Communities of (mal)practice? Exploring the interface of corpus linguistics and social theory

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Rationale

- A reappraisal of how and why the communities we study are, in fact, communities of practice (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998)

- In this process, questioning the ways in which we borrow and adapt social theories

- More than more or less loose/pragmatic adaptations of frameworks for connecting atomised data?

The basic framework (Wenger 1998)

Practice

Joint enterprise

Mutual engagement

Shared repertoire
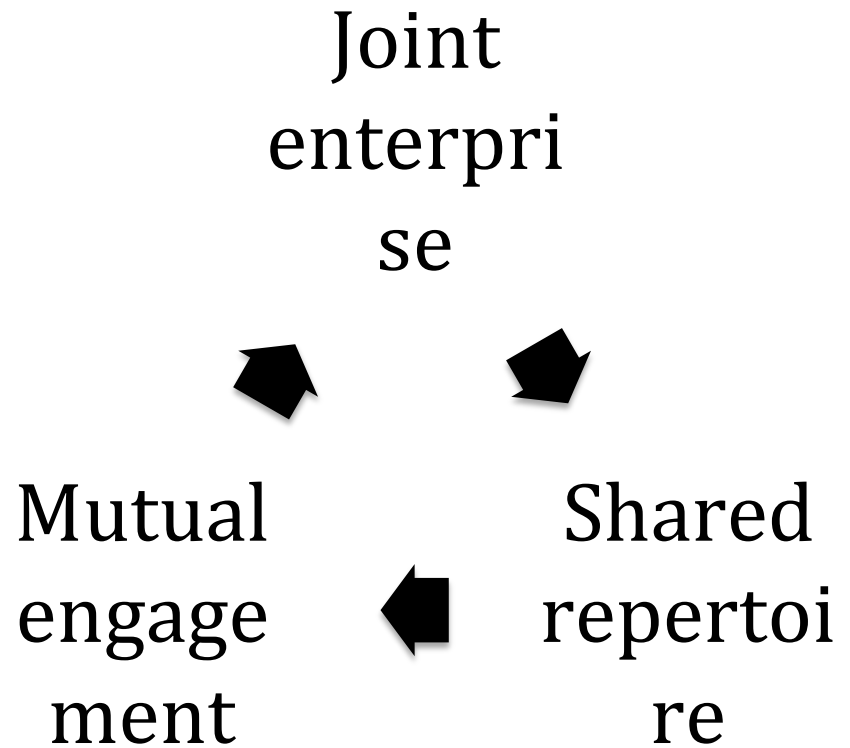
Is IVACS a community of practice?

Doing things together

Negotiated enterprise

Membership

Community maintenance

Stories, artefacts, styles, concepts, etc.

Central conundrum

- Just because a random group of people participate in an activity, or share a social identity does not a CoP make (see also Eckert & McConnell Ginet 1992; King 2014)

Situated Language Use

- a bowling team, a book club, a friendship group, a crack house, a nuclear family, a church congregation...(Eckert 2006: 683)

The community of practice is thus a rich locus for the study of **situated language use**, of language change, and of the very process of **conventionalization** that underlies both.

Indicators a community of practice has formed

- Sustained mutual relationships - harmonious or conflictual

- Shared ways of engaging in doing things together

- The rapid flow of information and the propagation of innovation

- Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process

- Very quick setup of a problem to be discussed

- Substantial overlap in participants' descriptions of who belongs

- Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise

- Mutually defining identities

- The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products

- Specific tools, representations and other artefacts

- Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter

- Jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones

- Certain styles recognised as displaying membership

- A shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world

The data (in case you didn't know…)

	C-MELT	Family corpus
Length of recording	3.5 hours	1 hour
Number of speakers	33	6
Number of words	39,975	12,531

Why apply social theory?

