineers, however, all work separately on their designated tasks and provide a progress report at their meetings. This working method is reflective of the extremely functional communicative style of this novice community. From the data and length of time spent on transactional topics, it can be considered that

the engineering community view their meetings as a space to provide a progress report on their work. It is interesting to note that the engineering community are aware of their lack of team work as they discuss the need to work more collaboratively in order to meet project requirements. As team work is part of the assessment, the group are aware of the need to combine their individual skills. However, the very individualistic working style they have employed from the beginning makes it difficult to work collaboratively. The marketing community also focus on transactional goals; however, they allow for a higher amount of relational talk than the engineers, demonstrated by the amount of relational episodes and relational sequences in the data. Interestingly, peer assessment is a common topic for both groups. Peer assessment forms part of the final assessment grade for the project and involves the process of the students grading each other's work and contribution to the group. The presence of peer assessment as a topic in the interactions of both groups highlights the students' awareness of being graded on their contribution and work by their peers. As the students themselves essentially decide five per cent of their grade, it could be considered that a certain amount of face work (Brown and Levinson, 1987) exists in order to secure a good result. It could be posited, therefore, that ultimately relational talk ultimately has an underlying transactional goal.

The relational topics in the data highlight the very different working styles and community cultures of each group. Tables 7.3 and 7.4 highlight the relational topics in the meetings of both communities.

Table 7.2 Relational Topics Engineering and Marketing

Engineering	Marketing
Socialising	**Socialising**
Tea Party (Royal Wedding)	Alcohol
Drinking Games	Hangover
	Fresher's Week
Travel	**Travel**
Work Holiday	Skiing
Conference	Holidays
Jobs	**Jobs**
Job offer	Bar Work
	Retail

	Future Employment
	Beauty Fake Tan Sunbed Nails Skin Physical Appearance
	Social Networking/Apps/Games Facebook Twitter Angry Birds Fruit Ninja
	Drugs Ritalin for study Sleeping Pills Valium
	Televison/Movies Geordie Shore Disney Characters Coronation Street
	Dating Girlfriends/ Boyfriends Valentine's Day Date stories
	Family/Pets Vicky's Dog Trips Home
	Fashion Designer Labels Ugg Boots Karen Millen

The relational topics in the data show a wide contrast in the amount of relational talk that actually occurs in both groups. The sheer volume of relational topics in the marketing data provides evidence of a culture that places value on understanding and

contributing to a wider social network. It also highlights the relevance of non-transactional based topics in providing more information about the community members, their personal beliefs, interests and social lives. Topic areas such as fashion, beauty and social networking demonstrate the importance of image and self-depiction to the group members. Although not all members of the group frequently engage in these relational topics, the core members, including the group leader and other vocal in-group members, maintain these relational episodes and sequences in order to discuss topics that are of importance to their social status. This corresponds with Eckert and Wenger's (2005) view that the community of practice forms a hierarchy within itself, which determines the norms for the rest of its members.

The engineering community do not discuss relational topics in the same way as the marketing group. The few instances of relational talk that occur in the data tend to be in the form of relational sequences as they are associated with the transactional goals being worked on. Other relational topics include job opportunities and interviews that take place in the members' personal time. However, this cannot be considered on the same level as the relational topics discussed by the marketing community as the engineers lack the rapport and solidarity of the marketing group. The following section will examine the role of transactional and relational topics in the meetings of both novice communities in greater detail.

7.3.1 Phatic Communication

The form of phatic communication that occurs at the beginning and end of the meetings differs in both communities. The topics discussed at the beginning of the meetings tend to be very different in form. Although relational topics can be found in the openings of both meetings, the form in which they are developed and taken up by the group varies greatly. The following examples demonstrate these different approaches to opening the meetings. In this example, the group members make small talk at the beginning of the meeting. Charles is teasing Vicky and the instance of phatic communication becomes a relational episode.

Example 7.3 Phatic Communication Marketing

Charles: <$OL> <$E> Sigh </$E>. The only reason you'd go up that KF=. What were you? You'll get a job there anyway. <$E> laughs </$E> what are you on about?

Sarah: <$OL> And I think I gave it all to.

Charles: <$OL> That was the banter I gave Vicky the other day I was like "Ah looks like I'll be working in uh looks like I'll be working in KFC this summer". She's like "Ah I'll have the tender strips with the extra fries and large Coke please."

Sarah: <$OL> Cos my internet was not working at all.

Vicky: <$OL> <$E> laughs </$E> So just learnt the menu off by heart. No I didn't say "the tender strips" did I. I said "Kentucky Charles" <$E> laughs </$E>.

Sarah: <$E> Laughs </$E> you actually know what it's called <$E> laugh </$E>. Brilliant.

Charles: <$OL> Exactly so I was like "Aw someone visits KFC a little bit too much."

Vicky: <$OL> It's ni= it's nice.

Sarah: Charles?

Charles: What?

Sarah: On um Fruit Ninja?

Vicky: <$OL> <$E> laugh </$E> oh.

          <$E> Vicky and Sarah jostle with snack </$E>

Charles: <$OL> <$E> laughs </$E>.

Sarah: No. Give me back.

Vicky: <$E> laughs </$E>.

Charles: Woah woah.

Vicky: <$OL> <$E> laughs </$E>. Swear to god Sarah I'm gonna kill you.

Sarah: <$E> laugh </$E>. I love you.

Vicky: <$E> laugh </$E>.

This example of phatic communication at the beginning of the meeting demonstrates the community culture of the group on different levels. The emphasis of acquiring a good job is highlighted in the way in which the speakers joke about Charles working in a fast food restaurant. As he could be considered a leader in the group, the notion that he would work in a fast food restaurant is humorous to the other members and they recap on their jovial interaction on the topic for those who were not present. This form of humour in ingratiation (see Chapter 6) indicates that Charles and Vicky are powerful members in the group as they are the target of humour in this case. It also highlights the

members' relationship outside of the meetings. In this interaction one member plays a game on his smart phone and two others jostle over a snack. The lack of structure at the beginning of the meeting demonstrates the level of rapport among the group members, yet also highlights the groups need for a leader to put the meeting back on track. Although the relational episode slows down the initial start to the transactional proceedings, it serves to give members the opportunity to develop as a team and build on the shared repertoire they have established.

The instances of phatic communication in the engineering meetings are far less frequent and tend to occur at the end of the meetings. Phatic communication tends to occur at the beginning and end of the meetings (Koester, 2006). Although this is true in many interactions, Laver (1975) maintains that phatic exchanges do not necessarily occur in every encounter. This is demonstrated in the opening and closing of the engineering meetings where phatic exchanges do not always occur. In example 7.4, the engineering group discuss the organisation of a social activity when they finish their project.

Example 7.4 Phatic Communication Engineering

Tim: And I was like <$E> Laughing </$E> you shouldn't be encouraging me not to do coursework. But.

Simon: **Right okay so next.**

Maneeb: **Let= let's shall we go out after we're finished?**

Simon: I think. We can have a night out. <$E> Laughs </$E>

Maneeb: I think everyone will be.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Simon: **So I think** all the groups will probably be out.

Tim: Yeah.

Simon: **So I think it**.

Cara: <$OL> Well if we <$=> if we </$= > can finish on the Thursday that means on the Friday erm I'll I'll I'll donate my house and we can <$=> we can </$= >.

          <$M> <$E> Laughter </$E>

Pete: I think the royal wedding drinking game then.

Tim: <$OL> Donate your house.

Maneeb: <$OL> There's a royal wedding drinking game?

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Pete: <$OL> Have you seen the royal wedding drinking game?

This example of phatic communication occurs towards the end of the transaction when all business has been covered by the group. The project deadline is near and there is a tone of excitement towards the end of the meeting as the group members discuss potential submission deadlines. As this novice community of practice are very work-focused and their community culture bases itself on professionalism, this relational excerpt is rare. As they discuss socialising and drinking games they demonstrate that socialising in the university student scene is also important to them. The emphasis on socialising here demonstrates that although relational topics are not prevalent in their conversations, they also value socialising albeit on a different level to the marketing students.

In this example, the topic of having a group night out is firstly introduced by Maneeb, when he states *Let= let's shall we go out after we're finished?* The topic is then reintroduced by Simon who states *I think. We can have a night out. <$E> Laughs </$E>*. The form of delivery in this case is undermining of Maneeb's original idea. This highlights Simon's position in the group hierarchy as he takes ownership of the socialising idea. The topic is taken up by other group members and Cara offers her house for the celebrations highlighting her role as sociable in the group. This is mocked by Tim who states *Donate your house,* in a condescending tone. However, the other group members have already begun to plan the drinking games they will play and continue the discussion for ten more turns before the topic is terminated by Simon who states *Right okay so meeting next Monday Cara chairman Maneeb secretary* before saying *Meeting adjourned* in an official close of the meeting. This is an example of Simon exerting power in the group, which is interesting as Tim would have previously put an end to relational episodes in conversation. Simon takes on the role of chairman and although he opens and joins in on the topic of socialising, he is also the one to terminate it. This is illustrated by the use of the topic termination marker *right okay*. The importance of social activities in this group is not entirely evident in the data. The speakers mainly engage in transactional talk although they are aware of the value of establishing rapport in the group through communication training. This can be observed

as they discuss their outing to a restaurant as part of a team building exercise. As team building is part of their assessment, they must discuss their efforts in their final presentation. It is, however, evident from their meetings that the key points of discussion are not in fact rapport building but highly transactional.

7.3.2 Relational Episodes and Sequences

The presence of relational episodes and relational topics discussed during these episodes is highly indicative of the community culture in the marketing group. In example 7.5, the marketing students engage in a relational episode interrupting their work on a task-based topic.

Example 7.5 Relational Episode Marketing

Charles: **"OMG[6] sold so much <$X> 'Buca | Sambuca </$X> tonight." "Love Facebook so much."**

Vicky: <$OL> <$E> laughs </$E>. Some of the girls do put like I'm gonna be in <-> tonight. Come down and get your shots."

Charles: Do they?

Vicky: Well I don't really like <->.

Charles: Are they your mates? <$X> D'you | Do you </$X> ever go on like group nights out like?

Vicky: I haven't been on one yet and I'm pretty sure my boss has picked up on it. It's like "Vicky you're gonna be at this one the next one aren't you? It's a roller disco night. Bring your own booze. This could get messy." I was like I was quite excited there was like a Fame night as well.

Jodie: <$OL> Okay so uh do we have any more ideas on that?

Vicky: Well what else was in uh in-depth interviews? Uh.

Jodie: I I couldn't find anything more.

Charles: That's their current strategy that's a bit that's a good outline I think. So what's the next one we need to do.

Jodie: Um let's think. Uh. We still <$=> we still </$= > need to write a paragraph on that but we can do that later. Yeah. Yeah.

Charles: <$OL> Yeah that's fine that's easily done yeah.

