

Hurry up baby son all the boys is finished their breakfast: A socio-pragmatic analysis of Irish settled and Traveller family discourse

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Abstract

The present study utilises an integrative theoretical approach that combines variational pragmatics and community of practice to examine two corpora representing spoken language collected in the home/family environment: one from a middle class Irish family and one from a family belonging to the Irish Traveller community, an ethnic minority group. A distinguishing characteristic of the study is its corpus-based methodology that enables the identification of a number of high frequency linguistic items that are characteristic of the pragmatic systems of both families. These items include features of the referential system such as *you*, *we*, *that* and *now* and vocatives such as *daddy*, *hun* and *baby son*. Highlighted also is an anomalous lack of hedges, usually a prominent feature of Irish English. These items display evidence of variation, while a number of similarities are also unearthed in both families' pragmatic practices. It is argued that the similarities between the two families' pragmatic practices are largely due to the influence of micro-social factors such as *audience*, *shared immediate situation* or *social roles*. The differences are attributed to the impact of macro-social influences such as *age*, *socio-economic status* or *ethnicity*. The present study also highlights the dual benefits of combining small-scale corpus linguistic studies to the study of variational pragmatics and community of practice. Analysing family discourse is not without its challenges, however, it is argued that examining language in one of its most natural contexts can lead to a variety of beneficial insights that have potential ramifications far beyond the immediate discipline.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Introduction to the study

Many people in Western society, indeed worldwide, consider family living as the most important aspect of their lives (Bernardes, 1997). Families are an integral part of society and, therefore, one could logically infer that family discourse should form an integral part of the study of linguistics. Yet family discourse, and indeed other areas of intimate discourse such as that between partners or spouses, seems to have been relatively neglected by linguists for a number of reasons. Primary among these is the difficulty linguists have traditionally faced in collecting intimate data (McCarthy, 1998). People in contemporary society view family life as intensely private and so are unwilling to allow linguists to intrude upon it. This problem is in a sense amplified in the present study as the Irish Traveller Community are probably the most marginalised community in Irish society (Pavee Point, 2005a). However, access problems should not, and, indeed cannot, provide linguists with an excuse not to adequately attempt a description of the typography of all instances of everyday, habitual spoken language. One criticism of small-scale corpus linguistic studies, of which the present study is an example, is that there are difficulties associated with generalising any findings therein (see Chapter 4). However, generalisations about language based on large data samples comprised of easily accessible (and financially lucrative) spoken discourse types may be critiqued for their bias towards that very data. Moreover, large-scale corpus analysis tends to treat language as a homogenous entity, largely ignoring the insights that can be provided from approaches such as sociolinguistics which take an a priori more heterogeneous view. It is argued here that small corpora are the ideal starting point for a research conversation about intimate spoken discourse. This study is, therefore, an attempt to begin this conversation in some way and perhaps provide an opening for further study in order that our bank of knowledge may grow.

In addition, interaction with one's family is so habitual for many of us that it is easy to forget the fundamental importance of family discourse. Varenne (1992: 13), in an ethnographic study of an American family, offers an interesting insight into the nature of family discourse:

Everyday life is made up of a multitude of small, if not small-minded, immediate concerns. Dinner has to be cooked, children put to bed, furniture selected and purchased. Such things have to be dealt with immediately if everything else is to proceed. And yet most dismiss these activities as irrelevant to the business of life.

Varenne's argument that everyday family life has been dismissed as 'irrelevant' appears to be supported when research into family discourse is compared to that into other context-types such as service encounters or academic discourse. For example, the present study proposes to employ a corpus linguistic methodology. If a researcher were to begin a corpus-based study of, for example, academic discourse, s/he has as a starting point corpora such as the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE)¹ or the fast-emerging Cambridge, Limerick And Shannon Corpus (CLAS)². However, the analyst of intimate data frequently finds him/herself in the far corners of many of the larger corpora, blowing the dust from small amounts of data that often appear to be a nod toward the notion of representativeness. Another difficulty associated with the study of family discourse is that due to the fact that the family unit, however this unit may be conceptualised, is familiar to us all, opinions about this context-type are readily proffered and yet it is rare indeed that these are informed or supported by any form of systematic or empirical evidence.

The present study aims to examine the pragmatic features of intimate, spoken Irish English recorded within the home/family environment. More specifically, it focuses on the similarities and differences (or variation) between the pragmatic language systems of two very distinct Irish families; one from the settled, mainstream community and one from the Traveller Community. Blum-Kulka (1997a: 12) states that the family 'serves as a critical social context in which children become socialized to local cultural rules regarding conversation.' This concept of learning *local cultural rules* is echoed in Crystal's (2000) assertion that the home dialect is the 'base dialect', the starting point

¹ The Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) is a 1.8 million word corpus of transcribed academic speech collected from a wide range of speech events and locations across the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

² When finished, the Cambridge, Limerick And Shannon Corpus (CLAS) corpus will comprise one million words of spoken English used in the hotel management training context.

for a person's language experience. Therefore, the family constitutes one of the primary sites where people first learn, amongst other things, the rules of conversation. The family also functions as a primary unit of language socialisation. Blum-Kulka (1997a: 3) maintains that 'to become competent conversationalists, children have to learn how to choose and introduce topics for talk, respond appropriately, tell a story or develop an argument.' The present study argues that the home is the site for the establishment of a pragmatic 'base' which provides family members with the linguistic competence that enables them to move beyond the home into the wider society. Moreover, Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006: 101) maintain that 'some of the major areas of social dissonance and conflict among different social and ethnic groups in American society are directly tied to people's failure to understand that different groups have different language-use conventions.' Therefore, it is hoped that the study of the pragmatic practices of two Irish families with different social and ethnic backgrounds may contribute in some way towards addressing any linguistic misconceptions that may be held either by settled people about Travellers or vice versa.

1.1 Irish Travellers

Irish Travellers are a small indigenous minority group that have been part of Irish society for centuries (Pavee Point, 2005b). In common with any ethnic grouping, Travellers share a common ancestry, have shared fundamental values and cultural differences and have a language of their own. Their history is largely unrecorded due, in part, to the difficulties associated with tracing the origins of any nomadic grouping with an oral tradition. However, the first mention of Travellers refers to their occupation as whitesmiths in the fifth century (see MacLaughlin, 1995: 13-22 for a full discussion of the debate surrounding the origins of Irish Travellers). According to the Central Statistics Office (2004), there are 23,700 Travellers living in Ireland, accounting for less than 1% of the population. There are also Irish Travellers living in Northern Ireland, Britain (approximately 15,000), Australia and the United States (approximately 7,000). Travellers have a younger age profile than the settled community, with two out of every five children aged fifteen years or younger, compared with one out of every five in the

settled population. However, Travellers' life expectancy is still at levels experienced by the settled community in the 1940's. Accordingly, Traveller males live, on average, ten years less than their settled equivalents, while Traveller women can expect to live, on average, twelve years less than their settled counterparts (*ibid.*).

1.1.1 Cultural values

Nomadism and the family are core values of Traveller culture. Gmelch (1989: 303) maintains that the Traveller family is the basic structural unit, as well as the primary unit of production and consumption. The Central Statistics Office (2004) documents 5,547 Traveller families with an average family size of 5.5, whereas the *Census of Traveller Families* (1981) noted that 97.7% of household members belonged to the nuclear family (see Rottman *et al.*, 1986). Maintaining family ties and ensuring contact with the extended family are fundamental to the Traveller way of life and this very often requires travel. As McDonagh (2000: 31) points out:

It's important to remember that within Traveller society you have a mother, father and children, but that is not as important as the family group ... You have one extended family and this is not seen in geographical terms. Settled people organise themselves within parishes and districts. Travellers organise within families.

Tovey and Share (2003: 472-473) claim that for Travellers, nomadism is a more significant marker of ethnicity than language and it has emerged as 'their most important distinctive attribute'. MacLaughlin (1995: 16) claims that Irish Travellers have a highly developed 'geographical imagination' (see Harvey, 1973), in other words 'they think across time and place and regard geographical mobility as an integral, but by no means defining, feature of their way of life' (MacLaughlin, 1995: 16). Unfortunately, nomadism as a way of life is unpopular among the settled community and, as a direct result, approximately 40% of Travellers live in temporary accommodation such as unserviced halting sites or by the side of the road (Central Statistics Office, 2004). Unserved sites lack the basic amenities such as refuse collection, clean running water or access to electricity.

1.1.2 Education

According to the Department of Education (2002: 10), 'Travellers are relative newcomers to the formal education system, despite the fact that they are an integral part of Irish society with a distinct history and culture to celebrate.' Two-thirds of all school leavers among the Traveller Community are educated to, at most, Primary level (Central Statistics Office, 2004). There are many contributory factors to this including past educational policy, a lack of visibility of Traveller culture within the school system and discrimination encountered when Travellers leave education and enter the workplace (Pavee Point, 2010). The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform's (1995) *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community* identified a range of recommendations including the need for an intercultural curriculum. However, many of these have yet to be implemented.

Milroy (1987) claims that language knowledge that pertains to influence social and educational policies is confined to careful styles or standardised varieties. Language tests, for example, are frequently based on a 'standardised' form of the language (see Milroy and Milroy, 1985 for further discussion of language assessment procedures). In order to properly integrate Travellers into education the differences between language and education have to be addressed. Frequently, the real data used to address the relationship between language and educational attainment is collected in the classroom (Milroy, 1987). Studies such as Gumperz (1972) and Labov (1972) have shown that the language used in the classroom cannot provide any clear indication of the range of a speaker's linguistic repertoire. However, it is the totality of this repertoire, rather than a small part of it, which provides the linguistic input into the educational process (Milroy, 1987). Tovey and Share (2003: 470) maintain that 'it is widely recognised that there has been a radical transformation of how the position of Travellers has been interpreted over the past twenty five years.' As a result of this shift in perception, Irish Travellers are now acknowledged as a distinct cultural group in Irish society as opposed to a 'subgroup' or 'subculture'. However, while some significant positive developments

have taken place at a policy level, the fact that many public services are designed by settled people means that Travellers' specific needs have not yet been met.

1.1.3 Language

The academic name for the language spoken by Travellers is *Shelta*, but Travellers themselves refer to it as *Gammon* (sometimes spelled *Gamman*) or *Cant*. Meyer (1909) maintains that Shelta was once the language of Irish poets and scholars because there are elements to the language, such as borrowings from Greek and Hebrew, that only scholars could have introduced. Cleeve (1983), Binchy (1994) and Ó Baoil (1994) affirm that the grammatical and syntactical structure of Shelta is overwhelmingly English but as Ó Baoil (*ibid*: 157) stresses 'a substantial part of its vocabulary and idioms are unrecognisable as anything remotely English'. This has led Binchy (1994: 151) to the conclusion that the Shelta lexicon is the ethnic marker and the grammar represents the parts of life shared with the settled community. Some Shelta words are simple borrowings of the Irish or English word with the first or sometimes first and last letters altered (Cleeve, 1983). The difference in the Shelta lexicon can also be explained to some degree by the application of a disguise rule to Irish words:

Table 1.1: Examples of the disguise rule in Shelta³

Shelta	Irish	English
<i>rodas</i>	<i>doras</i>	<i>door</i>
<i>laicin</i>	<i>cailín</i>	<i>girl</i>
<i>tobar</i>	<i>bóthar</i>	<i>road</i>

³ Adapted from Crofton (1886 cited in Binchy, 1994: 135).