- Intuitive feel for context
- Record / transcribe
- Disembodied data / looking for patterns
- Putting it all back together

In defence of small corpora

- Do we apologise too much?
- Limitations = Design criteria, representativeness, balance, ethics, no real theory, empirical, divorced from context, transcription…
- What about the advantages?
- Advantages = participant involvement, transcription, tagging, iterative approach…

Wooly mammoth

From theory to data

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

A pattern?
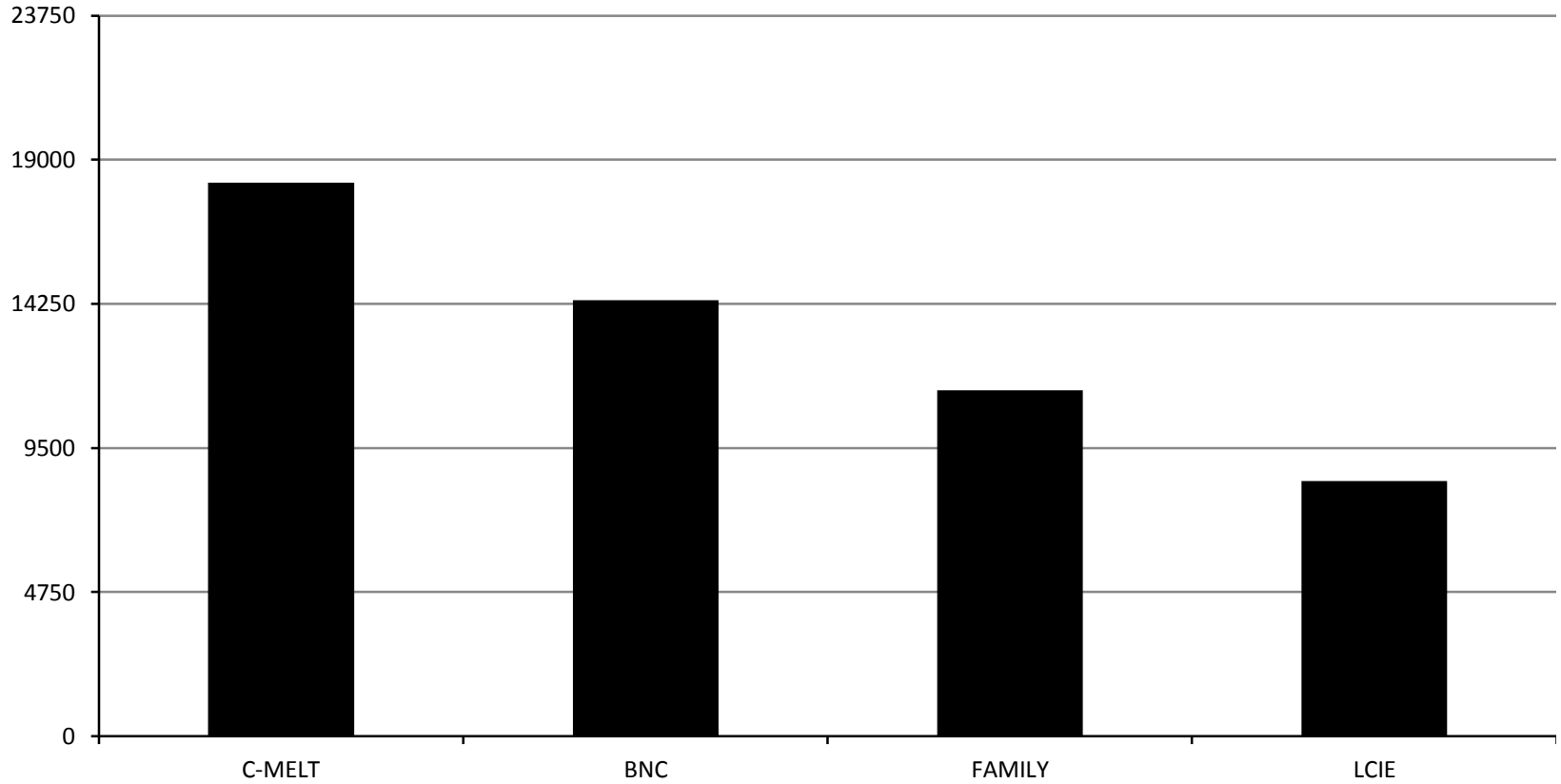
Drilling down into the data: *We*

<$1> What year were ye in Cyprus?