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[6] OMG acronym for Oh my God

This excerpt highlights the presence of recurrent relational topics in the marketing data. In this example the participants discuss Vicky's job as a bartender in a nightclub. Charles opens the interaction by teasing Vicky about how much time she spends on Facebook. As this is a topic that he has teased her about before, he does not need to elaborate on his joke, it has already become a topic of shared knowledge within the group. This means that Vicky can directly discuss the topic of her part time job before the episode is interrupted by Jodie, who overlaps, bringing the discussion back to a transactional topic. Charles immediately disengages with the relational topic of Vicky's job and displays how focused he is on the transactional goal by asking ***So what's the next one we need to do.*** He reinforces his knowledge of the transactional area by stating ***Yeah that's fine that's easily done yeah*** this indicates that although he is a key player in engaging in relational topic with in-group members, he is also aware of appearing work-focused in the meetings. The meeting continues on a transactional note for another ten turns and then reverts back to relational talk through a relational episode interruption as highlighted in example 7.6:

Example 7.6 Relational Episode Interruption Marketing

Charles: There's gonna be another like forty as well cos we've got minutes to put in and shit.

Jodie: We're so proud.

Vicky: You've got really stretchy skin haven't you?

Charles: No not really. Is yours not as stretchy as that? You haven't grabbed this bit of your   cheek though. Yeah it is. How stretchy is your face?

Sarah: <$E> laughs </$E>

In this example, the flow of transactional talk is interrupted by Vicky, who comments on Charles's skin. This leads to a ten turn long relational episode where the members discuss skin and aging. These relational topics display the level of priority given to the ability of social interaction and image by the community. The engineering community does not give the same level of importance to social interaction, hence, there are no parallel examples of relational sequences during meetings available for comparison.

7.3.3 Hierarchy and topic

As outlined in section 7.2.3, the relevance of topic in uncovering group hierarchy cannot be ignored. According to Handford (2010), high levels of convergence are dependent on the interlocutors following professionally constrained norms as these are closely linked to meeting expectations concerning the professional social identities of the interlocutors in this context (2010: 155). In the case of self-appointed experts, the level of knowledge or expertise in the area can be found in the length of turns on the topic, by referring to background knowledge and through the speaker separating themselves from those who lack knowledge in the area. As turn taking can also indicate power and hierarchy (Handford, 2010), the length of the turn a speaker spends on a topic can be indicative of his perceived power role in the group. The following example reiterates this point as a member of the engineering group takes on the role of leader and expert in the meeting through displaying his knowledge on presentation skills.

Example 7.7 Hierarchy in Topic Engineering

Tim: Do you just look at the slide and go <$E> tut </$E> "what does this say right eh let's think about that" and just do it off the cuff erm that's the kind of cos say for example some if somebody cos **I know a lot of people** I mean **I do it** to start with is you just write out what you're going to say word for word and then you have a script in front of you and you start with that script so you know that this lasts for five minutes or ten minutes or whatever. So you know your script lasts for ten minutes and then you start breaking it down and you go right I need to remember this so I'm going to bullet point each sentence so I've got ten bullet points and now I've got ten bullet pointed sentence and now for my sentences I've got a word or two words for each sentence so I still know roughly what I'm going to say I won't say it in exactly the same way **but in doing that I mean I found that when I went to America and I did my presentation there I'd bullet pointed I'd practiced loads and loads** <$=> and loads </$= > and in reality I said something completely different to what I'd said in rehearsals three minutes earlier.

Maneeb: <$OL> <$E> Laughs </$E>

Tim: Because you do that's just what happens and you think "oh I'm I'm my brain works this is how I'm going to say it" and in reality you have to become thirty seconds slower or thirty seconds faster. And that's the kind of for some **if somebody's just rehearsed** what they're going to say and they just recite it in a way **I actually have no problem with it cos I know a lot of people are struggling with nerves or whatever** and that if that's how **they** want to do it that's fine.

In this example, the speaker can be seen to engage in a long turn perhaps more associated with a presentation than an interactive meeting. This example is one of many where this particular participant overtly displays his knowledge on a particular topic. The group members are discussing the topic of different presentation styles and the

issue of presentation style comes across as an issue of great concern for many of the group members. As the field of engineering is traditionally very technically and task-focused, it can be considered that interpersonal skills are not valued in the same way as in other subject areas. This is can be seen in the group's fear of presenting their project findings. Tim, however, takes the lead in the area of presentation skills and depicts himself as an expert in the area. Not only do the lengths of his turns indicate this, but also the manner in which he stresses his expertise. He appoints himself an expert in the area of presentations by referring to his knowledge of how people present using notes: ***I know a lot of people***, before saying ***I mean I do it*** to reinforce his knowledge of this particular topic. He then proceeds to deliver his view on this style in great detail before referring to background knowledge of his work experience abroad: ***but in doing that I mean I found that when I went to America and I did my presentation there I'd bullet pointed I'd practiced loads and loads***. He then once again separates himself from those who need to use notes in a presentation by stating ***I know a lot of people*** and ***if that's how they want to do it,*** symbolising that he maintains that his approach is the most suitable for presenting. This display of power through highlighting expertise on a topic is not rare in a professional workplace; however, the length of turns taken by the speaker leaves no room for interjection by other group members. The speaker holds the floor for an extended turn, this could be associated with a lack of interpersonal skills as he does not allow space for other speakers to contribute. This issue will be considered in more detail in Chapter 8 on conflict and negotiation.

Table 7.5 outlines the main organisational structures observed from the analysis of topics in the meetings of the two novice communities of practice.

Table 7.5 Organisational Structures

Engineering	Marketing
Bureaucratic (Structured)	Organic (Unstructured)
Highly Transactional	High level of Relational Talk
Focus on Professionalism	Focus on interpersonal relationships
Strict Task focus	High level of rapport
Prominent members act as self-appointed experts	Prominent members lead relational episodes

Both communities display very different approaches to negotiating shared repertoire and constructing a community culture. The engineering group has built a largely formal meeting structure dependent on transactional topics and goals. The marketing group has developed a more relaxed approach to achieving transactional goals and also highly values the accomplishment of relational goals. Perhaps this is not altogether surprising considering the emphasis placed on interpersonal skills in a marketing environment. However, the lack of focus on transactional goals can at times cloud the purpose of the meeting, where relational topics are discussed for extended episodes. The lack of emphasis on interpersonal skills in the engineering group means that speakers cannot develop their ideas and express their individuality (Holmes and Marra, 2004) on a relational basis. This limits opportunities for building rapport within the group. The marketing community can be considered to develop a sort of interactional dexterity in their community, switching quickly between transactional and relational topics. This is not the case in the engineering community where members struggle to develop relational topics during meetings. This can be related to an issue of interactional style, as different groups value different strategies and styles. As each community of practice develops, it essentially outlines a style and organisational culture to be followed.

The prevalent topics in the data from both groups highlight the different organisational or community cultures present in the communities of practice. In order to be a full member of the marketing community, it is essential to engage in topics on a social level and be aware of the latest trends and fashions in the university circle. This is demonstrated by the ability of prominent members to lead relational topics. Prominent members of the engineering community, on the other hand, lead transactional topics and aim to emphasise their expertise. Full membership in the engineering group requires a full level of professionalism, task focus and dedication to the project to be displayed by its members. The topics outlined in this chapter indicate the values, beliefs and structural systems enforced by each community of practice, and demonstrate the importance of considering behaviour and language patterns in understanding a community's culture.

7.4 Conclusion

The area of organisational culture (Smircich, 1983) and how this culture is displayed in different communities of practice has come into focus in this chapter. In establishing the role that group members play in defining their own culture through analysing the topics most frequently discussed in their meetings, a greater understanding of shared repertoire was reached. In order to become a full member of a community (Eckert and Wenger, 2005), its members must adhere to social norms and display knowledge of the areas that matter most to the group. This was displayed through the participants' ability to engage in topics that have become essential to belonging in their communities. The development of shared repertoire over a period of time in both communities was evident from the participants' use of topic in phatic communication, relational episodes and forms of displaying hierarchy. The high presence of relational topics in the phatic communication of the marketing group underscores the focus on interpersonal relationships and social interaction. This was also evident in the level of relational episodes in the marketing community's meetings where the participants displayed a background knowledge of each other that became stronger over time. Hierarchy was displayed in this community through the ability to switch between relational and transactional topics. This could be seen as the leader of the group demonstrated the ability to diverge from one topic to another depending on the other participants' interactional needs. The engineering community displayed far less use of relational topics. However, the high presence of transactional topics in the data emphasised a focus on professionalism and goal-oriented interaction that overshadowed the need for interpersonal relationships.

This chapter has outlined how each community develops an individual style of working and establishes a way in which to enforce a hierarchy, fulfil transactional goals and maintain a certain level of rapport within the group. Through an analysis of both communities it can be considered that although transactional topics are vital to fulfilling project goals (Koester 2006), relational topics suggest a higher level of rapport (Holmes and Marra, 2004) and overall group harmony. The emphasis placed on different communicative approaches will be discussed further in chapter 8 through an analysis of conflict and negotiation in the novice professional meetings.

Chapter 8

Conflict and Negotiation

8.0 Introduction

The notion of power and politeness is an important issue to consider when analysing workplace language. Studies by Drew and Heritage (1992), Bargiela-Chiappini (1997), Holmes and Marra (2002), Koester (2006), and Handford (2010) outline the different politeness strategies employed in workplace interactions. As every working environment deals with deadlines and the stress of developing different interpersonal relations, the potential for conflict is greater than in other social interactions. This point is reiterated in Wenger's (1998) community of practice theory (see Chapter 3 for theoretical framework). He states that most situations that involve sustained interpersonal engagement generate their fair share of tensions and conflicts (1998: 77). The manner in which these conflicts occur and are avoided is central to this chapter.

Previous chapters 5, 6 and 7 in this study have highlighted the different communicative strategies present in the meetings of two novice professional communities of practice. The use of pronouns, humour and relational topics were all considered key in establishing rapport and creating a positive working dynamic in both groups. This chapter aims to uncover how conflict is initiated, performed and avoided in the novice communities of practice. In analysing the role of conflict in both communities of practice, its impact on the participant relationships and role in contributing to community practices can be determined. The analysis of conflict and negotiation will be carried out through the examination of face threatening acts (Brown and Levinson, 1987), the sequential organisation of conflict (Maynard, 1985) and the linguistic features of conflict and negotiation (Koester, 2006). The rationale for this choice of analytical frameworks will be detailed in section 8.2.1.

8.1 Previous Studies

This section will outline the previous research carried out in the area of conflict in the workplace. Firstly, the notion of conflict in workplace meetings will be examined from a management theory and linguistic perspective. Secondly, the notion of power in conflict will be discussed in order to determine the different power structures that can emerge in conflictual situations.

8.1.1 Conflict in the workplace

The issue of maintaining rapport and managing workplace relationships includes the avoidance of conflict and the ability to negotiate in conflictual situations. Management studies by Thomas (1976), Van de Vliert, (1984) and Rahim (1992) outline different conflict management strategies that can enhance individual, group and organisational effectiveness. Sitkin and Bies (1993) discuss the use of social accounts in conflict situations and highlight the exclusion of this type of research in previous theoretical management studies on conflict, such as those by Blake and Mouton (1964), which mainly focus on behavioural structures. They state that providing a mitigating account can act to lessen the behavioural responses that escalate to conflict (p. 355). Volkema et al (1996) highlight the role of third party sensemaking in interpersonal conflicts at work, focusing on 'conflict induced' sensemaking behaviours. The presence of conflict in organisations is viewed as a problem for management in terms of organisational effectiveness and efficient workforce. However, conflict has also been described as a necessary step towards self-awareness, change and development (Coiser and Dalton, 1990). This present study focuses on the potential of conflict to damage interpersonal relationships, posing a challenge to rapport development in groups and communities of practice.