Interestingly, one method of word formation in *Verlan*, a non-standard variety of French, occurs in the same way. The word from standard French is split into its composite syllables and these are then inverted, for example, *basket*, the French for trainers, becomes *sketba* in *Verlan* (Ellis, 2002). Hancock (1984) claims that this supposedly Irish element in the language accounts for between 2,000 and 3,000 words. However, Butler (1979, cited in Hancock 1984: 385) believes that too much has been made of this rule and that many Shelta words cannot be etymologised in terms of Irish or any other known language. Apart for phonological variation, Shelta is further disguised by the inclusion of archaisms and items from English Cant and Romani (Hancock, 1984).

Shelta's uniqueness has been negatively tagged because of the distrust that exists between the settled and Traveller communities. Instead of being actively promoted as a symbol of identity, it has been described as a 'secret language' (see Cleeve, 1983) and one of 'exclusion' (see Gmelch, 1989). Hancock (1984: 396) claims that Shelta is a language designed to 'erect barriers between people, rather than to break them down.' This is in stark contrast to other studies such as research into dialects spoken in Norway which seeks to explain difference from a positive viewpoint. Blom and Gumperz (1972) have investigated the differences between urban and rural dialects in Norway. They investigated the people of Hemnesberget in Norway and discovered that:

...a person's native speech is regarded as an integral part of his family background, a sign of his local identity. By identifying himself as a dialect speaker both at home and abroad, a member symbolises pride in his community (p. 411).

Throughout their study they constantly reiterate the bond between speakers of both the local dialect and the standard. They claim that when local dialectal phrases are inserted metaphorically into conversations, for example during business transactions, this may add a special social meaning of confidentiality or privateness to the conversation reinforcing the dual relationship that exists between the interlocutors. This emphasis on the special nature of difference is the antithesis of the negative slant often put on Shelta.

Cleeve's, Hancock's and Gmelch's studies echo Halliday's (1978) concept of *antilanguage*. According to Halliday (*ibid*: 164), an antisociety is 'a society that is set up within another society as a conscious alternative to it'. This alternative society is a mode of resistance and can be either passive or hostile in form. In turn, each antisociety spawns an antilanguage which corresponds to the same sociolinguistic norms as does a language to a society. The antilanguages cited by Halliday include an Elizabethan vagabonds' cant, the language of the underworld in modern Calcutta and *grypserka*, the language of Polish prisons and reform schools. Hancock (1984), Butler (1995) and McLucas and Weir (1997) have added Polari, Gangster Rap and the Mafia respectively to this subgroup. All these dialects grew from the need for some type of social resistance and protest. Characteristic of these antilanguages are new words for criminal acts, law enforcement representatives and penal institutions, words or phrases that can be used to exclude outsiders and disguise the group's activities. Gmelch (1989: 310 *footnotes*) maintains that in the case of Shelta:

It is used primarily to conceal meaning from outsiders, especially during business transactions and in the presence of the police. Most Gammon utterances are terse and spoken so quickly that a non-Traveller might conclude the words merely has [sic.] been garbled.

This corresponds to Halliday's (1978: 181) assertion that an antilanguage can be characterised by phonological and lexicogrammatical variation. In addition, it is defined as a systematic pattern of meanings exchanged under specific circumstances. He claims that speakers of an antilanguage are constantly attempting to maintain a counter-reality that is continually under pressure from the established order (*ibid*: 180). Seaholm (1977, cited in Hancock, 1984) maintains that the origin and perpetuation of Shelta is rooted in the asocial status of its speakers. Furthermore, he argues that the distinction between standard and non-standard dialects is one of language versus antilanguage, though in a more moderate form. Standard English is bound up politically with notions of national identity and is connected socially with the middle and upper classes and consequently with education, correctness and prestige. It attracts adjectives like *pure* or *proper* and similarly its speakers attract terms like *articulate* and *intelligent* (Thomas, 1999). Tovey and Share (2003: 472) claim that language has emerged as a significant marker of

ethnicity for Travellers. There is increasing evidence that for the first time Travellers see themselves as a distinct ethnic group with their own language as a central symbol of this distinctiveness. Two examples of this are the foundation of *Mincéir Misli* – a Traveller-run organisation which uses Shelta words as its title – and also Travellers choosing the name *Pavee*, again a Shelta word, to refer to themselves.

1.2 The rationale

The study of family discourse does not fit neatly into many accepted linguistic theoretical frameworks. As Chapter 3 will further explore, some of these frameworks are either constructed to analyse the individual, for example *social network theory* (Milroy, 1987), or a large social grouping, for example *speech community* (Labov, 1962, 1966; Gumperz, 1968, 1972; Hymes, 1972, 1974), whereas the family exists somewhere between the individual and larger social entities (Hazen, 2002). Copeland and White (1991: 2) claim that:

Many important questions about families can be addressed using existing, traditional methods. *But family research is not simply a matter of using traditional methods that were developed to study individuals to study members of a family.* Rather, it also marks a major paradigm shift: a conceptual, methodological and statistical departure from traditional methods by refocusing on different units of analysis; on nonlinear, multifactorial and indirect models of causality; and/or on the process of change [my emphasis].

Therefore, in order to adequately conceptualise the pragmatic variation between the two families in the present study, it is proposed to synergise two distinct analytical frameworks; *variational pragmatics* (Schneider and Barron, 2005) and *community of practice* (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Both of these frameworks offer complementary facets that allow the researcher to examine and interpret two distinct, yet parallel, family units. Traditionally, sociolinguistic studies of language variation have had as their focus features of pronunciation, grammar and lexis and have accounted for variation on the basis of social categories such as age, ethnicity and social class. Variational pragmatics allows the researcher to account for how the choice of one pragmatic strategy over another encodes these social indices. On the other hand, the

community of practice framework enables the families in the present study to be analysed as a unit rather than a series of disparate individuals. This facilitates a ‘localised’ interpretation of linguistic choice, thereby avoiding any criticisms of homogeneity that have, in the past, been attributed to the results of large-scale sociolinguistic studies (see Schneider and Barron, 2008).

Copeland and White (1991) posit a number of reasons to explain why research involving a family group is fundamentally different to research involving other small groups. Foremost among these is the existence of an in-built power hierarchy in the family. In general, families are hierarchical in their structure both in terms of parent → child and older sibling → younger sibling relationships (see Chapter 2). Hierarchy is often a feature of more directed, structured and formal speech contexts such as the classroom, courtroom or boardroom. This has led Blum-Kulka (1997a: 37) to use the slightly paradoxical tag of ‘unequal intimates’ to explain the speaker relationships that exist within this spoken context-type. This unique relationship between group members may account for the non-correspondence of family discourse to many accepted descriptions of language usage. For example, Brown and Yule’s (1983) distinction between *interactional* versus *transactional* discourse does not account for the language present at one of the major sites for research into family discourse – the dinner table. Many of the studies into family mealtimes demonstrate how, on the surface, language appears interactional, however, they also point to it containing elements of the transactional (for examples of studies of this type see Chapter 2).

Copeland and White (1991) maintain that families have a shared history that stretches back generations and this may influence their linguistic practices. They claim that:

The participants in a family research study bring to every interaction expectations about each other based to prior experience and family myth. Of course, these expectations are often unstated, maybe even denied but are inalterably present nonetheless (p. 4-5).

Therefore, a particular family may have rules built around, for example, turn-taking that may differ to those of other families (this point is further explored in Chapter 3 in

relation to community of practice). This, consequently, makes it difficult to generalise about the overall nature of family discourse. Therefore, a methodology involving small-scale corpus linguistics such as the one employed in the present study may be more suited to this context-type (see Section 4.3). In addition, Copeland and White (*ibid.*) argue that families have a shared future and this may have implications about what a family ‘says’ during the research process. They maintain that families are constantly engaged in a process of actively co-constructing their future relationships through discourse and, therefore, their input into the research situation may be affected. They cite the example of a family being asked to discuss a series of issues together as a group. Although they do not specifically refer to a sociolinguistic interview, it is typical procedure in family research that an entire family is present for the interview, especially if young children are involved. In these sociolinguistic interviews comments are neither confidential nor anonymous. Therefore, a researcher in this situation must acknowledge the fact that a family needs to ‘get on’ once the research is finished, and this may have an impact on the data being collected. The present study aims to offset some of these issues by studying their everyday linguistic practices and encouraging the families to record themselves speaking in their own homes, thereby removing any element of formality and artificiality that can be present in situations such as interviews or discourse completion tests (see Chapter 4).

The present study focuses on the pragmatic features of the language of two families for a number of reasons. The first reason addresses a concern with regard to the research process. As will be discussed in Section 1.4, the datasets derived from the recordings are relatively small especially in comparison to modern spoken corpora and, therefore, are open to criticisms regarding representativeness (see Chapter 4). However, the pragmatic items chosen for analysis – person, place and time reference and markers of relational language such as vocatives and hedges – are ubiquitous across many spoken context-types, often appearing at the very top of corpus word frequency lists (see Section 4.3). Biber (1990, 1993) maintains that the underlying parameters of linguistic variation can be replicated in a relatively small corpus, if that corpus represents the full range of variation. He suggests that the higher the frequency of the item under consideration, the

smaller the amount of representative data required. Furthermore, the present study seeks to highlight the importance of small corpora in variational pragmatic research. Burnard (2000) remarks that, due to the fact that mega-corpora such as the British National Corpus (BNC)⁴ are not monitor corpora, ‘it is a rather depressing thought that linguists of this century may continue to study the language of the nineties for as long as those of the preceding one were constrained to study that of the sixties.’ Small corpora are relatively easily assembled and analysed which results in ‘current’ linguistic knowledge. Small, register-specific corpora also afford the opportunity to examine localised nuances in pragmatic use rather than seeking to formulate generalisations (this point will also be further discussed in Chapter 4).