<$2> In ninety five.

<$3> Four.

<$2> Five.

<$3> Oh right.

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

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

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

<$5> Ninety+

<$2> Oh it's four so.

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

<$3> Yeah that's+

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

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

<$1> Does that mean me or everyone?

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

<$7> Got a date or something?

<$E> Laughter <\$E>

<$6> No just confused here.

<$E> All laugh <\$E>

We in the family - inclusive

**<$1>**   It's nothing got to do with <$O2> presents <\$O2>.

**<$2>**   <$O2> Shut up <\$O2>.

**<$3>**   <$E> laughing <\$E> Come here [name] shut up.

<$1>   It's nothing to do with presents and happiness it's got to do with celebrating the birth of Jesus.

<$5>   Okay so **we** won't give you <$O1> any presents <\$O1>.

<$1>**   <$O1> **We're not <\$O1> <$O2> allowed be happy <\$O2> <$O3> because **we** are Catholic <\$O3>.

**<$2>**   <$O2> [name] shut up <\$O2>.

**<$3>**   <$O3> You're having no <\$O3> presents so are you?

<$5>   I'll say a prayer for you.

<$1>   **We** are Catholic. **We** are not allowed be happy. It's all about the birth of Jesus.

   <$E> speaker two laughs <\$E>

We in the family - exclusive

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

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

<Son> Are you doin corpus stuff?
<Daughter> Ah **we** hit at it last semester like.

<Son> +aren't **we** already twinned with Quimper?
<Daughter> It's in France.

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

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

Breakdown of *WE* (tagged) in CMELT
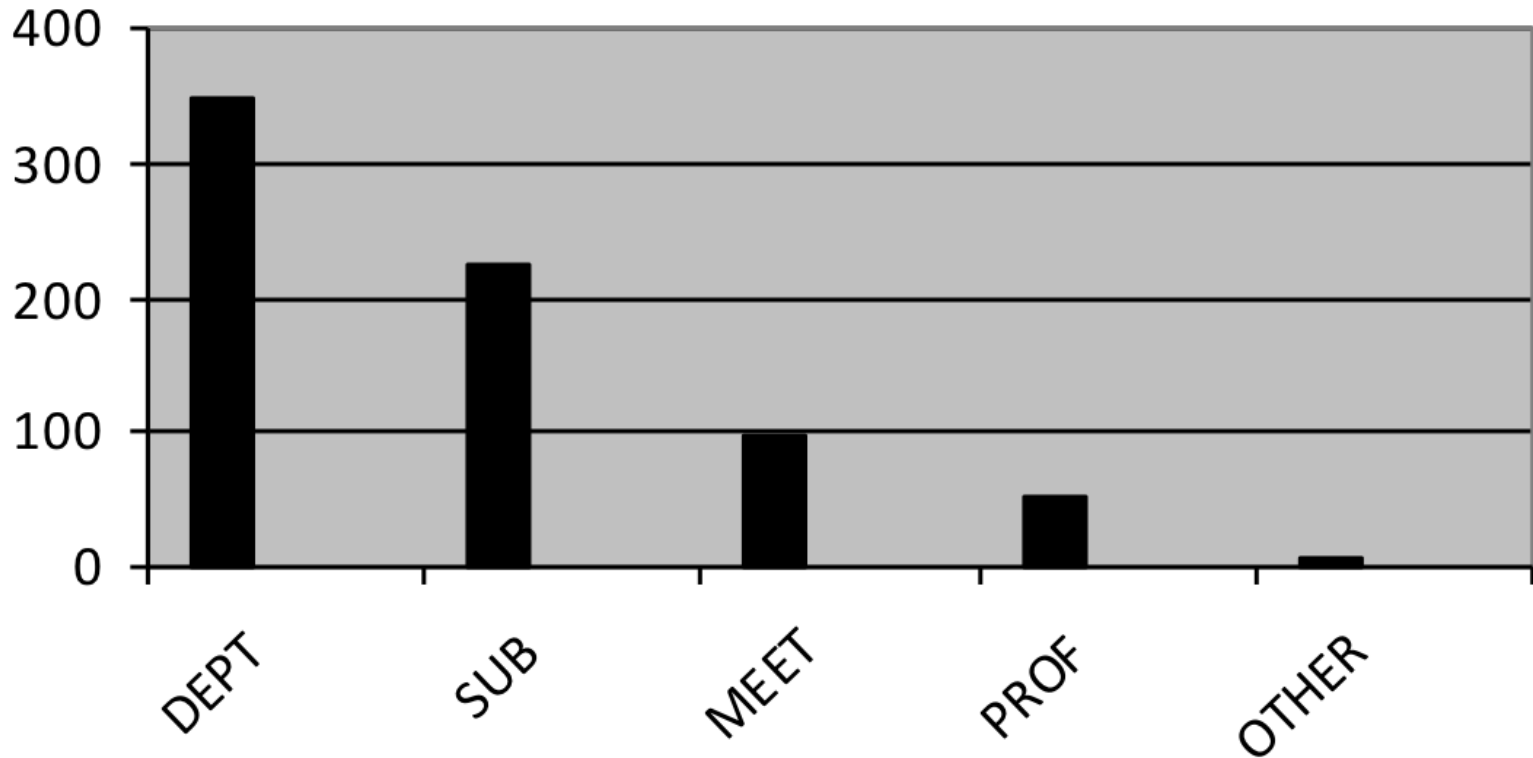
From data to theory