Although there are many management studies on the effects and prevention of conflict in organisations, most of these tend to be based on theoretical research focusing on behaviour. As conflict derives from a disagreement on positions due to a variety of different reasons, such as power, dynamic, beliefs and values, the linguistic strategies employed by speakers in asserting their agenda cannot be ignored. The analysis of language provides a solid insight into not only the structure of the conflict itself, but the position of the speakers involved. The discourse of conflictual situations in the workplace has been examined by Holmes and Stubbe (2003), Koester (2006), Handford (2010), Nguyen (2011) and Angouri (2012). In these studies the issue of dealing with conflict or potentially conflictual situations is outlined. The difficulty in obtaining natural data of conflict interaction is highlighted by Koester (2006), who outlines that speakers tend to avoid conflict in workplace interactions and highlights the difficulty of capturing conflicts, through recordings, when they do happen. This difficulty in

obtaining direct conflict talk in workplace interaction emphasises the need for further development in the area, as the negotiation and avoidance of conflict are key concerns of organisations. The high focus on interpersonal relationships in this study has so far emphasised the need for rapport and relational skills in transactional meetings in order to promote team work and a positive group dynamic. As establishing rapport and building social relationships at work requires a certain amount of politeness and face work (Handford, 2010; Koester 2010), the potential for dispreffered responses (Levinson, 1983), in the form of conflict or disagreement, is greater as participants are constantly negotiating transactional and interactional needs. This coincides with Handford's (2010) view of conflict in the workplace:

> In work situations, face-threats such as requests, orders, complaints and refusals are an occupational hazard, hence it could be argued that the workplace has a high potential for confrontation.

(Handford, 2010: 36)

This high level of transactional requests and the establishment of close working relationships means that participants in work-based interactions are constantly negotiating face. This is argued by Holmes and Marra (2003), who highlight the role of politeness in diffusing potential face threatening situations. The use of politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987) to avoid and negotiate in conflict has also been outlined by Koester (2006), who states that speakers negotiate tricky problems or conflict situations using politeness and solidarity strategies, occasionally also asserting their institutional power (p. 122). She highlights that, as maintaining good working relationships is important, co-workers tend to avoid outright conflict (*ibid*: 122). Although the social structure of the workplace indicates conflict as a negative phenomenon, it inevitably forms part of workplace dynamics whether through the negotiation of its avoidance or through highlighting power structures.

The area of conflict in workplace interaction has strong links to studies on disagreement. In examining the area of conflict, Grimshaw (1990: 1) asserts that whenever people engage with one another to interact and express their opinions, there is a latent but natural potential for disagreements to occur. According to Sifianou (2012), disagreement can be defined as the expression of a view that differs from that expressed

by another speaker (p. 1554). Bargiela-Chiappini et al (1997: 193) emphasise disagreement as a necessary part of the process of reaching agreement. Angouri and Bargiela-Chiappini (2011) discuss the benefits of disagreements in problem solving talk. They take the view that disagreement is not threatening to management and interpersonal relations; rather, it helps to address issues and creates discussion. As a difference in opinion is commonplace in transactional talk, speakers may revert to raising their points through disagreement. Problems may arise, however, when these disagreements turn to conflict. This issue is dealt with by Angouri (2012), who states that often directly related to conflict, disagreement has been presented as an act that may have repercussions for the interactants' relationships and the overall outcome of a task-oriented event such as a business meeting (p. 1555).

The possible repercussions of conflict on interactants' relationships are a focal point of this chapter. According to Grimshaw (1990):

> There is generally accepted belief that dispute modes vary developmentally, by gender, by participant relations of affect and of power, and by the nature and manner of the dispute.

<div align="right">(Grimshaw, 1990: 3)</div>

This highlights the role of participant relations in conflict patterns. As the members of the novice communities are constantly negotiating shared repertoire, the presence of conflict in their interactions can serve to hinder the development of rapport building and trust among participants. According to Langlotz and Locher (2012: 1591), conflictual disagreements are closely linked to negative emotional reactions, especially when one feels offended or treated rudely. This impacts greatly on rapport and the relational dynamic in the group, as members assert individual power in a direct fashion during conflict rather than expressing solidarity as a team. Angouri (2012) reiterates this point, stating that conflict has strong negative connotations in the workplace. She highlights the importance of having the necessary skills to manage such situations. Pointing out the damaging effects that conflict can have on employees in the workplace, she emphasises that senior employees would be expected to have the skills to either pre-empt or manage conflict (2012: 1566). The ability of employees to negotiate or mitigate in workplace conflict can therefore be considered a vital skill. Koester outlines how agreement and negotiation can be reached through the use of linguistic devices such as

indirect language, vague language, hedges and modals of possibility (2006: 134). The use of these linguistic devices in negotiation and the reduction of their use in conflict will be discussed later in this chapter. The following section will define conflict in order to place the current study.

8.2 Defining Conflict

According to Volkema et al (1996), conflicts are 'affect laden' situations involving anger, aggression, frustration, anxiety, or uncertainty (1996: 1441). This definition exemplifies the emotional effects of conflict and leads to the question of how conflict occurs in interaction. The difference in opinion of speakers is central to conflict theory; however, the form in which conflict occurs may be context dependant. Locher (2005) argues that a clash of interests is at the core of every conflict and that conflict does not need to be overt. In situations of verbal conflict, Waldron and Applegate (1994: 4), define verbal disagreement as a form of conflict, as they are taxing communication events (p. 335). As outlined in the previous section, disagreement was considered as having positive and negative effects on task-based activities and interpersonal relationships. Due to the potential directness of language in conflict however, it can be considered that disagreement as a form of conflict creates tension and stress among participants. The notion of disagreement as contributing to conflict can therefore not be ignored, and Kakavá (1993) goes so far as to state that disagreement can in fact constitute conflict since an argument is composed of disputable opinions or disagreements (p. 36).

The attack and defence structure of conflict can be related to the use of face threatening acts in interaction. According to Ruhi and Isik-Güler (2007: 683), as posited by Brown and Levinson (1987), in their ground-breaking study on politeness, face has been identified as a significant factor affecting the manner in which people engage in social interaction. Politeness theory indicates that conflict can also be linked to the production of face threatening acts in interaction (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Culpeper et al (2003) state that impoliteness can be defined as 'communicative strategies designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony.' (2003: 1546). The notion

of face, primarily introduced by Goffman (1967), implies that all speakers are principally concerned with how they are perceived by others and that a loss of face can lead to embarrassment or humiliation. An attack on the face of a hearer or participant may be viewed as face threatening act. Face threatening acts can be considered as actions that intrinsically threaten a speaker's positive or negative face wants through verbal or non-verbal communication (Brown and Levinson, 1987). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), negative face wants are defined as the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others. Positive face is the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others (p. 62). Face threatening acts may come about for a variety of different reasons and may cause great offence and embarrassment to a speaker. As face-threatening acts are not a desirable feature of communication, most community of practice members will work to avoid reaching conflict. Brown and Levinson argue that in the context of mutual vulnerability of face, any rational agent will seek to avoid these face-threatening acts, or will employ certain strategies to minimize threat (1987: 68). In their research on politeness theory, they outline a set of politeness norms to mitigate conflict and avoid confrontation.

As politeness is so crucial to business meetings and workplace interactions where relational interaction has become so important (Holmes and Marra, 2004), the violation of politeness protocol may lead to disagreement and, potentially, conflict. For this reason, the rapport building structures and relational skills mentioned in previous analysis chapters (see Chapters 6 and 7) are highly significant in assisting the avoidance of conflictual interaction. This role of relational skills in the workplace is highlighted by Holmes and Marra (2004), who argue that relational practice works towards constructing and maintaining workers' dignity, to saving face and reducing the likelihood of offence being taken, to mitigating potentially threatening behaviour, and to minimising conflict and negotiating consensus (p. 381). Due to the high level of face threatening factors attributed to conflict both socially and in the workplace, it can be considered that conflict creates a negative environment in a community of practice.

Although conflict can assist a decision-making process (Angouri and Bargiela Chiappini, 2011), it can also have implications on team work and solidarity by

threatening the core values that maintain a group's morale. Conflict will therefore be defined in this study as a breakdown in positive communication between mutually challenging speakers due to a face threatening act. This definition will serve to exemplify conflict in the data where two or more speakers engage in a turn structure deemed as conflictual. The notion of face threatening acts will be used to indicate the level of imposition or power loss caused to one participant by another.

The following section on conflict and power will discuss the role of power in both challenging and mitigation during conflict through face threatening acts. This will mainly be carried out through an overview of power in work based meetings in order to determine the extent to which power plays a part in initiating or mitigating conflict and how this is portrayed through language.

8.2.1 Conflict and power

According to Locher (2004: 37), language is one of the dominant means through which power is exercised. The complex power structures present in meetings provide an ideal context from which to analyse conflict. As participants in work-based interactions fulfil different institutional roles, there is potential for conflict if these roles are threatened or undermined by another member in the group. Angouri and Bargiela- Chiappini (2011) discuss the fact that power relationships are central to understanding the dynamics of interactions in professional settings in general. Handford (2010) explores power and constraint in business meetings through an analysis of turn-taking patterns. He discusses Hutchby and Wooffitt's (1998) view that the exercise of powerful discursive resources can be resisted by a participant and outlines the potential problems that modern workforces face with a rising emphasis on relational practice at work (Handford, 2010: 219). When discussing the role of power in interaction, Locher (2004) states that power cannot be possessed like a commodity; rather, it is constantly negotiated in and around relationships. She develops the notion that the more resources (linguistic or interactional) interactants can activate, the more powerful they can become (2004: 37). Norrick and Spitz (2007) state that:

> Social power is not a static entity, nor can it be located as a property of the individual. Rather it is an emergent reality that is mutually and dynamically achieved by participants in and through social interaction.

> (Norrick and Spitz, 2007: 1662)

This is displayed in groups where participants have not been assigned strict team roles and are encouraged to develop them during the course of their work. In the case of structured meetings, a conventional turn taking systematic route is set in place. This means that participants adhere to a certain set of institutional rules. Locher's (2004) and Norrick and Spitz's (2007) notions of resourcefully acquired power are also relevant in these circumstances as, although set power structures are in place, it is the participants who are inevitably in control of the interaction that ensues.

In the case of a structured meeting, the role of chairperson carries the most power. The chair's role in the meetings is to encourage a discussion of the agenda and ensure that all points of business relevant to the meeting are discussed. It can be considered that the chairperson generally enacts the role of leader in the sense that he/she may address direct questions on progress and other issues to present members. The role of chair in business meetings is discussed by Handford (2010), who highlights that, depending on the meeting type, the chair would be expected to take the greatest amount of turns. This agrees with Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997), who state that the most senior speakers speak for the most amount of time. As the role of chair can be considered of key importance in the power dynamics of meetings, any face threatening acts made towards the chair could be considered highly confrontational. According to Locher (2004), disagreement is an arena where power and politeness are likely to be observed together. She discusses the role of power in discourse and provides the following example:

> Example (2) A committee member in a business meeting takes over the role of chair during a meeting so that the real chair has to fight for the floor in order to recuperate his rights.