The present study also seeks to contribute to the existing research of intra-varietal pragmatic variation in Irish English by looking at how two groups of Irish people vary their language use patterns in one specific context. An examination of the research into Traveller language in Section 1.1.3 reveals a raft of studies conducted in the 1980s and early 1990s. These studies demonstrate the traditional sociolinguistic focus on aspects of language form rather than language use. Therefore, our knowledge of the total linguistic repertoires of Travellers in Ireland is still very limited. This argument can also be extended to the settled community and to Irish English in general. Much of the ground breaking work on the description of Irish English concerned its phonological, grammatical and lexical features (see, for example, Harris, 1984; Kallen, 1990; Filppula, 1991; Dolan, 2005; Hickey, 1995, 2004, 2007). Many of these features were either attributed to translation from *Gaeilge*, the Irish heritage language, or to a ‘hangover’ from Ireland’s historic and geographical links with the United Kingdom. This resulted in Irish English being portrayed as a language ‘hybrid’ rather than a valued language variety in its own right. Recently, however, corpus-based variational studies such as those using the Limerick Corpus of Irish English⁵ (see, for example, Farr and O’Keeffe, 2002; McCarthy and O’Keeffe, 2003; O’Keeffe and Adolphs, 2008) have

⁴ The British National Corpus (BNC) is a 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken language from a wide range of sources, designed to represent a wide cross-section of British English.

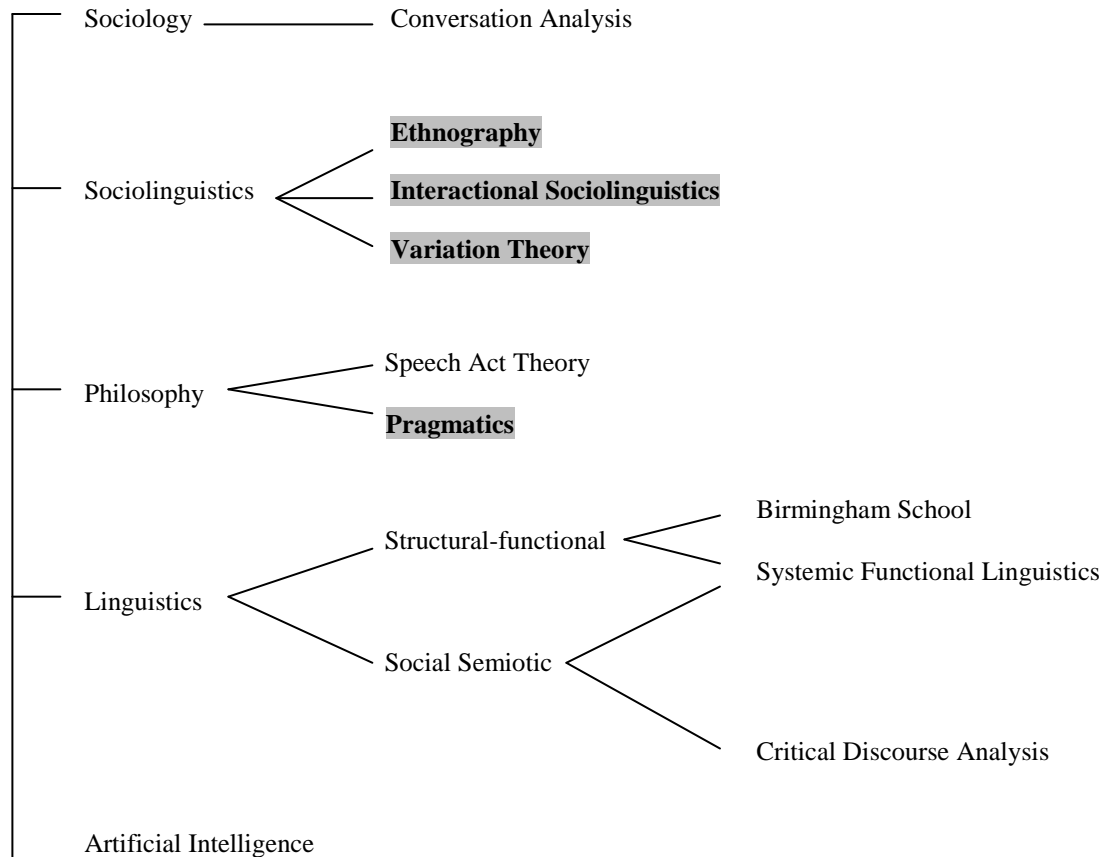
⁵ The Limerick Corpus of Irish English (LCIE) is a one million word corpus of spoken Southern Irish English (for more details see Farr *et al.* 2004).

begun to address a general paucity of pragmatic research dealing with Irish English in contrast with other varieties of English. In particular, Barron and Schneider's *The Pragmatics of Irish English* (2005) marked a paradigm shift, examining pragmatic language use in private, official and public spheres of Irish life and contrasting them with language use conventions in other English-speaking cultures. Work such as this is essential to the establishment of Irish English as a recognised language variety. As Barron and Schneider (2005: 12) maintain 'without contrastive research, hypotheses about the distinctiveness of Irish English, though important, remain only hypotheses.'

1.3 Locating the study

According to Eggins and Slade (2001: 23), 'the pervasiveness of spoken interaction in everyday life has made it an interesting domain of study for researchers with backgrounds in ethnomethodology, sociolinguistics, philosophy, structural-functional linguistics and social semiotics.' Therefore, it is essential to specify the approaches to language analysis that make specific contributions to the present study. The present study is based on the overarching assumption that a family are linguistically engaged in creating and recreating a socially defined construct referred to as 'family'. McCarthy *et al.* (2002: 57) state that 'discourse analysis deals with the analysis of language in its social context.' However, as Figure 1.1 demonstrates, there are a number of disciplines associated with the analysis of discourse. The present study sets out to establish the similarities and differences between the pragmatic language use of two families. This variation at a pragmatic level will be accounted for by examining the impact of social factors on the discourse of the two families. Therefore, as Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate, the literature and theoretical frameworks that contextualise the study are primarily drawn from the logico-philosophical approach of pragmatics and the sociolinguistic approaches of variation theory and interactional sociolinguistics (these approaches are shaded in Figure 1.1). The study also draws to a lesser extent on insights offered by Hymes' (1972, 1974) concept of ethnography.

Figure 1.1: Approaches to the analysis of discourse according to disciplinary origins⁶



The data in the study was collected by a process of audio recording, transcribed and analysed using corpus software and, therefore, corpus linguistics is implicated (see Chapter 4). The approaches highlighted in Figure 1.1 also complement the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the corpora. For example, interactional sociolinguistics explains how the use of deixis by family members enables them to create different identities both within the family group and beyond it. Similarly, insights from the pragmatic field of politeness allow for the consideration of mitigating practices within family discourse. This application of a combination of philosophical, sociolinguistic and corpus approaches to the present study reflects the interdisciplinary nature of any examination of family discourse.

⁶ Adapted from Eggins and Slade (1997: 24) by McCarthy *et al.* (2002: 60).

1.4 Limitations of the study

In comparison to the corpora mentioned thus far, MICASE, CLAS, BNC and LCIE, the datasets from the settled family and the Traveller family that comprise the corpora to be analysed in the present study are relatively modest. While the context-type – intimate discourse – is, as a rule, only available on a smaller scale, and, arguably, more suited to analysis on this scale, it is important to acknowledge that with small datasets issues of *representativeness* and *generalisability* arise. In order to offset these criticisms in some way, the quantitative data generated by the corpora in the present study, are, where possible, compared to findings from corpora such as LCIE and the BNC (see, for example, Sections 5.2, 6.2.1 or 8.2.3). Moreover, any qualitative examination of the quantitative insights offered by the corpora are, in the main, supported or disputed by evidence from both families and reference to findings from other studies of family discourse. In addition, the present study has endeavoured to ensure that a range of variables is comparable across the two families. As Section 4.1 demonstrates, both families are from the Limerick City region, have a similar gender profile and represent a wide range of ages (in both the parents and the children). Both families could also be labelled with the traditional ‘nuclear family’ tag as they consist of two parents, married to each other, and their biological children. Finally, the recording context of the family home was kept constant.

Neither does the present study make any claim that the two families featured are representative of their respective communities. The Traveller Community, while arguably more homogenous than the settled one, consists of, for example, Travellers that live in mobile accommodation and those that are referred to as ‘settled Travellers’ who often live in houses. Similarly, ‘the settled community’ represents a wide range of people from differing social, educational and ethnic backgrounds. In addition, both communities contain so-called traditional families but also an increasing number of non-traditional family constellations. Therefore, the data collected is not presented as representative of or generalisable to the wider Irish community, rather it is maintained that the data is representative of the pragmatic reality of the everyday linguistic

practices of two distinct families. To extend Hunston's (2002: 23) argument that 'a statement about evidence in a corpus is a statement about that corpus', so too any statement about evidence from the present study should be accompanied by a caveat: it is evidence of the particular and not of the general.

1.5 The research questions

The size of the data samples employed in this study have been identified as its primary limitation. However, in order to offset this, it is proposed to examine only high frequency items as these are largely consistent across many corpora. Many of the words that appear at the top of spoken corpus word frequency lists have little semantic or ideational meaning in their own right; however, it has been shown that many of these items have a strongly interpersonal and/or textual function. For example, O'Keeffe *et al.* (2007) list discourse markers such as *you know*, *I mean*, *right* and *well* as among the most frequent expressions in spoken English. Similarly, a cursory glance at the spoken frequency lists of corpora of different varieties of English reveals the presence of the pronouns *I* and *you*, words that are emblematic of the English deictic system. Therefore, the first research question addressed by the present study is:

- What are the high frequency items that characterise the pragmatic systems of the family discourse represented in the study?

These items will comprise the topics for the analysis chapters in the present study – *Person reference* (Chapter 5), *Place and time reference* (Chapter 6), *Vocatives* (Chapter 7) and *Hedging* (Chapter 8). Curiously, while all the other areas of analysis feature prominently on the word frequency lists of both corpora (see Chapter 4), hedging emerges as somewhat of a 'black swan' in the present study. The study deals with two family groups, therefore, a related question embedded within the first research question is:

- What are the similarities and differences in frequency between these pragmatic items in settled and Traveller family discourse?

Anderson and Corbett (2009: 122) caution that ‘a corpus will show a (small) sample of what has occurred in language, but cannot show what it means nor what does not occur.’

As already mentioned, there are a number of variables that are similar across both families in the present study. Both families have a similar familial structure, gender profile, encompass a number of age groups and their discourse was recorded in the home/family environment. However, the family groups have distinct social, ethnic and educational backgrounds. Accordingly, the third research question is:

- What do these similarities and differences in the pragmatic systems reveal about the influence of micro- and macro-social factors such as *power*, *socio-economic status* or *ethnicity* on the families?

Finally, due to the fact that the study of family discourse is not a neat ‘fit’ in many accepted linguistic theories, the fourth research question poses a more pertinent theoretical query:

- What can this study of family discourse bring to our understanding of the frameworks through which spoken discourse may be analysed, specifically variational pragmatics and community of practice?