Julia: Because that's what **we're** trying to do **we're** trying to make **them** study and learn English. But making **them**

pay for not is not. Because there are some students th= that two hundred and fifty is not that much money and it won't touch them and there are others. Who it really

hurts and that's total= **that's just an issue that is so far removed from learning English.** I don't know.

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

Kate: Yeah.

Anna: Exactly.

From data to theory

<$7> Yeah <$G2> they have to come down to me and like they can go back to class when they have the book. Not my problem if they don't call. They get no classes until they buy a book.

<$1> But have they paid for the classes?

<$7> They've paid for the classes they haven't paid for the book.

<$1> But can they not look into one of the students' books beside them?

<$7> No. And nor can they get the book off them.

<$E> Sound of male speaker sigh and tutting </$E>.

<$8> Oh but I mean if they've paid for their classes they should really be allowed to sit in.

<$7> They need to come down to buy the book. That's how you solve the problem of making sure everybody buys it. **So like it or not that's how we're going to deal with it.** Em. Tommy and John.

<$1> Oooh.

<$E> laughter <\$E>

<$3> Scary yeah.

Extract

<Daughter> Jimmy where are you going with the robin?

<Son 1> <$H> Eating him <\$H>.
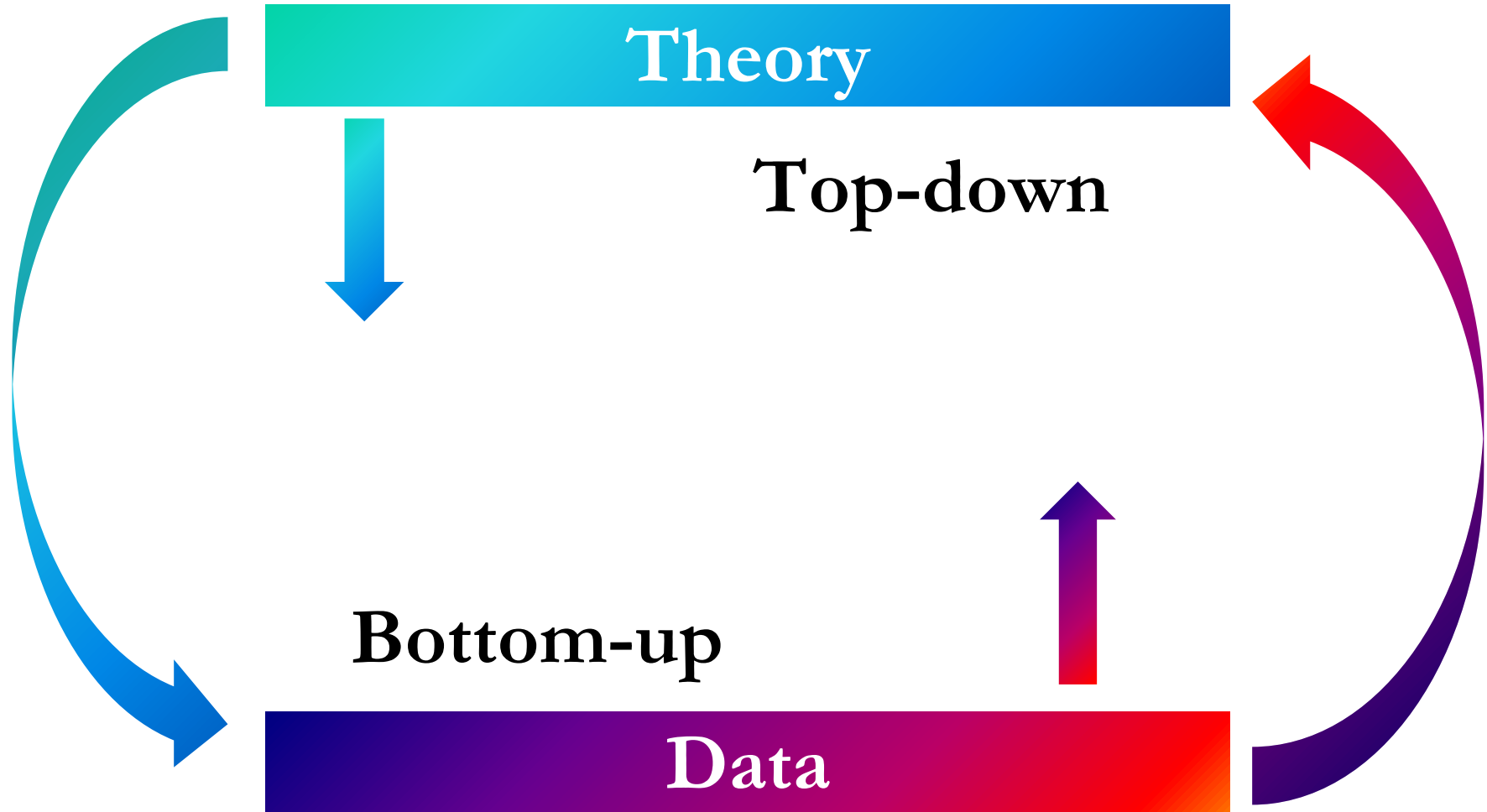
<Mother> Jimmy nothing goes on the tree that isn't silver or glass.