> (Locher, 2004: 1)

This example highlights the delicate power balance in meeting structures, placing the role of chair in a leadership category over other members in the group. The conflict that

may arise when the role of chairperson is contested can provide an insight into the power structures in a group.

According to Koester (2010), the dominant participant in interaction will express themselves more directly and use evaluative language in a conflictual situation, whereas the member with less power will use more vague language and hedging (p. 135). This indicates that, in a potentially conflictive situation, the speaker in the position of most power will use the most direct form of expression in the group. This view is similar to that of Lukes (1974), who defines power as being based on the assumption of latent conflict and real interests. He states that A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests (1974: 34). This viewpoint seems to indicate that a participant displays power when they behave in a way that damages the interests of another participant. In this instance, it could be considered that if a speaker performs a direct face threatening act on another speaker, they are in fact positioning themselves as a more powerful participant.

The use of strategic rudeness and impoliteness in exercising power has been examined by Ladegaard (2012) and Chang and Haugh (2011). Ladegaard (2012) uncovers how jocular insults may function as a means by which superiors maintain their position in the workplace and also as a socially acceptable strategy by which subordinates challenge their leaders. Chang and Haugh (2011) examine the use of strategic embarrassment in business meetings. In their study they discuss face threats and the ability of the speaker to embarrass the addressee into doing what he or she wants by topicalising unmet expectations and implying a mild reproach or complaint. These strategic uses of face threatening acts to employ power demonstrate the importance of power structures in the community of practice. As the members of both novice communities of practice develop their own understanding of meeting structures and dynamics, they also create a set of norms to be adhered to (Wenger, 1998). This indicates that each community will react and deal with conflictual situations in a manner most appropriate to the community norms they have formed. According to Locher, impolite behaviour is just as significant in defining relationships as appropriate/politic or polite behaviour (2004: 11). The manner in which conflict is initiated and mitigated

can therefore lead to a clearer understanding of the relationships in each novice community of practice.

8.2.2 Conceptualising a Conflict Framework

This section will outline the analytical approach undertaken in this chapter. The section will be divided into three parts. Firstly, the notion of face threats in conflict will be further analysed in order to uncover the types of interactions that may lead to conflict. Secondly, the sequential organisation of conflict will be discussed in order to identify conflictual turns in the data before providing an overview of the linguistic strategies employed by speakers in conflict.

Face Threatening Acts

As outlined in section 8.1.2 on defining conflict, a face threatening act can be considered as an action that intrinsically threatens a hearer's positive or negative face want through verbal or non-verbal communication (Brown and Levinson, 1987). So far in this chapter, the presence of conflict in the workplace has been attributed to the considerable amount of face work situations facing employees on a daily basis. As this study includes the notion of work-based interaction in a community of practice setting, it can be considered that the novice professional meetings of university students also require a certain amount of face work. As the novice professionals have established their own communities of practice and organisational cultures (Chapter 7), the levels of politeness or impoliteness employed in the meetings depend on the level of importance they attribute to either. This is asserted by Mills (2005), who examines the role of potentially face threatening or impolite activities such as insults, interruptions and direct talk as features considered central to belonging in particular communities of practice (Lycan, 1977; Tannen, 1981; Mills, 2005).

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), there are many factors which can be considered face threatening acts. In order to place the current study, the face threatening acts considered most relevant to situations arising in work-based interaction are outlined

below from Brown and Levinson's 1987 framework. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), face threatening acts can be considered as:

(i) **Acts that primarily threaten the addressee's negative face want, by indicating that the speaker does not intend to avoid impeding freedom of action**:

Those acts that predicate some future act and in doing put some pressure on the speaker to do the act:

    (a)   Orders of requests

    (b)   Suggestions, advice

    (c)   Remindings

    (d)   Threats, warnings, dares

Other acts include those that threaten the positive-face want, by indicating that the speaker does not care about the addressee's feelings, wants etc.

(ii) **To show that the speaker has a negative evaluation of some aspect of the hearer's positive face:**

    (a)   Expressions of disapproval, criticism, contempt or ridicule, complaints and reprimands, accusations, insults

    (b)   Contradictions or disagreements, challenges (speaker indicates that he thinks hearer is wrong or misguided or unreasonable about some issue, such wrongness being associated with disapproval)

Brown and Levinson (1987: 67-68)

From these examples of face threatening acts, it is clear that there is a high level of potential conflict in work-based interactions. As outlined by Handford (2010), the potential for conflict in workplace environments is higher than everyday multi-party conversation interactions due to the potential face threats at work. Koester (2006) deals with the way in which speakers negotiate these tricky situations using politeness and solidarity strategies. However, potential conflict may arise when a speaker does not employ politeness strategies such as hedging or vague language when expressing an order, suggesting, advising or expressing disapproval or disagreement (Brown and

Levinson, 1987). As outlined in Chapter 7, the transactional topics in the meetings of both novice communities of practice involve much deliberation on the fulfilment of tasks and deadline negotiation. When dealing with the designation of tasks and decisions on deadlines, the work-based interactions of the communities were structured in two ways:

(a) The community of practice work as a team to construct an appropriate task delivery structure and openly discuss deadlines;

(b) The chair or powerful member of the community directs task delivery and deadlines to the group members after an open discussion.

In the case of the chair directing task delivery and deadlines to the group, the use of politeness strategies can be considered crucial to maintain the face of all members of the group (see Chapter 5 for the use of pronouns in giving orders). In professional meetings, the chair is usually a senior employee (Handford, 2010) and, therefore, has the power to exert authority over other members. The balance of power in novice professional meeting with an acting chair is unlike the professional arena as all members share equal responsibility of the project. Although studies have indicated the use of disagreement in aiding problem solving and fuelling creativity (Bargiela Chiappini and Harris, 1997; Angouri and Bargiela-Chiappini 2011), an open display of power through direct orders, disagreement or other face threatening acts by any member of a novice professional community of practice could be considered highly face threatening and conflictual. This study will examine the role of face threats in instances of conflict and conflict avoidance in order to determine how novice professional deal with this context of interaction.

Conflict Structure

In examining how conflict is initiated and terminated through speaker turns, the use of power play and linguistic features in conflict can be identified. An analysis of these patterns in conflictual interaction can lead to further comprehension of how speakers threaten each other's face and may provide a framework for speakers to avoid unnecessary situations of tension in work-based interaction. The role of sequential

organisation as outlined in Conversation Analysis theory (Drew and Heritage, 1992) is an important factor in examining the turn taking processes in conflictual interaction.

Conflict has been explored linguistically by researchers interested in structural elements of discourse (Maynard, 1985; Nguyen, 2011). As conflict talk involves the disagreeing viewpoints of two or more participants, the structure in which it occurs is vital to understanding the core reasons behind the breakdown of communication which lead to conflict initiation. The turn taking system of conflictual interaction has been examined by Maynard (1985), Vuchinich (1987), Coulter (1990), Gruber (1996), Hutchby (1996), Muntigl and Turnbull (1998), Norrick and Spitz (2007) and Nguyen (2011). These studies highlight that conflict usually follows a certain structural pattern. This normally concerns a turn taking sequence where speakers display their apparent disagreement on a certain issue or with each other. In verbal conflict, the sequences must consist of three turns where speakers mutually challenge one another (Norrick and Spitz, 2007). Nguyen (2011:1756) states that conflict talk only occurs with the appearance of a second opposing turn, which retrospectively marks the arguable move as the beginning of the conflict talk sequence. As the speakers must assert their stance in conflict, the second opposing turn is crucial in dictating the tone that the conflictual episode will take. Without the challenge from a second speaker, conflict will not occur, thus disarming the conflictual sequence. This is discussed by Norrick and Spitz (2007), who state that conflict sequences continue as long as the participants insist on their own standpoints or persist in contradicting or accusing one another. According to Nguyen's (2011) study on a conflictual sequence in the interaction of a novice pharmacist and patient, conflict was comprised of four general areas, namely:

(a)   Conflict Initiation
(b)   Conflict Resolution
(c)   Orientation to conflict after resolution
(d)   Conflict Termination

Conflict initiation refers to the three part turn system outlined by Maynard (1985) and comprises three parts: (a) ongoing talk that contains an "arguable move," (b) initial

opposition, and (c) counter-opposition. This will be outlined in the data through an analysis of the tone of the turns taken by speakers in conflict.

Conflict Resolution refers to the point in the conflict where an understanding or resolution appears to be met. This can be instigated by a third party (Nguyen, 2011) or by one of the speakers involved in the conflictual sequence.

Orientation to conflict after resolution highlights that conflict talk does not always end with resolution. According to Nguyen (2011), post-conflict resolution talk includes crucial moments for the involved parties to mend alignments that may have been established earlier in the conflict resolution. She states that post-resolution orientation to conflict may create the opportunity for the conflict to be renewed in talk (p. 1764).

Conflict Termination refers to the end point in the conflictual episode. Vuchinich (1990) identifies five ways of concluding conflict sequences, namely: submission, compromise, stand-off, withdrawal or dominant third party intervention.

The analysis section of this study will examine the data for these conflict structures, particularly conflict initiation, conflict resolution and conflict termination, in order to further analyse the linguistic strategies employed by the participants in asserting their power roles. These three areas are seen as the most crucial in determining how participants orient towards and negotiate away from conflict in interaction.

Linguistic features of Conflict

This final point of analysis focuses on the linguistic strategies employed by participants in conflictual episodes. In this section Koester's (2006) notion of subjective stance in discourse will act as the main frame for linguistic analysis. Stance has been defined by Lyons (1977) as linguistic subjectivity. Biber and Finegan define stance as the lexical and grammatical expression of attitudes, feelings, judgements, or commitment concerning the propositional content of a message (1989: 93). As stance involves the expression of emotion in interaction, it can be conveyed through both linguistic and non-linguistic means. Ochs (1996) and Fairclough (2003) note that the linguistic realisation of stance not only expresses speaker subjectivity but may also and

simultaneously index social identity and relationships in the speech situation. Biber et al (1999) state that in conversation, emotive and attitudinal stance can be conveyed through a number of non-linguistic means (such as body posture, facial expression and gestures) and paralinguistic devices (such as pitch, intensity and duration) (1999: 967). According to Rühlemann (2007), stance is a means of establishing bonds of communion and refers to the way in which one relates to events or propositions. Due to the emotional connection in expressing stance, the speakers' use of language in conflict is vital to uncovering their position in the conflict. Analysing stance provides a means of understanding the emotional position of speakers when they are engaged in a face threatening act, either as the initiator, receiver or negotiator of conflict.

In the case of conflict, the role of the negotiator is fundamental to understanding a groups' power dynamics. Koester (2006) states that discursive identities are not static but negotiated through talk, and speakers may invoke their institutional identities or play them down (p. 135). This could signify that speaker roles and power structures can shift depending on how they negotiate their institutional identities. Koester continues to develop the notion that relational work done by a member can be perceived as negotiation. The role of negotiator in conflict can be deemed as powerful in interaction as they place themselves in direct line of the conflict in order to address the issues at play. Locher also states that interactants can exercise power in order to achieve their own aims or to resist the aims of others (2004: 2).