In light of these questions and the hypotheses that can be derived from them, Chapters 2, 3 and 4 set about outlining the integrative approach taken to the literature, frameworks and methodology necessary to answer them.

Chapter 2

Literature review

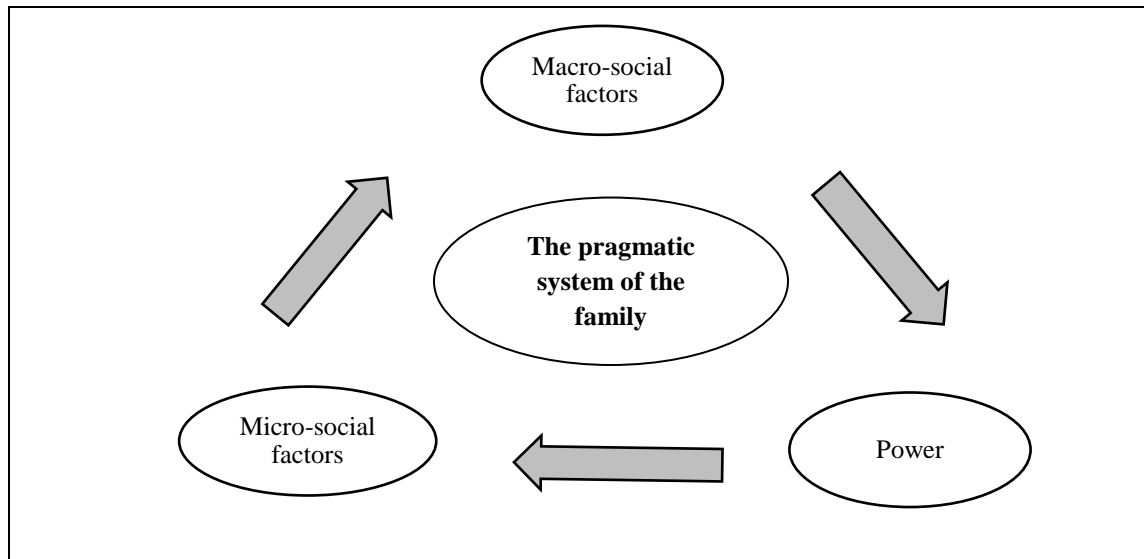
2.0 Introduction

The studies presented in this chapter, although primarily located within socio-pragmatic research, are of such diversity that it can be difficult to create a coherent picture of previous research on family discourse. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to present a survey of the literature as a coherent picture of the main preoccupations of researchers in the area of family discourse and the salient findings thereof. Interestingly, family discourse, although integral to our general language socialisation, is not as widely researched as other context-types such as workplace discourse or academic discourse. The chapter begins by addressing the realm of linguistic pragmatics. This is in contrast to more traditional studies of language variation which, in the main, have focussed on features of pronunciation, grammar and lexis. However, the present study seeks to focus on functions of language use such as politeness that traditionally fall into the category of pragmatics as the study of pragmatics is essential to our understanding of language in its full complexity (Verschueren, 1999). Christie (2000: 1) notes ‘where studies lack a pragmatic perspective such research cannot adequately account for the relationship between the functions carried out by language and the socio-culturally situated users of that language.’

The second part of the chapter deals with the socio-cultural factors that have a specific impact on the pragmatic systems within family discourse. Firstly, as will be seen, the micro-social factors that affect family discourse, for example, *mode*, *audience* or *shared immediate situation* are those that define this register. Secondly, it must be recognised that while ‘power’ plays a significant part in all linguistic behaviour, it has a very specific impact on family discourse due to the nature of the role relationships between family members that are at once both fixed and evolving. Finally, the macro-social factors that shape the language use of the families in the present study, *gender*, *age*, *ethnicity* and *social class*, will be examined. At this point, it is important to acknowledge that these factors do not operate in isolation, but work interactively to contribute to both the similarities and differences between the families’ pragmatic language use that will be examined in the analysis chapters. What will emerge from the

chapter is that a family's pragmatic system is orbited by a complex web of multidimensional socio-cultural influences, illustrated in Figure 2.1:

Figure 2.1: The socio-cultural factors influencing the pragmatic system of family discourse



2.1 Pragmatics and the study of family discourse

In traditional sociolinguistic research, the pronunciation of the utterance *I've got a headache* may carry indicators of age and/or social class. Equally, the choice of *I've* as opposed to *I have* in the utterance may reflect the informality of the speech situation or that it is spoken as opposed to written language. However, *I've got a headache* also carries a variety of meanings according to when it is used, who uses it, who the person is talking to, where the conversation takes place etc. (for example, a wife saying it to her husband in bed may have a different meaning to a man saying it to a doctor during a medical examination). Therefore, in any language, what is *said* is often quite distinct to what is *meant*, or to put it another way, *form* is often very different to *content*. Hymes (1974) refers to two different types of competence; the first, grammatical competence, relates to the ability to create and understand grammatically correct sentences and the second, communicative competence, is associated with the ability to produce and understand sentences that are appropriate and acceptable in a particular situation. Christie (2000) notes that it is axiomatic to pragmatics that our grammatical competence

does not provide conversational participants with sufficient knowledge to be able to understand examples of language use. Therefore, it is within the notion of communicative competence that the study of pragmatics is located.

The term *pragmatics* is often used in linguistic research to refer to the study of the interpretation of meaning. Although it has proven difficult to determine an exact definition for the term pragmatics (Levinson discusses the issue over more than fifty pages in his influential 1983 work *Pragmatics*), a user-friendly definition is that suggested by Fasold (1990: 119) as ‘the study of the use of context to make inferences about meaning.’ In this definition, inferences refer to deductions made by participants based on available evidence (Christie, 2000). This available evidence is, according to pragmaticists, provided by the context within which the utterance takes place. Cutting (2008: 3-11) distinguishes between three different types of spoken context; *situational*, what speakers know about what they can see around them, *background knowledge*, what they know about each other (interpersonal knowledge) and the world (cultural knowledge), and *co-textual*, what they know about what they have been saying. Therefore, the pragmatic choices made by conversational participants can simultaneously encode situational indices of position and time and interpersonal and cultural indices such as power, status, gender and age. Thus, pragmatics provides, Christie (2000: 29) maintains, ‘a theoretical framework that can account for the relationship between the cultural setting, the language user, the linguistic choices the user makes, and the factors that underlie those choices.’

In relation to language use differences, Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006: 94) maintain that ‘different social and cultural groups often have contrasting expectations about the appropriate use of direct and indirect expressions.’ Therefore, the study of politeness forms a cornerstone of the present study. Holmes (1995: 10) claims that in different social groups ‘ways of being polite often contrast markedly.’ As a precursor to reference to politeness strategies in Chapters 7 and 8, an in-depth exploration of the concept of linguistic politeness, in particular Brown and Levinson’s ([1978] 1987)

model, will be addressed in the following section. Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006: 94) further argue that:

...contrasting expectations about directness may lead to misunderstandings across different groups...children who are used to more indirectness may feel threatened or intimidated by adults who consider directness to be the appropriate norm for directives with children.

In relation to family discourse, the issue of pragmatic socialisation is explored in order to account for the influence of factors such as gender or ethnicity on the socialisation processes employed by parents in conversation with their children. As has already been mentioned, it is hoped that, in the longer term, this might be used as a starting point to address some of the distrust that exists within Irish society between the Traveller and settled communities.

2.1.1 Linguistic politeness

Perhaps the most famous, and most remarked upon (both positively and negatively) study of politeness is Brown and Levinson's model. Their publication *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Use* ([1978], reprinted 1987), is arguably the most influential model of linguistic politeness to date given that it has dominated this field since it was first published. Indeed, Eelen (2001: 3) comments that 'the names Brown and Levinson have become almost synonymous with the word 'politeness' itself.' Brown and Levinson's work began as a response to the work of the philosopher Paul Grice. Grice (1975: 45) claimed that conversations are 'characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognises in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction.' Based on these assumptions, Grice posited his Co-operative Principle (CP): that all people are essentially cooperative in order to achieve the purpose of being 'maximally efficient' in interaction with others (Grice, 1989: 28). In order to elaborate on the CP, Grice formulated four maxims: *Quantity, Quality, Relation* and *Manner*.

1. Quantity, requires speakers to be as informative as required for listener comprehension, by ensuring that they are both succinct and explicit. In other words, when talking, we are required to give neither too much nor too little information.
2. Quality, states that speakers should be truthful and not say anything which they cannot provide adequate evidence for or do not believe to be true.
3. Relation, where 'speakers are assumed to be saying something that is relevant to what has been said before' (Cutting, 2008: 35).
4. Manner, which requires speakers to be clear and orderly in order to avoid ambiguity and obscurity.

Grice did not expect rigid adherence to these maxims; indeed he was particularly interested in how the maxims were 'flouted', thus requiring the listener to infer the underlying meaning from clues available in the conversational context, which Grice termed conversational implicature. Brown and Levinson (1987) wished to account for what they saw as a consistent flouting of, rather than adherence to, these maxims. They maintained that this non-adherence happened for a reason. They start from the notion of a Model Person whom, they claim, 'is a wilful, fluent speaker of a natural language, further endowed with two special properties – rationality and face' (p. 58). These 'rational agents' (Locher, 2004: 66) are strategic beings who enact language choices based on a specific set of their own and their addressee's needs. Brown and Levinson claim that speakers are often indirect and uncooperative because of a need to go about their business unimpeded and a need to be approved of. These needs they termed 'face wants'. Blum-Kulka (1997b: 50) succinctly summarises Brown and Levinson's theory thus; 'for Brown and Levinson politeness is the intentional, strategic behaviour of an individual meant to satisfy self and other face wants in case of threat, enacted via positive and negative styles of redress.'