<Son 2> Or approved by mum.

<Mother> Now+

<Son 1> He's white.

<Mother> +take it off.

Relationship between theory and corpus data

Clancy and Vaughan (2013)

- In the workplace the pragmatic work *we* does is much more complex due to the fact that the members of that community do not share the same degree of closeness. Therefore, in addition to identifying the key community in-groups and out-groups, in the workplace *we* is also required to 'perform more complex functions in relation to politeness' (p.69).

From **social learning** to **corpus based** analysis

Social learning
Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998

Sociolinguistics; Linguistic anthropology
Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992; Eckert 2006

Corpus-driven analyses; Corpus-based discourse analysis
Vaughan 2008; Vaughan & Clancy 2013

We

- Prototypically collective
- '"we" is always simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, a pronoun of solidarity and rejection, of inclusion and exclusion' (Pennycook 1994: 175)
- Complexity of reference: encoding and decoding

Extract

<Son 1>   But Goldie's a girl's name like.

<Daughter 1> Yeah b= **we** didn't give her the name.

<Son 1>   What?

<Daughter> <$O> **We** didn't give her the name <\$O>.

<Son 2>   <$O> **We** didn't give her the name <\$O>.
Although she was so young she wouldn't notice   it.

<Son 1>   She wouldn't have a clue shur.

<Son 2>   **We** could've changed it. **We** could call her am
Alex.

<Son 1>   Shit for brains.

<Daughter> Alex.