Strategic negotiation in conflictual circumstances can lead to a speaker hiding their true emotional stance in interaction, employing linguistic features to avoid conflict. Brown and Levinson (1987) discuss potential linguistic features to avoid disagreement in interaction. They highlight the role of safe topics, token agreement, and hedging opinions as a strategies to which speakers may claim common ground, twist their utterances so as to appear to agree or to hide disagreement or employ vagueness about their own opinions so as not to be seen to disagree (1987: 112-116). The expression of conflict on the other hand disregards these strategic devices to claim common ground.

When examining the language of conflict, Koester (2006) states that one of the ways in which conflictual discourse is marked linguistically in relation to non-conflictual discourse is by the increased use of emphatic markers of subjective stance and the simultaneous reduction of indirectness and hedging devices (p. 131). Strong and forceful expressions of subject stance include the following types of interpersonal marker:

- Deontic modals expressing obligation and necessity (e.g. have or should)
- Epistemic modals expressing strong commitment (must, surely, obviously)
- Intensifiers, exclamations and expletives
- Evaluative lexis and idioms

(Koester, 2006: 130)

She also outlines that items which make the discourse more explicit, removing any vagueness or ambiguity, also contribute to a forceful and unhedged mode of expression (2006: 130).

The expressions of negotiative strategies in claiming common ground and subject stance in conflict sequences will be analysed in order to determine speaker roles and power positions in conflict. The presence of lexical patterns in conflict will also be discussed with a view to uncovering stance in conflictual situations. In all, this study will apply three main principals to the analysis of conflict in the data. Firstly, an overall evaluation of potential face threatening acts will be considered before a discussion of the linguistic features of conflict in expressing power and stance in key stages of a conflictual sequence.

8.3 Analysis of conflict

The analysis of conflict will consist of applying the frameworks discussed to areas of conflict in the engineering and marketing data. The data from both novice professional communities will examined in order to determine how conflict occurs in interaction, the

role that conflict plays in their community of practice and the effects conflict has on the participants in both groups.

8.3.1 Example of Conflict

The main instance of conflict in the subcorpus can be found in the engineering data. During the course of the engineering project meetings, tensions begin to build due to power struggles, lack of relational focus and tighter deadlines. This leads to a direct confrontation between two of the most prominent members in the group. The transactional focus by members in the engineering meetings means that relational values do not constitute a norm in their community of practice. Speakers employ politeness strategies in meetings; however, they do not frequently reinforce solidarity through discourse (Holmes and Marra, 2004). This example of conflict in the data could be considered an effect of these factors.

8.3.2 Conflict Initiation

The following example of conflict occurs when the two main members of the engineering group engage in a discussion on deadlines. The meeting is being chaired by Simon who has so far asked each of the group members for their progress reports. When it comes to the point of discussing deadlines, he states: *+I yeah this is gonna be interesting. Eh that passes the deadline date for the our own deadline date and I may be slightly late on that eh so maybe we should discuss that. Um.* This utterance precedes the conflict that ensues, highlighting that the speaker is aware of the potential problems that could arise from his delay with the deadline. Example 8.1 situates the conflict that occurs due to the face threatening act of expressing disapproval (Brown and Levinson, 1987), performed by Tim. The conflict will be analysed using the conflictual sequence framework (Nguyen, 2011) in order to observe the full structural sequence of the conflictual episode.

Example 8.1 Conflict Initiation

1 Simon: Erm okay so deadline's gonna pass erm.

2 Pete: Who's gonna make the <$=> who's gonna make the </$= > deadline?

3 Tim: Me.

4 Simon: Okay that's that's good that's one erm **well I think this is why did it early** cos we
            knew that things were gonna overlap a bit erm.

5 Tim: Okay but in reality how far behind the deadline are you?

6 Simon: Hm?

7 Tim: How far out of reach are you from the deadline?

8 Simon: I'm not gonna know until we get to the deadline I'm afraid+

9 Tim: Erm.

10 Simon: +the next few days is gonna predict all that.

**11 Tim: <$OL> Okay so you're now saying that you're not gonna hit the deadline but
                you don't know how far behind you are?**

12 Simon: That's exactly what I'm saying.

13 Tim: Okay but you should know roughly where you expect to get it done by.

14 Simon: Erm okay eh twenty seventh of April at eleven twenty five.

15 Cara: <$E> Laughs </$E>

16 <$M>   <$E> Laughter </$E>

17 Simon: Is that alright?

18 Tim: Thank you very much that's really helpful.

19 Simon: I know but it's unhelpful of you asking my exact date because+

20 Tim: Well no no what I'm saying.

21 Simon: +well if you were in a range of five days.

The potential for conflict in this face threatening situation for Simon the chair person, can be seen in turn 3, where Tim very confidently and abruptly affirms that he is going to make the deadline by stating: *Me* when the question of who can make the deadline is put to the group. Simon immediately defends his lateness on the deadline by referring to a previous agreement made by the group: *well I think this is why did it early cos we knew that things were gonna overlap a bit erm*. Here, Simon attempts to assert himself

as a team player by evoking the use of inclusive *we* to appeal to the team (see Chapter 5 on pronouns). This attempt is, however, taken as a dispreffered response by Tim who directly states: ***Okay but in reality how far behind the deadline are you?***. The raised intonation and content of this utterance directly accuses Simon's inability to reach the deadline. Tim highlights the problem as highly individual through the use of the pronoun ***you,*** instead of using the pronoun ***we*** which would have been more collaborative and inclusive in this context. This utterance by Tim can be considered as initiating conflict (Nguyen, 2011). Simon's response, a simple ***Hm?,*** provides Tim with the opportunity to readdress his question in a more polite form. However, Tim directly poses the accusatory question to Simon on a second occasion: ***How far out of reach are you from the deadline?*** Simon employs a politeness strategy in his response and his use of: ***I'm afraid*** at the end of his utterance before stating: ***the next few days is gonna predict it all***, highlights a desire to disengage from the conflict. His utterance is overlapped by an infuriated Tim who demands: ***Okay so you're now saying that you're not gonna hit the deadline but you don't know how far behind you are?*** Tim has chosen to interpret Simon's response as an indicator of passive stance on the issue of the deadline. This in turn provokes a humorous, albeit passive aggressive reaction, from Simon who directly states: ***That's exactly what I'm saying***. This could be perceived as a direct challenge to Tim who is obviously attempting to expose Simon's inability to provide a set date for the submission of his work.

Turn 13 can be considered the *third turn* in the initiation phase of conflict (Maynard, 1985) as Tim feels he has been counter challenged by Simon through his direct response. In this third turn of conflict initiation, Tim once again exposes Simon by forcing him to provide a deadline date for the submission of his work. What is interesting in this case is that although Simon is the acting chairperson of the meeting, Tim has taken over the role of chair by initiating a line of questioning on Simon's deadline dates. This can be considered a highly face threatening act as Simon's face is being directly undermined in front of the entire group (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Simon reacts to this counter attack by engaging in sarcastic humour to disarm Tim evoking laughter from the other members (see Chapter 6 on humour). This can be seen to heighten Tim's subjective stance further as he makes a sarcastic return with the

utterance: ***thanks that's really helpful***. This highlights that although Simon has used humour in an attempt to disarm Tim, he has in fact further provoked him. Although the use of humour creates momentary alleviation for the group members, demonstrated through laughter, the tension is reinitiated in the next turn with Tim's sarcastic response. This highlights that the ameliorative effects of humour may only last till the next speaker's turn, especially if the one who initiates the humour has less power in the current context or is an unratified participant in the group (Goffman, 1979, 1981).

8.3.3 Orientation to Conflict

In example 8.2 the conflict can be seen to continue despite Simon's attempts at humour to relieve the tension. This can be considered as *orientation to conflict* (Nguyen, 2011) as Tim continues to engage in conflict even though an opportunity to alleviate the tension has been provided.

Example 8.2 Orientation to Conflict

Tim: <$OL> **Okay but what I'm saying** is do you think that you're not gonna make Friday but you'll make next Monday?

Simon: **I already told you this** and said I was probably gonna be a week late **we talked about this yesterday** but.

Tim: <$OL> Okay but what I'm saying is you told me you haven't told the rest of the meeting cos they have to know as well.

Simon: Right.

Tim: Cos **everybody's in this group** and what I'm saying is you <$=> if you </$= > if you're not gonna make that Friday fair enough **we put our hands up we** go "I've I'm late" whatever but then **you have to say** "but I wanna get it done by Tuesday yeah? Which means **I've** got the weekend to work on it I'm a couple of days late I'm still pretty much there" rather than going.

Simon: <$OL> I'm gonna be about a week late.

Tim: **Okay** so you're gonna deliver.

Simon: <$OL> Sorry for the inconvenience Tim.

Tim: So is this a week late for t= the deadline?

Simon: Yes.

Tim: So you'll deliver Friday the fifteenth?

Simon: Probably around then maybe a few days in between give or take I'm not sure.

Tim: <$OL> **Okay** right.

Simon: Is that okay with you?

Tim: Well **I'm just concerned** now because you're saying a few days in between and that's the fifteenth two days after that seventeenth eighteenth you might get it delivered now we're really we're two weeks behind the deadline there that's+

Simon: Okay.

Tim: +that's what **I'm concerned** about well week and a half.

Simon: <$OL> Do you know **what I'm concerned** about. **You're getting so stressed out let's take a deep breath.**

Tim: **I no I'm not getting stressed out I'm merely saying** that the reason we put these deadlines in was to make sure that we had enough time to get a decent report done cos because we had enough to see each other cos in reality none of us has seen what anyone else has done yet.

This section indicates that Tim has previous background knowledge on the subject of Simon's deadline when Simon states: ***I already told you this and said I was probably gonna be a week late we talked about this yesterday but.*** As Simon has already discussed this issue with Tim in private, the fact that Tim openly exposes him in front of the group in such a direct manner could be considered a direct and strategic attack (Ladegaard, 2005) on Simon's face. This could be attributed to the fact that Tim perceives himself to be the most powerful member in the group, as previously indicated in Chapter 7 by the length and frequency of his turns in discourse. Tim evokes group solidarity by stating: ***everybody's in this group*** as the main excuse for exposing Simon on the late deadline issue. In order to justify his attack on Simon, Tim outlines the group protocol on deadline delays: ***we put our hands up we go I've I'm late*** and uses emphatic markers of subject stance through the use of a deontic modal of obligation and necessity: ***you have to say but I wanna get it done by Tuesday yeah?*** This can be perceived as highly aggressive and face threatening discourse by Tim, who is in essence making an example of Simon in front of the group. Simon takes a passive stance in this situation. However, he again asserts his annoyance with Tim through employing the use

of sarcasm: ***Sorry for the inconvenience Tim*** and ***Is that okay with you?*** By directly addressing these statements to Tim, he outlines that the conflict is Tim's concern rather than a concern of the group.

Intensifiers

The use of lexical intensifiers in subjective stance to assert dominance can be found in extract 8.1 and 8.2. Tim's use of *okay* at the beginning of the utterance conveys a dominant stance from the outset and can be perceived as highly conflictual. In both extract 8.1 and 8.2 the use of *okay* at the beginning of the utterance as an intensifier was found a total of 8 times in the following forms:

> Okay but in reality
>
> Okay so you're now saying
>
> Okay but you should know
>
> Okay but what I'm saying (x2)
>
> Okay so you're gonna deliver
>
> Okay so we all need
> Okay right

These examples of lexical intensifiers can be considered a strong indicator of subjective stance (Koester, 2006). The use of *okay* at the beginning of a face threatening utterance intensifies the tone of confrontation by dismissing the hearer's contribution. The following example from extract 8.1 highlights this use of okay as an intensifier:

> Simon: That's exactly what I'm saying.
>
> Tim: **Okay** <u>but you should know</u> roughly where you expect to get it done by.