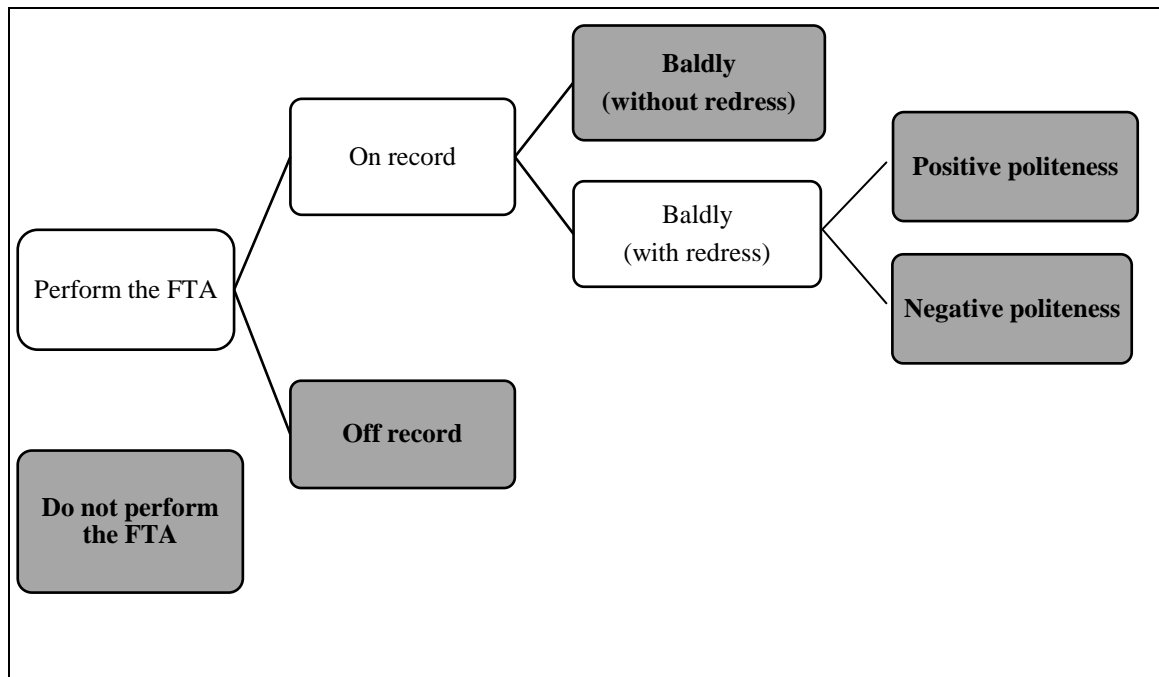
Brown and Levinson's notion of face was derived from the work of the sociologist Erving Goffman (1956; 1959; 1967). Drawing on the work of Durkheim (1915), Goffman echoes the Gricean notion that conversation is essentially co-operative in

nature. Goffman developed a concept of face inextricably bound to English idiomatic expressions such as ‘to lose face’, that is to be embarrassed or humiliated, and ‘to save face’, that is to prevent damage to one’s reputation or the loss of people’s respect for the speaker. Goffman (1967: 5) defined face as ‘the positive social value a person effectively claims for [him/herself].’ He suggested that in order to maintain this positive self-image, a person invests emotional energy in the face that they present to others which requires a degree of effort on their part, a process he refers to as face-work. Following Goffman, Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) maintain that face is ‘the public self-image that every member [of society] wants to claim for himself.’ For Brown and Levinson, face consists of two related aspects; positive face and negative face. For both of these aspects of face, our essential needs are the same – we want people to like us – and this impact on our linguistic behaviour. From the point of view of positive face, we want to receive acknowledgement from others that we are liked, accepted as part of a group and that our wants are understood by them. In the case of negative face, we want to be independent and not have our actions imposed on by others.

Brown and Levinson (1987) assume that, in their everyday interaction, people behave as if these face needs will be respected by others, however, despite this assumption, people sometimes engage in actions that threaten these two face needs, which Brown and Levinson refer to as ‘face threatening acts’ (FTAs). This refers to a communicative act performed by the speaker that does not respect either the hearer’s need for space (negative face) or their desire for their self-image to be upheld (positive face) or both. Brown and Levinson essentially view politeness as a complex system for softening FTAs. This has led to some criticism of their model because assuming that conversation involves potential threat to face ‘rules out the case of neutral or pro-social intent (Werkhofer, 1992: 169). Locher (2004: 70) maintains that ‘it is true that Brown and Levinson neglect the pro-social side of politeness in their discussion of data.’

In Brown and Levinson’s model, if an FTA has to be performed, then the speaker has five communicative choices in order to accomplish this (shaded in Figure 2.2):

Figure 2.2: Brown and Levinson's (1987) strategies for performing FTAs



There are certain situations, perhaps when a lower power or status speaker addresses one of higher power or status, where a speaker may consider performing an FTA as too great a risk in which case the speaker may choose not to perform the FTA. On the other hand, the speaker can decide to perform the FTA, in which case they say something off record or on record. Performing an FTA off record involves employing strategies such as metaphor, irony, rhetorical questions, understatements or hints. Locher (2004: 68) maintains that in an off record strategy ‘there is more than one possible interpretation of an utterance, therefore leaving open a way out for both S [speaker] and H [hearer], because S can claim never to have done the FTA and H can choose not to understand it.’ Alternatively, the speaker can go on record, and this requires the speaker to make a strategic choice either to perform the FTA with or without redress. Redress, Brown and Levinson (1987) maintain, is action a speaker takes by modifying their utterance in some way in order to take the hearer’s face into account, in other words, redress involves the use of mitigation. A speaker that goes on record without downtoning their utterance, by choosing the bald on record option, is opting for the most face-threatening

route. Finally, a speaker can choose to redress the FTA using either a positive or a negative politeness strategy.

As already stated, positive face requires that the individual's positive self-image be respected in everyday interaction with others. In order to achieve this, Brown and Levinson claim that conversational participants often work to minimise the social distance between them. Cutting (2008: 46) points out that positive politeness strategies 'aim to save positive face by demonstrating closeness and solidarity, appealing to friendship, making other people feel good and emphasising that both speakers have a common goal.' Brown and Levinson (1987) list fifteen strategies that a speaker can employ in order to avoid threatening the addressee's positive face (see Appendix A). One of the most common positive politeness strategies, in-group identity markers such as nicknames, falls under the banner of *terms of address*, which are 'traditionally one of the central topics in politeness research' (Eelen, 2001: 38), and these are explored in relation to the present study in Chapter 7. Positive politeness behaviour is often compared to that which is characteristic of interaction in an intimate setting such as between husband and wife or within family discourse (see Blum Kulka, 1997a; Clancy, 2005). Brown and Levinson (1987: 103) also maintain that because positive politeness can be associated with intimate language use, it can be used as a 'social accelerator', where, for example, strangers, in using markers of positive politeness, can indicate that they want to form a closer bond.

On the other hand, negative politeness is action aimed at non-interference and non-imposition on the hearer and so the maintenance of negative face requires the achievement of distance. According to Cutting (2008: 45), speakers use negative politeness strategies 'to avoid imposing or presuming, and to give the hearer options.' Brown and Levinson list ten strategies for the linguistic realisation of negative politeness (see Appendix B). Included in this list of strategies is that of hedging for the sake of negative politeness in order to mark a claim 'as being provisional pending... acceptance in the community' (Myers, 1989: 13). The use of hedges in family discourse is explored in Chapter 8. In the same way that they place positive politeness at

the heart of ‘intimate’ behaviour, they place negative politeness at the heart of external ‘respect’ behaviour. Brown and Levinson (1987: 129-130) claim that ‘when we think of Western cultures, it is negative politeness that springs to mind...it is the stuff that fills the etiquette books.’

Brown and Levinson claim that our choice of politeness strategy, or lack thereof, is decided by a number of social variables. The first of these is the perceived social distance between the speaker and hearer. Social distance is dependent on socio-cultural factors such as age, gender, role, education, class, ethnicity etc., all of which contribute towards establishing a degree of familiarity between speaker and hearer. The higher the familiarity, the lower the level of politeness strategies used. The second contextual feature, power difference, is similarly dependent on socio-cultural features and these determine who has the dominant role in the conversation; the less dominant the role, the higher the level of politeness strategies such as negative politeness. The final feature cultural ranking, dependent on a culture-bound evaluation of polite language use, is calculated according to how threatening a particular speech act is perceived to be within a specific culture. Once a decision has been made about these variables, the appropriate linguistic strategy is selected by the speaker.

2.1.2 Pragmatic socialisation in the family

The family has proven to be fertile ground for pragmatic socialisation research. According to De Geer (2004: 1706), pragmatic socialisation is ‘a term used to describe parents’ specific focus on language and its use in different settings.’ Becker (1990: 10) maintains that not only must children acquire a repertoire of behaviours (some of which, like greetings, take a variety of quite different forms), but they must learn the circumstances in which these behaviours are expected, appropriate or effective. A linguistic tool employed by parents in the course of this process is what is often referred to as a ‘metapragmatic comment’ (see Becker, 1988 and 1990; Blum-Kulka, 1990 and 1997a). Meta-pragmatic comments are comments made ‘to sanction a perceived lack of politeness, to encourage ‘proper’ behaviour and to prompt the use of politeness

formulae' (Blum-Kulka, 1990: 278). In a cross cultural analysis of the family discourse of three cultural groups, Jewish-American, native Israeli and Israeli-American, Blum-Kulka (1997a) studied the phenomenon of politeness from the perspective of the parent in relation to the language of parental social control acts at the dinner table. According to Blum-Kulka, control acts 'encompass a large class of verbal moves aimed at affecting the behaviour of others (e.g. offers, requests and orders)' (p. 142). Therefore, these acts are, by nature, face threatening and directed in the main at the children present. She found that in all three cultures, the parents showed a preference for a direct mode of performing the control acts, a mode far in excess of the general directness norms that prevail in adult speech in the respective cultures. Blum-Kulka (1997a) illustrated that the parents' control acts were very direct, however, she also demonstrated that these control acts are rich in mitigation such as the adult's use of terms of endearment and nicknames.

Similarly, de Geer *et al.* (2002) point to mitigation through the use of endearments, justifications, politeness words and tone of voice. Blum-Kulka (1990, 1997a) claims that this apparent paradox of *mitigated directness* is due to the unique characteristics of family discourse – the family domain is characterised by asymmetrical role relationships, a high level of informality and a preference for linguistic features that index positive affect. These function to 'license the prevailing direct style, lending it a solidarity politeness interpretation' (1997a: 177). Vuchinich (1984: 220) maintains that relations in the family are 'multiplex', involving more than one relation type, for example, power and affect. He claims that 'where multiplex relations are prevalent, more complex social control mechanisms than simple dominance are necessary to maintain social control.' Blum-Kulka (1997a) argues that solidarity politeness is essential in regulating family discourse in order that parents can be sociable with their children while simultaneously socialising them.

Brumark (2003a, 2003b) examined parents' use of directives at the dinner table in 19 Swedish families. She found a clear gender distinction regarding the use of indirectness for socialising purposes. When addressing children, women use more syntactically

indirect directives, those traditionally associated with politeness, than men. She maintains that men tend to be either more direct in their speech or use *off-record* politeness strategies such as sarcasm (Brown and Levinson, 1987), especially when trying to regulate the behaviour of their children. Brumark (2003a, 2003b) demonstrated that with these parents, the women's indirect directives appeared to be more 'successful', i.e. the children obeyed them, than the direct style of the men which resulted in the children protesting or resisting (see also Brumark, 2006). Becker (1988) found that American parents employed indirect comments in the majority of cases (92%) in order to correct their children's pragmatic behaviour. She suggests a number of possible reasons for this level of indirectness. Firstly, the parent's are using them in a face saving manner (Brown and Levinson, 1987) in that indirectness draws less attention to the child's error or omission. Secondly, parents are using indirect teaching techniques as models from which the children then learn indirectness. Thirdly, indirectness places a cognitive load on the children as they have to generate the correct responses themselves rather than being given them directly by the parents. Finally, she suggested that indirectness in the form of sarcasm or deliberate vagueness may be used as a form of punishment by the parents. Ironically, Ervin-Tripp *et al.* (1984) found that polite requests, when used by children, were refused more often than they were successful. However, what they did discover is that these requests are virtually never ignored by adults. They conclude that 'this must explain at least part of the motivation for using polite forms, and it may represent the principal force towards the acquisition of politeness' (p. 134).