Tim's use of ***Okay*** in this example highlights his indifference to Simon's utterance and works to reinforce subjective stance through the use of a deontic modal ***<u>you should</u>*** ***<u>know</u>***. The lack of hedging in Tim's discourse also emphasises his irritation highlighted further by the aggressive tone he employs in both extract 8.1 and 8.2.

8.3.4 Conflict Climax

Example 8.3 highlights the most heightened section of the conflict. The direct conflict begins again in this extract as Tim reacts to Simon's assertion that the group knows how to write a report.

Example 8.3

Simon: <$OL> Look <$H> quiet up </$H> Tim we know how to write a report **come on**.

Pete: <$OL> Yeah well that's that's that's done Monday onwards.

Tim: Yeah now I'm not saying you don't know how to write a report **I'm really saying that you f= seem really quite relaxed** about the fact that+

Simon: Erm. <$E> Sharp exhale of breath laughter </$E>

Tim: +missed the deadline whatever. **Simon you've no** Simon you've just said **be fair** you did just say "I'm not gonna make the deadline I'll be about a week late oh but give or take two or three days". That's a ten day window.

Simon: <$OL> Yeah <$H> to have a windo= </$H> no no two or three days well yeah it could be a ten day window then.

Tim: Yeah.

Simon: Do you wanna put a ten day window then just in case?

Tim: No I don't. No at all.

Simon: **Right okay.**

Although the topic of discourse had moved on to the discussion of the report, the conflictual topic of the deadline is brought up by Tim again as he responds to Simon's face threatening remark: *we know how to write a report come on*. In this extract the conflict becomes more heightened between Tim and Simon, both participants speak in raised voices and Tim directly addresses Simon: *Simon you've no Simon you've just said be fair you did just say "I'm not gonna make the deadline I'll be about a week late oh but give or take two or three days"*. This echoing of the other speaker's words as a typical feature in arguments has been outlined by McCarthy (1998: 112-114). By using echoing as a device, speakers use their interlocutor's words in order to strengthen their own argument (Kotthoff, 1993; Koester, 2006). The conflict comes to a head when Tim questions Simon's commitment and dedication to the project in a direct face threatening act through expressing his concern as to Simon's delay through the use of evaluative lexis:

Tim: I'm j= **I'm just a bit concerned** that **you seem quite happy doing whatever.**

Simon: I'm not relaxed I'm working as hard as I can.

Tim: I'm not s= no.

Simon: I've not stopped working I don't know what you want from me.

The use of *I'm just a bit concerned* in this context acts as an exemplifier of Tim's emotional stance before he makes a direct attack on Simon's work ethic by stating *you seem quite happy doing whatever.* Simon responds to this attack of face by challenging Tim's authority stating *I don't know what you want from me*.

Evaluative Lexical items

The presence of evaluative lexis plays a significant role in the confrontational approach of the speakers in the conflictual sequence. Evaluative items referring to concern were frequent in the interaction. These consisted of the following:

> My concern (x5)
> My only concern
> My other concern
> My biggest concern
> I'm just concerned (x2)
> I'm concerned

Overall, the use of evaluative language to indicate disapproval and concern occurred 11 times in the data mainly by Tim. The use of these phrases was seen to contribute to conflict in the data as it was considered a provocation by the hearer. In the example of this form of subjective stance found in extract 8.2, Simon reuses Tim's recurring phrase indicating concern:

Tim: +that's what **I'm concerned** about well week and a half.

Simon: <$OL> Do you know **what I'm concerned** about. **You're getting so stressed out let's take a deep breath.**

Tim: **I no I'm not getting stressed out I'm merely saying**

This example indicates that the language employed by the conflict initiator is crucial to outlining the route that the conflict will take. By using an unhedged expression of concern Tim once again provokes Simon by highlighting his deadline issue as a problem. Simon use of *You're getting so stressed out let's take a deep breath* indicates an attempt to regain power by telling Tim to calm down. Tim's reaction to this highlights his frustration with Simon *I no I'm not getting stressed out* and his intonation indicates that he is set in a defensive stance.

8.3.5 Conflict Resolution-Negotiation

In example 8.4 a member of the group decides to intervene as the conflict between Tim and Simon has taken on a recurring pattern.

Example 8.4

Maneeb: **Can I <$=> can I stop you guys </$= > can I stop you guys+**

Simon: Go on.

Maneeb: **+because it's not being constructive and it's just enough.**

Simon: <$OL> **I know** it's not constructive at all.

Tim: Okay.

Maneeb: **<$OL> Can you <$=> can you </$= > please slow down both of you I I em eh em eh.**

Simon: <$OL> I think this is actually getting quite **unprofessional** it's it's I'm getting I'm working as hard as I can+

Maneeb: Yeah.

Simon: +and I I'm saying I'm gonna be a week late I've already said that if you can't accept that then that's on you.

Maneeb: **I think everyone takes Tim's point of view you know on board yes but I also eh putting him under pressure it doesn't either help him so we just need to find a.**

Simon: <$OL> Well yeah I under= I understand that we.

Tim: <$OL> I'm I'm not putting him under pressure **I'm merely asking if** i= because **my concern** is and this is **my biggest concern** this is where **we set the deadlines was I knew** people were gonna miss it.

The role of negotiator can be observed in extract 8.4 during conflict resolution as Maneeb intervenes in the argument and directly asks permission to stop Tim and Simon from speaking *Can I <$=> can I stop you guys </$= > can I stop you guys*, before directly telling both participants that their argument is not being constructive *+because it's not being constructive and it's just enough.* He acts as a self-appointed mediator and speaks on behalf of all members of the group. As soon as Maneeb intervenes, Simon underlines his distaste at the entire situation by emphasising how unprofessional he believes the argument has become *<$OL> I think this is actually getting quite unprofessional it's it's I'm getting I'm working as hard as I can+.* Maneeb reacts very diplomatically to both participants in his intervention and evokes the power of group solidarity to emphasise his point. *I think everyone takes Tim's point of view you know on board yes but I also eh putting him under pressure it doesn't either help him so we just need to find a.* His use of hedging through the use of *I think* symbolises his desire to abstain from conflict as he defends Tim's point of view before acknowledging that Tim has acted in a forceful manner toward Simon *putting him under pressure.* This provokes a defensive stance from Tim, *I'm I'm not putting him under pressure I'm merely asking if i= because my concern is and this is my biggest concern.* Although Tim has had to indirectly acknowledge that pressurising Simon is a negative act, he once again begins to form his argument on the deadline issue. In his utterance: *we set the deadlines was I knew people were gonna miss it*, Tim asserts his perceived role as leader of the group. Although he uses inclusive *we* in asserting that the group set the deadline he then switches to *I knew* when providing the rationale as to why the deadlines were set (see Chapter 5). This demonstrates the power struggle between individual and group identities in this community and could be considered a potential cause of this conflictual sequence.

8.3.6 Conflict Termination

This final example from the conflictual episode deals with how the conflict is terminated. The direct conflict is terminated as Tim overtly takes over the role of chairperson and begins to provide long examples of why the group decided on deadlines before ultimately shifting the topic to work-based activities. The role of chairperson, however, is then taken over by Maneeb who acted as the mediator in the direct conflict.

This indicates the power of the negotiator in interaction and is demonstrated in example 8.5.

Example 8.5 Conflict Termination

Maneeb: **<$OL> Eh who who can deliver before the eighteenth Friday well before the eighteenth?**

Tim: Before the eighteenth?

Maneeb: Before the eighteenth Friday week p= eh who can deliver at the end of this week?

Tim: <$OL> The fifteenth of. I can deliver this week.

Maneeb: No because we're we're thinking of because you're gonna be away anyway and if we all send you+

Tim: Mm hm.

Maneeb: +our reports to read **you won't be able to read all of it anyway in your holidays** so some of them will brought back.

Tim: <$OL> I'll I will <$E> Laughs </$E> **I plan to work during my holiday**. Um this is eh M= **my concern** is I read slowly **my biggest concern** and I need time to read erm and I I think I don't know if you all plan to read everybody else's part of the report that's the other thing. I plan to read everybody else's part of the report it's going to be a three or four hundred page report+

Maneeb: Yeah.

Tim: +I can't read that in two days I physically can't+

Maneeb: **Yeah yeah.**

As detailed above, the role of chairperson is taken over by Maneeb. He asks the group who can deliver before the 18th. What is interesting is that in responding, Tim once again takes over the floor providing a delivery date to suit his own interests: *I can deliver this week*. Maneeb's hedged response *No because we're we're thinking* once again evokes group solidarity as he speaks on behalf on the other members through the use of inclusive *we* (Chapter 5). Maneeb's next utterance is a crucial display of power as he brings up Tim's impending holiday as a reason to rearrange a deadline: *because you're gonna be away anyway and if we all send you our reports to read you won't be able to read all of it anyway in your holidays so some of them will brought back.* This statement is a direct questioning of Tim's work ability as he has previously said that he will deliver regardless of his holiday. This use of previous background knowledge (Brown and Levinson, 1987) in a face threatening act places Maneeb in a position of

power and urges a direct response from Tim. Tim's response is defensive as he solidifies his dedication to the project: *I plan to work during my holiday.* The use of subjective stance markers can be found again in this sequence as Tim states: *Um this is eh M= my concern is I read slowly my biggest concern and I need time to read.* In stating that he needs more time to read the others work, he once again highlights his position of power in the group by deciding that the other members should adhere to deadlines. He continues to assert his power by taking a ten line turn which outlines his viewpoint on the urgency of adhering to the deadline. This highlights that the conflict in this situation has followed a fully structural pattern and that the initiator of the conflict is not willing to back down on his initial stance even though the direct conflict has now ended. As neither party concedes and Tim continues to maintain his original stance, it can be considered that the conflict terminates in a stand-off (Vuchnich, 1990), in other words opposing turns are produced until the topic or speech activity changes (Nguyen, 2011). As Tim has humiliated Simon, the other speakers in the group are reluctant to contest him and it is Maneeb who directly addresses Tim from a power position. As Maneeb takes on the role of chair in this instance by asking who can make the deadline, Tim is swift to change the dynamic and reclaim the role of chair even when faced with a face threatening act.

The conflict in this data highlights a number of relational and linguistic factors. The organisation of conflict follows an identifiable turn taking pattern exemplified by a confrontational sequence. The use of intensifiers and evaluative lexis also serves to enhance conflict and highlight a speaker's subjective stance and can contribute to provoking the hearer. The level of relational solidarity does impact on the potential of conflictual situations in the community of practice and conflict can be seen to impact on the group's morale in the discourse that follows the argument. A lack of solidarity in the engineering group is highlighted through the perceived betrayal of trust that instigates this conflict. As Simon and Tim have discussed issues relating to work outside of the meeting beforehand, it is surprising that Tim decides to take such a direct route in exposing his disdain toward Simon in such a public manner. The level to which these novice professionals engage in the project, however, indicates the level of seriousness which they attribute to their work. This is highlighted in the data when the conflict was described as *unprofessional* by Simon, indicating that the project simulation has

succeeded in emulating a professional project. The avoidance of conflict could have been achieved in this meeting through a more empathetic approach to speaker disagreements and an overall emphasis on solving the problem as a team rather than as individual participants.

8.3.7 Conflict Avoidance

The marketing group do not enter such a direct conflict at any stage in the data. The students generally work quite constructively together during their meetings and, as outlined in Chapter 6, place a high value on rapport management. The lack of direct conflict in the marketing data could perhaps be due to the fact that they are more inclined to behave strategically when confronted with face threatening issues. Example 8.6 highlights the lengths that the marketing students go to in order to avoid conflict. In this extract the students try to convince Charles to write an email to an absent member of the group. He displays his reluctance in doing so as it appears he does not want to engage in the face threatening act of giving orders or making requests (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

Example 8.6 Conflict Avoidance Marketing

Charles: **No it's just awkward.**

Nita: Why?

Sarah: <$OL> Why?

Jairul: <$OL> Why?

Sarah: You wanna.

Charles: **Cos if I email it fe= seems like I'm bossing her and I think she feels like   that.**

Sarah: No no you cos **you need to tell her because you need to** <$=> because you need to </$=> say you're going to pick up the Dictaphone.

Charles: <$OL> will email you.

Jairul: <$OL> **Dude but the year's gonna end**.

Charles: I'm already doing that.

 Silvia: <$E> laughs </$E>.

Sarah: Yeah so you're emailing her **you might as well pop it in**.

Charles: It's a text message.

Sarah: Why are you texting her?

Vicky: <$OL> Text her.

Jairul: **Well why don't you just tell her when you go to he= her place be like oh could   you do this?**

Sarah: <$OL> **Charles manners.**

Silvia: **By the way**.

Sarah: Yeah **face to face**.

Jarul: **By the way. Thank you but by the way.**

Vicky: <$OL> **U= use the O'Neill charm on her**.

Sarah: Yeah use the O'Neill Valentine's charm.

Charles: <$OL> Okay okay. Em I'll let you know what.

Sarah: <$E> laughs </$E>. **I'll let you know what we discussed for you to do. Sarah will   email you   later.**

This extract taken from the marketing data is a clear example in demonstrating the student's strategic form of avoiding conflict with an absent member of the group at a meeting. Here, Charles must send a message to Jodie who is absent, detailing the work she must complete for the next meeting. Charles is very aware that by sending *her* a text he risks sounding authoritative: *Cos if I email it fe= seems like I'm bossing her and I think she feels like that*. As Charles can be considered to convey leadership qualities in the group (which he is aware of), he is cautious to appear too firm with Jodie who also displays aspects of leadership identity at different points in the data. The other students seem to find the idea that Charles is finding difficulty in telling Jodie what to do quite entertaining. Jairul's utterance of mock frustration, *dude but the year is going to end*, acts as an encouraging push for Charles to send the message. The group fully supports Charles as the leader on this task of conveying the message to Jodie, and the participants try to find different ways to assist him in tactfully approaching the situation. Sarah's utterance: *you need to tell her because you need to* places Charles in a position of leadership and responsibility for the message. Sarah is also very tactical in her approach to telling Charles what to put in the message: *Yeah so you're emailing her you might as well pop it in*. The use of *pop it in* suggests that Charles should make light of the issue of giving Jodie's work to perform. Jairul offers another way of dealing with the potentially conflictive situation: *Well why don't you just tell her when you go to he= her place be like oh could you do this?* Here, Jairul suggests that Charles should

hedge the message to Jodie when he sees her. The use of ***oh could you do this*** could be considered a highly tactical hedging device in conflict (Koester, 2006) and would allow Charles to appear less face threatening. Sarah agrees with tactic in passing on the order ***face to face***. This implies that the students are very aware of how face threatening the situation could potentially be and by suggesting that Charles should hedge his language and speak to Jodie face to face, they collaboratively assist in the avoidance of a potential conflict. Sarah eventually dictates the text message that Charles sends and takes on some of the responsibility of the order: ***I'll let you know what we discussed for you to do. Sarah will email you later.*** The use of *inclusive we* in the text message demonstrates the groups cohesion in making decisions and conflict avoidance. Although Charles is indicated as the leader who must send the message, the other students are given the space to vocalise how they think the delicate situation should be approached. The use of humour in the extract serves to convey a sense of harmony in the group. This is seen when Vicky states: ***U= use the O'Neill charm on her***. In this utterance Vicky captures the funny side of the situation and also credits Charles with the power of persuasion over Jodie ***her***, the person who must be tactically dealt with in order to avoid conflict.

From the analysis of the conflictual sequence in the engineering group and the efforts to avoid conflict in the marketing group, wide distinctions can be made in terms of the appropriateness of conflict in both groups. It is clear that the marketing group therefore have a tendency to avoid conflict at all costs and are very aware of how they are perceived by the rest of the group. This would suggest that belonging to the 'in-group' (Cutting, 2002) is very important to them and that they appreciate good team work from other group members through achieving common ground (Koester, 2006: 62).

The engineering group, on the other hand, are highly individual in their working style, which leads to leadership struggles and conflict in the group. Students in the engineering group are not as relationally focused as the marketing group which leads to the use of direct language and unhedged orders in their meetings. The constant use of these linguistic devices eventually leads to a long sequence of conflict which underlines the power struggles that exist in the community of practice throughout the duration of

their project. The lack of this kind of encounter in the marketing data can be attributed to the higher level of rapport and time spent on relational activities leading to solidarity (Holmes and Marra, 2004) in their community. The emphasis that the marketing students place on team morale and participant relationships is indicated by their highly strategic use of interpersonal language and negotiative linguistic devices.

8.4 Conclusion

The examination of the presence of conflict in the engineering novice community highlights key communication issues within their community. Although the group members have established community norms that feature a structured working system, there seems to be a rift among participants as to what constitutes as impolite behaviour (Mills, 2005). The strong power structure that can be observed in the group through the presence of a rotating chair in the meetings can be considered as having a negative effect in this situation of conflict. As members display a stronger concern for power than team solidarity, the willingness and ability to negotiate conflict becomes difficult. The presence of a dominant member in the group in this situation has a potential effect on team morale due to the direct face threatening attacks made on members. The members of the marketing community did not face such an outward display of conflict in their meetings. The use of direct language and unequal power structures is deemed inappropriate by this group, highlighted by their efforts as a group to defuse a potentially conflictive situation.

Overall this chapter dealt with the issue of conflict in the novice community of practice and found that face threatening acts may lead to conflict if not appropriately hedged by speakers (Brown and Levinson, 1987). It also highlighted that hedging and indirect or vague language serve to defuse conflict (Koester, 2006). The structure of conflict was considered in terms of turn systems in the engineering data and was found to consist of distinct elements, mainly initiation, resolution and termination (Nguyen, 2011), allowing for the identification of conflict patterns. It was also found that speakers employed features of subjective stance in conflictual discourse (Koester, 2006). The emergence of the conflictual sequence in the engineering data highlights the importance

of relational talk and rapport building in work-based interactions as highlighted in the marketing community (Holmes and Marra, 2004). It also demonstrates the damaging effect that conflict can have on the participants' relationships (Angouri, 2012) as speakers were reluctant to share their views after the conflictual episode. The defusing of conflict in the marketing group through collaborative and strategic conflict avoidance measures highlights the students' awareness of rapport and harmony in order to maintain team morale.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

9.0 Introduction

This study focused on the meetings of two novice professional groups working on Authentic Workplace Projects within the disciplines of marketing and engineering. Underlining the communicative strategies present in these meetings and determining how they were linguistically realised was the core question of this study. From this question arose two sub-questions: a) *How do these strategies contribute to the development of communities of practice?* b) *Does the use of communicative strategy vary between Engineering and Marketing communities of practice?*

The data for this study was collected as part of the 1,500,000 word NUCASE (Newcastle University Corpus of Academic Spoken English) project. The meetings from engineering and marketing Authentic Workplace Projects were chosen for analysis and consisted of a 240,000 word sub-corpus of NUCASE. The specific assignments set to both student groups from different faculties were designed to mirror an authentic project from the marketing and engineering industries. The focus on achieving professional goals also meant that the development of communicative skills inherent to professional practice was a focal point of these assessments. For this reason, the role of communicative strategy in interaction formed a core part of this study. The term communicative strategy was employed to describe the forms of language used in achieving the development of team building and leadership skills in the interactions of the participant meetings. In determining the communicative strategies performed in order to construct leadership, rapport and negotiation, the Community of Practice framework (Wenger, 1998) was adopted in addressing the different approaches and styles of each participant group. The role of communicative strategy in uncovering community practices and culture was at the forefront of this study.

Both student groups were considered under the term *novice professionals* in order to contextualise the data in terms of professional industry. Placing the student meetings within a novice professional context allowed for a detailed analysis of communicative strategy in both communities of practice. This study can be considered original in that it examines the area of novice professional language in project meetings within the

university context. Research on novice interaction has considered novices under supervision in the field of medicine; however, the present study focused on the unsupervised meetings of students modelling an authentic workplace context through their work on authentic projects. In this respect, this study captures the essence of professional development as it focuses on the communicative strategies displayed in two very different working environments, highlighting the defining interactional issues of contrasting communities of practice.

9.1 Findings

In addressing the main research question and subquestions, the analysis chapters focused on underlining the key linguistic processes employed in fulfilling the communicative strategies of each participant group. A key issue for analysis was the development of communicative strategies in achieving work-based goals in communication. A comparative analysis of the data was undertaken by applying the community of practice framework to both groups in the data (Wenger, 1998). The analysis identified four key areas of linguistic features in fulfilling communicative strategy. These have been outlined as: Pronouns in establishing identity through leadership and team work, Humour in rapport management and solidarity, Topic in defining organisational culture and Politeness in conflict and negotiation.

The link between pronouns and the negotiation of identity was discussed in Chapter 5. The use of pronouns *I* and *we* were considered core to the construction of group identity, expert identity and hierarchical identity in the novice communities of practice as they allowed for the interpretation of collective and individual identity. It was demonstrated that the marketing group used *inclusive we* on a highly cohesive level, highlighting the level of rapport and solidarity in the group. The engineering group also used *inclusive we* in promoting group cohesion although a high presence of *I,* in voicing personal opinions, suggested a more individual approach to work based activities. The use of pronouns in conveying expert identity was deemed relevant in both data sets, as participants used the pronoun *I* in asserting ownership of ideas and knowledge. The use of pronouns as a communicative strategy was considered in both strategically unifying

and segregating the participants in the two communities of practice. Through examining the use of pronouns in the data, the manner in which both communities constructed joint enterprise could be observed through the negotiation of power and roles in interaction.

The use of humour as a communicative strategy was found to contribute to rapport management and group cohesion in Chapter 6. In examining the role of humour as a communicative strategy in this study, it was ascertained that both communities employed humour to fulfil different communicative goals in the meetings. These included humour in the use of ingratiation, social play, repair and social control. The marketing community were seen to perform humour as a communicative strategy in a highly collaborative way, whereas the engineering community tended to veer toward a more individual use of humour. The use of humour to fulfil different interactional functions demonstrated that the marketing group used humour as a highly cohesive, social strategy. The engineering group, on the other hand, employed humour in hierarchical social control and repair. The use of humour was considered as indicative of the shared repertoire of each community of practice as it conveyed the routine practices of both groups.