Blum-Kulka (1990, 1991) also emphasised the role culture has to play in language socialisation. For example, she found that Israeli families tend to prefer markers of solidarity politeness such as nicknames, whereas American families prefer conventional politeness markers such as full first names. De Geer *et al.* (2002) analysed the dinnertime talk of 100 middle class families from five different groups living in three different countries; Estonian families in Estonia, Finnish families in Finland, Swedish families in Sweden as well as immigrant Estonian and Finnish families in Sweden. They examined the parents' use of metapragmatic comments and noted a high degree of

directness across all groups. They claim that in Sweden one might have expected to find more indirect comments due to the individualistic nature of the country in comparison to, say, Estonia. However, Daun (1994) points out that Swedes behave differently at home than in official contexts, and may therefore be expected to express themselves differently. De Geer *et al.* (2002) also found that all groups produce more comments in relation to their children's behaviour than their language use. However, the Finnish and Estonian families are primarily concerned with the children's table manners whereas the Swedish families comment considerably more on ethical and moral issues.

2.2 Sociolinguistics and the study of family discourse

Sociolinguistics studies the relationship between language and society. In general, researchers make a distinction between two orientations within sociolinguistics, and this distinction is useful for positioning the present study. Tagliamonte (2006: 3) maintains that 'depending on the purposes of the research, the different orientations of sociolinguistic research have traditionally been subsumed by one of two umbrella terms: 'sociolinguistics' and 'the sociology of language''. Fasold devotes a volume to each of these subdivisions in his introduction to sociolinguistics. The first, *The Sociolinguistics of Society* (first published 1984), addresses the sociology of language which deals with the relations between society and languages as wholes (Hudson, 1996) and addresses socio-political aspects such as language maintenance and shift, language policy and planning and issues surrounding multilingualism. The second, *The Sociolinguistics of Language* (first published 1990), explores sociolinguistics, which can be said to be the influence of social factors on the language use of an individual speaker or group of speakers. According to Holmes (2001: 1), '[sociolinguists] are interested in explaining why we speak differently in different social contexts, and they are concerned with identifying the social functions of language and the ways in which it is used to convey social meaning.' Therefore, more specifically, sociolinguistics is concerned with how language varies from context to context and the social significance of this variation. It is within this branch of sociolinguistics that the present study is located.

The study of language variation involves examining the complex interplay between the influence of the social characteristics of speakers (such as their gender or ethnicity) and the influence of the speech situation on the language they use (Holmes, 2001). Traditional sociolinguistic research demonstrates how people choose different pronunciations, grammars or vocabularies according to how they identify themselves: man or woman, middle or lower class, black or white, and so forth. In addition, the different social contexts in which they find themselves influence their language choice. Factors such as the social distance between speakers, formality (or not) of the setting or the topic of the conversation are all reflected in participants' language choices. Recently, sociolinguistic research has sought to move beyond the traditional boundaries of pronunciation, grammar and lexis to explore variation in interactional features such as turn-taking, narrative or topic. In addition, sociolinguistic research has also begun to investigate features of the pragmatic system of a language, for example, politeness. The sections that follow provide a detailed examination of the study of sociolinguistics applied to family discourse. Firstly, the influence of situational features will be examined and this will be followed by an analysis of the primary social features at play in the present study – gender, age, ethnicity and social class. While the contribution of traditional sociolinguistic research will be acknowledged, the focus will instead be on interactional and pragmatic features, with particular reference made to corpus linguistic studies where possible. The present study will also be evaluated in light of previous contributions to research into family discourse.

2.2.1 Micro-social factors and family discourse

According to Holmes (2001: 7):

In any community the distinguishable varieties (or codes) which are available for use in different social contexts form a kind of repertoire of available options. The members of each community have their distinctive *linguistic repertoires*. In other words in every community there is a range of varieties from which people select according to the context in which they are communicating.

As previously stated, one of the primary aims of this study is to determine whether or not the individual families have a common shared pragmatic repertoire (see Section 3.5). It will be hypothesised that similarities between the families' shared linguistic repertoire are due, in part, to their shared 'local' characteristics. These characteristics are particular to the context of family discourse. The relationship between language features and their context of occurrence is called *register* (McCarthy, 1998). Register variation is generally associated with the work of Biber throughout the years (for example, Biber, 1988, 1995). Biber *et al.* (1999: 15) define registers as 'varieties relating to different circumstances and purposes'. These registers are delimited in non-linguistic terms, with respect to situational characteristics such as mode, interactiveness, domain, communicative purpose or topic. This results in language varieties being classified in terms of registers such as academic English, legal English, crime fiction and, of course, family discourse.

Rühlemann (2007: 7) maintains that 'one crucial characteristic of register is its intimate relationship with the type of situation in which it is used.' Biber *et al.* (1999) developed a matrix of situational characteristics that distinguish one register from another and this is applied to family discourse in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: The situational characteristics of family discourse

THE FAMILY

Register

Mode: Spoken: face-to-face

Interactive online production: Spontaneous, no advance planning

Shared immediate situation: The family home

Main communicative purpose/content: Interpersonal communication

Audience: Private, immediate family members only

Social roles: Hierarchic/asymmetrical - parents-children, sibling-sibling
Fixed/stable and pre-established speaker relationship; father, mother, siblings

In Table 2.1, the *shared immediate situation* that characterises the register is identified as the family home, and it is here that the present study is distinct from much of the previous sociolinguistic research on family discourse. The majority of the previous studies into family discourse have further delimited the family home by concentrating on the dinner table as the primary site for research. Dedaić (2001: 375) places dinnertime at the heart of the family and maintains that 'food and family are inseparable notions, together connoting sharing, nurturing, well-being, tradition, habits and customs. In these senses, dinner table conversations are an ideal venue in which to take the pulse of the family.' Blum-Kulka (1994: 44-45) describes middle-class family dinner talk as having a triple function:

- It is an arena for the negotiation of social power, where children learn the rules of interacting in multi-party discourse where variables such as age and intimacy matter;
- It helps in the development of both monologic and dialogic skills;
- Dinner table talk reveals what Blum-Kulka refers to as 'culturally sensitive events' through which children acquire culturally embedded ways of speaking.

Ochs and Taylor (1992a, 1992b) outline another positive function of family interaction at dinner time in the United States. They maintain that talking is as important as eating at mealtime and that this talk is characterised by a high degree of problem-solving across diverse socio-economic backgrounds. They claim that problem-solving is a complex cognitive activity that involves 'challenging, defending and reworking the facts and the moral stances of the problematic events narrated' (1992b: 42). However, the dinner table, while undoubtedly a fruitful site for research into the linguistic practices of the family, represents but a single, highly ritualised event in the family sphere. In an attempt to redress this concentration on dinner table discourse, more recent publications such as Tannen *et al.* (2007) have focused on other speech situations, for example, watching television or play time. The present study also seeks to move beyond the

dinner table to explore other family speech events such as putting up a Christmas tree, fixing a computer printer and cleaning the house. Much of the data collected by studies around the dinner table has been done so in the presence of a researcher that is not a member of the immediate family grouping. Hence, it could be argued that this data may not be entirely uncensored or natural. In all speech contexts, participants tend to be acutely aware of the presence of an observer, and this, coupled with the ‘microphone effect’, may lead to a change, however slight, in a family’s linguistic behaviour. The present study has sought to avoid this as the researcher is a member of one of the families and the other family recorded itself with no observer present (see also Chapter 4).

In Table 2.1, an additional situational characteristic *social roles* (from Ventola, 1979) has been added to account for the unique speaker relationships that exist in this context; in family discourse there exist pre-established speaker roles wherein the speakers are bound in an asymmetrical power relationship. Ventola (1979: 268-269) defines participant roles as having three parts; *social*, *textual* and *participatory*. *Textual roles* refer to the roles required in text making; namely those of speaker and hearer. *Participatory roles* refer to the role of participants in a conversation as initiator and respondent. Ventola maintains that these roles are responsible for the ‘flow’ of conversation. On the other hand, the *social role* determines what kind of speech an individual uses in a particular social setting, and this can be shown to have a marked effect on language use in family discourse. According to Ventola (*ibid*: 269):

We may simultaneously act out several social roles, all of which give some credit to our total behaviour...however, one of the social roles usually becomes dominant and it is this overriding social role that generally determines what kind of speech an individual uses in a particular social setting.

Ventola claims that the overriding social roles in casual conversation are non-hierarchic i.e. friend-friend, stranger-stranger. However, in the family there exists a parent-child relationship which is hierarchic, asymmetric and dominant in nature. Many of the studies explored in Section 2.2.2 will show that the parents hold more conversational power than the children, in that they play a more significant role in language events such

as narrative and topic development. In addition to the parent-child hierarchy, this asymmetry also exists between siblings. Studies such as Nilep (2009) have shown that there is an asymmetrical relationship based on age between the siblings where the elder siblings, generally, hold more power than their younger counterparts.

The social roles that define the participants in family discourse have a direct impact on the way family participants conduct their everyday conversation. Malinowski ([1923] 1972) pointed out that casual conversation functions to establish and maintain contact between people. However, it is argued in the present study that, to a large extent, both the establishment and maintenance functions are extraneous in family discourse due to the particular speaker relationships in this register. Laforest (2002) investigated complaint sequences addressed by a speaker to a peer (member of a couple to his/her partner, individual to his/her brother/sister) in the family discourse of four French speaking families from Montreal. She chose to examine complaints in family discourse in order to observe a context where ‘things are truly at stake (given that the interactants have a continuing relationship)’ (p. 1599). She found a high concentration of complaints in the corpus and that interactants were not preoccupied with the precautions normally associated with face threatening acts outside the private sphere. Nevertheless, she noted that argument sequences following a high concentration of complaints in a short space of time were relatively rare. Thus, she maintains that ‘the dynamic is not one of mitigating the complaint, or expressing it politely, but of severely restricting its impact on the continuation of the conversation’ (p. 1618). She demonstrated how, for example, interactants use a variety of techniques such as irony and humour to restrict the impact of the complaint. Hopper *et al.* (1981) explored the use of idioms among fifty married people in order to determine the effect that intimacy has on language use. They found that the use of idioms seems particularly suited for relationship growth rather than maintenance functions. The relationship is pre-established i.e. husband-wife, therefore the maintenance function is unnecessary and is replaced by a development function that may promote relationship cohesiveness and develop relationship norms. Moreover, Ventola (1979) demonstrated how friends who have previously acquired knowledge about each other use fewer *approach* elements (such as small talk, ice breakers etc.) and

can move more quickly to what he refers to as *centering*, where a participant registers his/her full involvement in conversation.