An analysis of the different topics in the interactions of both novice professional communities of practice, in Chapter 7, served to underscore the different organisational cultures present in both communities. The presence of relational topics, in particular, demonstrated key differences in the working styles of the marketing and engineering communities. Relational topics were considered core to the practices of the marketing communities, whereas they appeared very infrequently in the engineering data. The hierarchical attributes of topic change and control were evident in the engineering community, who also placed a great emphasis on the completion of transactional goals in interaction. The importance placed on different topics and patterns in both communities highlighted the organisational structures of both groups. This allowed for a more conclusive insight into the shared repertoire of the novice professional communities of practice, as it allowed for clear distinctions to be made on the core values of each community.

Chapter 8 dealt with the application of communicative strategies in situations of conflict and negotiation. The area of politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987) proved essential in highlighting the different approaches to potentially conflictive situations in the data. The analysis indicated the presence of face threatening acts in the data and examined communicative strategy in dealing with potentially conflictive situations. It was established that the engineering community were more inclined to engage in a conflictual episode due to the complex power structures in the meetings. This was demonstrated through the analysis of a conflictual episode through between the engineering participants, which drew attention to underlying tensions and power struggles in the group. The use of linguistic features in intensifying the conflictual episode were examined, as were the features in negotiating conflict. The marketing group did not engage in such an evident example of conflict. An example of conflict avoidance, in the marketing data, demonstrated the group's use of communicative strategies (hedging and repair) in order to maintain harmony. The importance placed on politeness and power in both groups highlights another aspect of shared repertoire through demonstrating the appropriateness of certain behaviours over others in each community.

In summary, the analysis of the linguistic features of communicative strategy in the data served to highlight the different practices in the novice professional communities of marketing and engineering students. The notion that each group of students constructed a novice professional identity was demonstrated through the examination of their use of language in defining shared repertoire and joint enterprise. The contrastive interactional processes of both the marketing and engineering group served to demonstrate the vast differences in the values, beliefs and practices (Wenger, 1998) of both communities. The engineering community attributed a high level of importance to technical expertise, precision and professionalism. This was demonstrated through the use of communicative strategy in asserting hierarchical roles and structured interactional patterns based on transactional goals. The value placed on expert knowledge in this community of practice led to the construction of expert members and a hierarchical system. The presence of a chair person led to very structured meetings. This level of structure was also reflected in their use of communicative strategy as the members used

pronouns, humour and topic to solidify structure, work ethic and professionalism as valuable cultural norms in their community of practice.

Analysis of the marketing community of practice identified the group as highly socially conscious and relationship oriented. The high use of relational topics and humorous sequences in communicative strategy emphasised a focus on group cohesion. The ability to engage in humorous sequences and relational talk was considered of key importance to belonging to the in-group of this community of practice. The notion of team morale was prevalent in the negotiation of shared repertoire in this community, and members strived to maintain a cohesive, rapport driven environment in their meetings. In the marketing community, participants used linguistic elements of communicative strategy in order to establish group cohesion, rapport and social competence as core values of their community of practice.

The students from both groups displayed elements of the communication skills listed in the project outlines, albeit in different ways. This highlights the different approaches to group work and communicative strategy in different disciplines and industries. An interesting finding from the study was that as the students or novice professionals in both communities of practice do not have a mentor or experienced leader to follow and learn from, they must construct their own interpretation of what constitutes a professional norm in their community. This leads to the natural development of self-appointed experts and the emergence of leaders in both communities of practice. From this study, it can be maintained that the background discipline can influence the novice professionals use of communicative strategies. The more technically focused engineering group place more emphasis on structure and technical work. This can be considered efficient in terms of productivity; however, it can lead to the underdevelopment of communicative strategies in rapport management and group cohesion. The socially focused marketing students consider team morale and rapport management to be the most valuable asset to group work. This leads to the development of strong communication skills in social interaction; however, it can also lead to the exclusion of less communicatively competent members.

9.2 Limitations of the Study

This study considered the communicative strategy of two participant groups from marketing and engineering faculties. This can be considered a limitation as, although the data allowed for the comparison of communicative strategy in two groups of novice professionals, an assumption cannot made on the state of communication across the disciplines of marketing and engineering. Further research could include the study of a wider number of participant groups in order to construct a detailed discipline based comparison. The application of a professional context to analysing the data allowed for the analysis of professional communicative strategies in novice professional interactions. This allowed for the examination of language in determining key areas of workplace communication skills. Another limitation of this study was that the study focused solely on the novice professional context, it did not consider samples from the wider professional community. Building on this research, further studies in the area of novice professional language could consist of a comparison between the use of communicative strategy in higher education contexts and professional workplace environments. This could serve to identify similarities and differences in the language and practice of novice professional and professional groups. In highlighting these differences in communicative strategies, further development and training could be carried out in order to prepare novice professionals for professional environments.

9.3 Conclusion

This research has shown that communicative strategy plays an important role in the construction of novice professional communities of practice. The strategic use of language in workplace contexts allows for the negotiation of roles and identities, the development of relationships and the exertion of authority. It is the participants who define the most appropriate form of interaction for their community. In this study, I have demonstrated how language allows for the interpretation of communicative practices and the establishment of cultural norms with different communities. It can be considered that both universities and professional organisations can benefit from further studies in the area of novice professional interaction. As the development of cultural norms and group identity are so crucial for every group in society, so it is in novice professional contexts. Training in effective communication and communicative strategy

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can lead to enhancing the experience of Authentic Workplace Projects and encourage the development of communicative awareness across disciplines. As seen in this study, the value of language and communicative strategy in underpinning our identity, both individually and collectively cannot be underestimated. It is through constructing these identities and behavioural patterns through language, that we shape our experience and existence in society.

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APPENDIX A—Concordance lines for *I think* Engineering

N	Concordance
56	sort of er layout of the the write up. I think it's the one that you used. Did
57	. If you go on the N file and just look for I think it's er a Word document called
58	down. Yep. Yeah no that's good yeah. I think we should go with it that way.
59	. Yeah. Right okay. Because that's I think what that's the gravel. Yeah.
60	. Right okay. I I'll take it off you. Well I think this is good because we've
61	. Yeah. So I need to do them. Yeah. I think that this maybe the one thing
62	it. Yep. Yeah. Alright okay. Erm I think that is a lot more reliable than
63	answers for fatigue. Yeah. Yeah. So I think yeah the fatigue thing is going to
64	I was like I said before erm er I had I think from your module the er.
65	with the way of the gravel. Is that right? I think so. I'm not I'm not completely
66	here and try to avoid it. Yeah. I think the only way to do that is by
67	rather than a fixed support. Okay. So I think you have to accou=. So there's a
68	be er a concentration area I don't think. I think the most concentrated area will
69	. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Right erm we yeah I think we all know what we need to do
70	just crack on. Start cracking on. Yeah. I think so yes erm. When is best for
71	this week. Yeah cool. But yeah. Right I think it's good. We're not. No-one's
72	. So you go onto the website at all? I think you go on Download dot com.
73	something wrong with their website I think. And like yeah. It's like cannot be
74	be accurate or something. If you try. I think if you try Download dot com.
75	. After Christmas this is roughly who I think will probably do each chapter. In
76	all. Doesn't matter. But it's just for me I think that's almost like a better angle
77	in management report. Well yeah. I think it's twenty percent is it should be
78	that it's worth twenty percent but. I think it's actually going to be such a
79	he's got a lecture? Er yeah one till two I think. Er two till three sorry. Ah that's
80	Or do you just wanna start afresh? I think start afresh because the one I've
81	. Or that was the last week of exams I think. Erm I think yours starts around
82	the last week of exams I think. Erm I think yours starts around about the
83	starts around about the same time I think. Yeah mine starts the thirtieth so
84	. Week beginning. The Monday? I think so yeah. Oh you wanna make it
85	there's no time loss. Er . Sorry? I think there is one small solution.
86	. The most important thing for Ellie I think are my C P values. Yes. What

APPENDIX B—Concordance lines for *I think* Marketing

N	Concordance
225	where's that? Uh if you open mine I think it's this one? Yeah. Um go to
226	. This is a quarter of everything so. No. I think the the graphs need to be a bit
227	Or my bit? Survey Monkey where d= I I think I've got this. That that's yours.
228	yours. Um you've got it. It is in. Um I think it should be this one. Survey.
229	done one. Yeah yeah. Okay. Yeah. So. I think I have my . We can sort of work
230	Uh Pip sent it to me. It's i= it's. Yeah I think so yeah. So yeah I've got it.
231	"I'd have worked one more". "Revival" I think the word was. I don't want this.
232	can't find my interviews at the moment. I think I might have saved it on desktop
233	Aladdin. Oh yeah. I'll take that any day. I think you look more like Aladdin.
234	the main report? It's in the research bit I think or the main report one or the other
235	. I don't know why. . Ate too much I think I've stretched my stomach. What
236	I you don't remember I don't remember. I think I was after about two days of
237	that uh uh". "You've got a shit accent." I think it'd be quite good if I actually tried
238	over him all morning. And then he I think he sensed that I was gonna leave.
239	. To be fair I do think I've lost it a bit but. I think it I you could write stuff but that
240	by Brian Keenan. Anyone? No? It was I think it was pretty you could do what
241	. What else did you do at A Level? I think I've just the stronger brain .
242	stronger brain . That's a good A Level I think but uh. Business and history.
243	just gonna have a little quick nap Burp . I think it's so funny and it's just like
244	No that's good. Who's this? Omar? I think we need to get some
245	. Although like. Are we gonna put that+ I think we still need something to be th=
246	colours to. Uh um I'm quite yeah. I think we cou= can make uh
247	. . We should keep them one colour I think. Saint Oswald's. Colour. Of.
248	colours. Huh. Oi. Oh wait. Oh no. I think purple. Yeah purple would work.
249	do a few of these for in-depth interviews I think they'll be quite good. We can do
250	in the so if it breaks up that's why. I think that's just yeah I think she's got
251	up that's why. I think that's just yeah I think she's got the wrong end of the
252	said that uh. They like it in paper form I think in newsletters. Do they? I don't
253	Do they? I don't remember. I don't know I think the way she was like. Well I
254	fixed their attention . And an inde= I think in the left one. So that's quite
255	just an idea? Yeah they did. They did I think but it's not like the one of the

APPENDIX C— Conference Papers related to this study

- **January 2013**

  Presented a paper at IVACS Annual Symposium, Mary Immaculate College, titled '*From task to chat: Topic patterns in Novice Communities of Practice'*

- **June 2012**

  Presented a paper at IVACS Research Centre Sixth Biennial International Conference hosted by Leeds Metropolitan university on humour titled, 'Laughter and Dynamics' presenting data from PhD study

- **January 2012**

  Presented a paper at IVACS Annual Symposium, Cambridge University titled '*Pronouns and Playing the Part'* presenting data from PhD study

- **May 2011**

  Presented a joint paper with Dr Steve Walsh at Corpora Galore Conference, Newcastle University, titled *'Applying Corpus Linguistics and* Conversation *analysis in the investigation of small group teaching in Higher Education'*

- **January 2011**

  Presented a paper at the IVACS Annual Symposium *Approaches to Analysing Discourse* at Newcastle University titled *'Exploring a framework for analysing academic language'*