2.2.2 Power in family discourse

Ochs and Taylor (1992a: 301) believe that the power structure evident within family discourse appears to be a universal one: 'such administration of power is characteristic of families everywhere and may occur whenever family members interact.' They examined family narratives in a corpus of 100 family dinner narratives of middle-class, white, two-parent American families. They described the family as a political institution:

Families are political bodies in that certain members review, judge, formulate codes of conduct, make decisions and impose sanctions that evaluate and impact the actions, conditions, thoughts and feelings of other members (p. 301).

They point out that the construction of family narratives is a powerful medium for the on-going (re)construction of the political structure of the family with its inherent power differentials. They contend that the most powerful roles of narrative introducer, ratified recipient and problematiser are occupied by the parents. They found that introducers tend to be mothers, whereas the roles of ratified recipient and problematiser tend to be exercised primarily by fathers. Children most often occupy the less powerful roles such as protagonist and problematisee. However, they discovered that children are not resourceless in family narrative activity. They can at times resist the most persistent narrative interrogation and are adept at playing roles such as 'wise guy' or 'con artist' in order to escape their parents' 'continued narrative surveillance' (p. 337).

According to Watts (1991), the exercise of power in families is often enacted by controlling the discourse topic. He maintains that discourse participants that can impose a topic, shift a topic against the will of their co-participants, prevent a co-participant from initiating or completing a topic or deny a co-participant discourse space through interruption are generally those with the highest power and status. In respect to topic

performance at the family dinner table, Tryggvason (2006) found an asymmetry in generating talk between the mothers and the fathers. She studied the amount of talk produced by families in three Nordic groups; 20 Finnish families living in Finland, 20 Finnish families living in Sweden and 20 Swedish families living in Sweden. She found that the fathers were more passive than the mothers in initiating and closing topics; in fact, the fathers were as active in this respect as a child in the 9-13 year-old age bracket. In a similar vein, Abu-Akel (2002) points out that the dynamics of topic development are rooted in the social roles adopted by Caucasian-Americans with their inherent power relations and gender roles.

Similarly to Ochs and Taylor (1992a, 1992b), he noted an obvious power differential between the parents and children. The parents were more successful in having their topic nominations acknowledged. In addition, the children often had to renominate their topic several times in order to receive acknowledgement. Topics initiated by the father are concerned with 'local' issues concerning correct mealtime behaviour and last, on average, about 20 turns. He found that those topics that are established and sustained are displaced topics, those having no spatial or temporal connection to events occurring during dinnertime. These displaced topics are generally initiated and problematised in some way by the mother. These topics are sustained over an average of 150 speaker turns. In terms of gender roles, what is interesting is that although the mother initiates the topic, it is the father who evaluates it. Furthermore, he maintains that those topics sustained in conversation by the family are those that have a psychological impact on the participants. These topics are on the family 'agenda' so to speak. For example, topics drawing on ritualised behaviour around dinnertime are short because they are routine and regular. However, topics that impact on the family in some way, for example, the family's finances, are likely to be sustained in interaction. In terms of gender roles, what is interesting is that although the mother initiates the topic, she establishes the father as the primary recipient and evaluator. According to Ochs and Taylor (1994: 116), 'fathers turn such opportunities into forums for problematizing, with mothers themselves as their chief targets, very often on grounds of incompetence.' They maintain that initiating topics allows the mother a control that is 'ephemeral'

(*ibid.*); the real conversational power rests with the father. They have labelled this gender asymmetry ‘Father knows best’.

Studies such as Ervin-Tripp *et al.* (1984) have noted that power in family discourse is strongly affected by issues such as gender and age. For example, they demonstrated how young children are less successful than older ones at getting the attention of someone who is already engaged in talk with another person. They contend that this is because younger children fail to recognise transition-relevance cues such as topic changes which would provide them with an opportunity to ‘break into’ the conversation. In addition, they discovered that mothers are more cooperative with the demands of their daughters than with those of their sons. Therefore, any study of power should account for the influence of macro-social factors of gender and/or age, and it is to these factors that attention now turns.

2.2.3 Macro-social factors and family discourse

Hudson (1996: 45) maintains that although the term register is widely used in sociolinguistics to refer to ‘varieties according to use’, the primary focus of sociolinguistics is on *dialect*, that is ‘varieties according to user’ (*ibid.*). As previously mentioned, sociolinguists have long been concerned with on how the variables of age, gender, social class and so forth affect the way that individuals use language. In the following sections, a number of these variables will be addressed in relation to the study of family discourse. There are, of course, other social factors that may be considered in any sociolinguistic study and two of these, region and religion, are not considered here due to the fact that both families in the present study are located in the Limerick City region and both are of the Catholic faith, therefore, these two factors are considered ‘controlled’ for the present study.

2.2.3.1 Gender

Gender has been one of the major ‘growth issues’ within sociolinguistics in recent years. It has variously been described as an ‘emotional’ (Wardhaugh, 2007: 315), ‘fascinating’ and ‘controversial’ (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 2006: 234) area within sociolinguistic research. There have been various claims made about differences between the speech of men and women, the diversity of which exceeds the scope of this section. According to Coates (1986: 74), ‘early work on sex differences in language emphasised women’s apparent sensitivity to prestige forms.’ For example, Labov (1966) found that women showed a higher usage of prestige forms than men in more formal styles but lower levels of these forms in more casual styles. Wolfram (1969) illustrated how African American men produce more multiple negation constructions (*I didn’t tell you nothing*) than women. Trudgill (1974) observed that women tend to use more word final *-ing* than men who demonstrate a preference for *-in*. Women’s language choice in these instances has been attributed to the prestige that is associated with the ‘standard language’. Elyan *et al.* (1978) found that women using an RP accent were rated as more fluent, intelligent, self-confident, adventurous, independent and feminine than women with a regional accent.

There have also been a number of studies into discursual differences between men and women. These have focussed on areas surrounding turn-taking in conversation such as topic control (Zimmerman and West, 1975), interruptions and overlaps (James and Clark, 1993) and verbosity (James and Drakich, 1993). Research has also focussed on pragmatic elements of speech such as politeness (see Holmes, 1995; Mills, 2003). For example, Lakoff (1975) and Spender (1980) have argued that women’s speech is characterised by elements such as hedges and tag questions which lead them to mark women’s speech as indirect, diffident and hesitant. Research such as Lakoff’s (1975) study sparked a gender debate in sociolinguistics that centres on a difference-dominance argument. The first difference view is that women’s and men’s biological differences are reflected in their language behaviour. The second, the dominance argument, claims that language use is hierarchical and reflects male dominance. Therefore, men use

speech to dominate both each other and women. These arguments have been all but rejected by gender researchers. Wardhaugh (2007: 327) argues that accounting for differences based on biology ‘seems rather to be a clear case of stereotyping, which offers no more than a facile solution to a difficult problem.’ The more credible difference argument now established is concerned with the different learned social behaviour of men and women. This viewpoint maintains that both groups are subject to different life experiences and that this is reflected in their language use.

Ochs and Taylor (1994: 98) maintain that ‘family exchanges do not simply exemplify gender relations otherwise shaped by forces outside the family but, rather, are the primordial means for negotiating, maintaining, transforming, and socialising gender identities.’ If the dinner table is the primary site for studies of family discourse, then the primary focus of these studies is the parents, more specifically the mother. Early accounts of gender differences and amounts of talk found that men talk more than women in mixed-sex interaction in order to exploit their greater power and exert dominance and control over women (see James and Drakich, 1993). More recently, however, sociolinguists have acknowledged that the mother is the central figure in a family’s verbal and non-verbal interaction. Correspondingly, more recent empirical studies have found that mothers frequently do the most talking in the family, especially at mealtimes. Tryggvason (2006) found that the mother was the most dominant speaker in the three cultural groups in terms of utterances, turns and words produced. In each group, the father and target child contributed equally to the conversation.¹ Similarly, De Geer and Tulviste (2002) found that Estonian and Swedish mothers dominate the floor when it comes to the overall amount of speech.² Research has also shown that mothers dominate the use of particular linguistic strategies. Ely *et al.* (1995) initiated a corpus-based study of middle-class, American families in order to generate a descriptive account of adults’ and children’s use of reported speech. They found that most families use reported speech during the course of dinner time, however, this attention to ‘talk

¹ In Tryggvason’s study the target child was aged between 9 and 13 years.

² Gender-based findings such as those of Tryggvason (2006) and De Geer and Tulviste (2002) show considerable cross-cultural variation. For example, Blum-Kulka (1997a) observes that in Jewish American families, the fathers take a larger talking space than the mothers.

about talk' is far more notable in the speech of mothers than of fathers or children. They associate the greater attention paid to reported speech by the mother with the language socialisation processes – 'in middle-class homes, where the mothers serve as the primary caretakers, it is not surprising that mothers talk more about talk' (p. 217). As the primary caretaker, it seems that mothers use reported speech to encourage and support communication with their younger children.

Studies have also shown that mothers occupy a myriad of roles in interaction with other family members. Using an interactional sociolinguistic approach, Kendall (2008) performed a framing analysis of one family's dinnertime encounters in order to examine the discursive creation of identity and to explain the interactional dynamics of families. Interactional sociolinguistics largely grew from the work of Gumperz (1982a, 1982b) and Goffman (1956; 1959; 1967). Gumperz maintains that interactions are critically linked to our socio-cultural context. Egging and Slade (2001: 35) further add that:

...in our participation in discourse events, we are always bound by our cultural context. Because we interact with orientations only to those contextualisation cues that our background knowledge prepares us for, miscommunication can occur when we come into contact with interactants who do not share our cultural context.

Much of the empirical work done in interactional sociolinguistics in relation to family discourse is that performed by Deborah Tannen (1994; 2001; 2007). Tannen builds on Bateson's (1972) and Goffman's (1981) concept of a linguistic *frame* as a way of understanding participants' interpretation of ongoing interaction (see also Chapter 5). Kendall (2008) identified five frames linguistically created and maintained by one or both parents. In addition, she identified fifteen positions taken up by the parents within these frames. These frames and positions are identified in Table 2.2:

Table 2.2: Parental frames and positions at dinnertime (Kendall, 2008: 547)

DINNER FRAME	CAREGIVING FRAME	SOCIALISATION FRAME	MANAGERIAL FRAME	CONVERSATIONAL FRAME
Head Chef	Assistant	Etiquette Monitor	Planner	Journalist
Host	Teacher	Behaviour Monitor	Social Secretary	Moral Guardian
Director of Cleanup	Caretaker	Language Monitor		Facilitator Comedian

Kendall found that the mother takes up more positions at dinnertime than the father and also that these positions are more powerful ones. These positions are strongly linked with the creation of gendered parental identities within the family. For example, the mother occupies, almost exclusively, a variety of positions, for example, *Head Chef* (responsible for preparing dinner), *Planner* (organising the child’s social life), *Moral Guardian* (judging the appropriateness of the child’s behaviour in the past) and *Etiquette Monitor* (responsible for enforcing bedtimes). This results in an identity of ‘nurturing disciplinarian’ for the mother of the family. Indeed, Much and Shweder (1978) refer to the notion of mothers as the ‘guardians of the social order’. On the other hand, the father, while occupying positions such as *Journalist* (showing interest in the child’s life by asking questions), primarily occupies the position of *Comedian* (making humorous remarks throughout dinner). Through his use of humour, the father both balances out the disciplinarian aspect of the mother’s positions and also subverts the authority the mother has. Therefore, the father creates a more symmetrical power relationship between himself and the child. This results in a different identity of ‘rebellious comedian’ for the father.

Without doubt, the mother’s role in family affairs is a very powerful one. However, Boxer (2002) offers a cautionary tale to mothers regarding their use of this power. She investigated the speech behaviour of nagging which, she claims, principally occurs within the familial domain ‘and, indeed, is the source of a good deal of conflict within this domestic domain’ (p. 60). She maintains that nagging is scarce outside of intimate discourse because of its face threatening nature. Therefore, it is typically associated with interlocutors that are not engaged in the complex process of negotiating relationships.

As has been argued, familial relationships are fixed and pre-established. Many of the themes/topics of nagging have their origins in the domestic arena, however, nagging appears to originate in the struggle for status and power in the family. In Boxer's data, only six of the seventy nagging sequence recorded featured men nagging women. In contrast, in two thirds of the data, women were the naggers. Boxer argues that nagging has its origins in the process of language socialisation. According to Tannen (1990: 31), 'many women are inclined to do what is asked of them and many men are inclined to resist even the slightest hint that anyone, especially a woman, is telling them what to do.' Therefore, the co-operative style of women clashes with the hierarchical style of men and nagging is the result. Interestingly, as the studies of narrative have shown, power resides in topics being successfully introduced, ratified and evaluated. Boxer claims that nagging, a sequence which is often ignored, results in the nagger losing conversational power.

As has been shown, from a gender viewpoint, the majority of studies in family discourse have primarily orientated themselves with the mother at the centre. Although Kendall's (2008) study on framing is a notable exception, fathers and children have been, in a sense, relegated to the lower leagues of gender-based research. The present study aims to contribute to a reinstatement of the father and children in the analysis of family discourse. In terms of a wider social remit, Kendall claims that a gender-based analysis of the parents has much to offer the researcher. According to Kendall (*ibid*: 565):

...language, gender and parental identities are intertwined in ways that both reflect and reproduce gender as a social construct and encourage a traditional sex-based division of labour despite (or because of) the mass movement of women with young children into the workforce. Thus, gender at a societal level is (re-)created at the interactional level through the positions the parents take up within the frames they create and maintain as they interact with their daughter at dinnertime.

If as stated here, gender at a societal (macro) level is (re-)created at an interactional (micro) level by the parents, then so too are other social factors such as ethnicity or social class. The present study seeks to make manifest the linguistic representations of these macro-social features in the pragmatic systems of the families studied. As will be

shown in the analysis chapters, many of the linguistic differences between the two families will be shown to reflect the differing influences of these social variables.

2.2.3.2 Age

As with gender, dialectology research has provided a great deal of information about the relationship between age and patterns of pronunciation, grammar and lexis. Downes (1998: 223) maintains that in this research ‘there is a reoccurring pattern in which scores of younger speakers are closer to the vernacular, and away from overt prestige norms.’ The use of non-standard vernacular forms appears to peak in adolescence and ‘then steadily reduce as people approach middle age when societal pressures to conform are greatest’ (Holmes, 2001: 168). There is evidence that the use of the vernacular rises again as people enter old age and a more relaxed phase of their lives (see Downes, 1998). Corpus studies such as Rayson *et al.* (1997) have supported the traditional view, showing that younger speakers prefer certain interjections and show a marked tendency in favour of certain taboo words. However, perhaps surprisingly, they also found that younger speakers show a paradoxically stronger tendency towards more polite words than older speakers.

In family discourse, adolescence has also emerged as a locus for research, and, in common with other modern sociolinguistic and corpus studies, these studies have concentrated on interactional features, and more recently, on the area of language and political economy. Family discourse studies demonstrate that as children enter adolescence, their interaction with their parents begins to change, and a transition from a hierarchical relationship to an egalitarian one begins to take effect (see Youniss, 1989; Smollar and Youniss, 1989; Tannen, 2001). Hofer and Sassenberg (1998) outlined this progression in an analysis of mother-daughter conflict discourse. They found that adolescent daughters surpassed their mothers in rejecting arguments and producing counterarguments. They also produced as many proarguments (an utterance that extends an argument to justify one’s position) as their mothers. They maintain that in conflict discourse, adolescents ‘may learn that knowledge can be used efficiently to justify one’s

standpoint and to resist mothers' attempts to control' (p. 60). Interestingly, Hofer and Sassenberg (*ibid.*) have shown that mother-daughter speech behaviour is governed more by their role than the type of discourse within the same role. Their findings demonstrate that mothers tend to control the flow of discourse and daughters respond, even when symmetry is more pronounced as with adolescent daughters.

Beaumont (1995) compared communication patterns between adolescent girls and their mother to conversations the girls had with their friends. She found that mothers and daughters, as expected, exhibited different conversational styles. For example, the daughters used more overlaps, simultaneous speech and interruptions than the mothers, whereas the mother's speech was characterised by slower pacing, more pauses and few interruptions or instances of simultaneous speech. Beaumont also disputes the notion of a dominance hypothesis in family discourse, principally as the children enter adolescence, they gain conversational power whereas the mothers lose conversational power. However, she found that neither the mothers nor the daughters increased the frequency of their interruptions during adolescence. Beaumont maintains that these findings suggest that there is a move from a hierarchical to a more egalitarian relationship during adolescence. Furthermore, a functional analysis of these interruptions revealed that the adolescent girls interrupted their mothers primarily to challenge the stance taken by the mother. This, she believes, is indicative of involvement rather than dominance (see also Tannen, 1984).

Nilep (2009), through an examination of the relationship between the members of a Japanese-American, bilingual family, attempts to show how micro-level interactions both reflect social schemas and help reproduce them. In his study, he noted that the mother prefers her children to use Japanese in the home and, therefore, the mother's powerful social role therein is indexed by her use of this language. This is evident, for example, when the mother uses little mitigation when issuing directives in Japanese. However, Nilep argues that because the siblings speak English outside the home, they have more social capital (Bourdieu, 1991), and therefore more power, in the broader English speaking community than their mother. The older siblings appear to recognise

this and employ this power both through challenging the role of their mother and also by seeking to socialise their younger counterparts into locally appropriate roles. Nilep demonstrates how, both in the presence and absence of the mother, the older siblings evaluate their younger siblings' use of code-switching within the family unit, ratifying certain choices and censuring others. In doing so, the older siblings subvert the role of the mother in ratifying linguistic behaviour and also place themselves in a more powerful role than the younger ones.

2.2.3.3 *Ethnicity*

Language has long been identified as one of the defining features of an ethnic grouping and the role of language as a marker of ethnic identity has been explored in many different contexts. One commonality in the relationship between ethnicity and language variation is that where a choice of language is available for communication, it is often possible for an individual to signal their ethnicity by their language choice. Eriksen (2002) maintains that in order for ethnicity to come about, distinct groups must have a minimum amount of contact with each other and perceive that they are culturally different from one another. He stresses the need to view ethnicity as essentially an aspect of a relationship, not a property of a group. This is in accordance with Fought's (2002: 444) assertion that 'ethnicity is not about what one is, but rather about what one does'. She points out that the bulk of the sociolinguistic research on ethnicity and language change 'has focused on majority communities, often on speakers of European-American ethnicity in large urban settings' (*ibid*: 456).

Fought further delineates previous studies in saying that those examining minority ethnic groups have limited their analysis to investigations of phonological and grammatical variation. For example, although some morpho-syntactic forms have been identified, Cajun English is primarily described in terms of its phonological features (see Dubois and Horvath, 1998, 2000). Similarly, the greater part of the seminal sociolinguistic research based in Belfast (see J. Milroy, 1991; L. Milroy, 1987 and 2002; J. Milroy and L. Milroy, 1985) is concerned with phonological variation. From the point

of view of the role of ethnicity in language variation, Rickford (1999: 90) maintains that American sociolinguistics has made far more progress in understanding the role of variables such as socioeconomic status or gender as sociolinguistic boundaries than in the role of ethnicity. This, he states, is in the main due to the majority of the work in African American Vernacular English focussing on describing the phonological and grammatical features of the vernacular. The present study seeks to move beyond this level of analysis and compare a minority ethnic grouping to the ‘mainstream’ in order to describe variation at a more discursual, pragmatic level.

In terms of family discourse, Schiffrin’s (1996) seminal paper on narrative demonstrated how narratives situate experiences both *locally* in that the experience ‘is situated in and relevant to ‘a particular “here” and “now”, a particular audience and a particular set of interactional concerns and interpersonal issues’ and *globally* ‘by drawing on cultural knowledge and expectations about typical courses of action in recurrent situations’ (p. 168). She focuses on two stories told by Jewish American women about troublesome issues in their families. The general theme of both stories is similar – how to integrate outsiders into the nuclear family. She maintains that narratives reveal sensitive parameters of ethnicity, for example, one mother’s daughter is dating someone who is not Jewish therefore the mother constructs an opposition of ‘us’ versus ‘them’, thus, Schiffrin claims, ‘supporting a larger social structural opposition between different religions’ (p. 172). She maintains that:

Narrative is a means by which to arrive at an understanding of the self as emergent from actions and experiences, both in relation to general themes or plots and as located in a cultural matrix of meanings, beliefs and practices. The form, content and performance of narrative thus all provide sensitive indices of our personal selves and our social and cultural identities (p. 194).

Similarly, Ochs and Capps (2001: 111) believe that the narration of personal experience at dinnertime ‘builds understanding of what it means to be a person and a member of a community, that is, a history of being in the world.’ Paugh (2005) claims that, the children (whom she equates with linguistic novices) through participation in narrative activity, interact with more knowledgeable family members (the experts) and are thus

socialised to participate in everyday conversation both within and outside the family home. Here, Paugh is, in essence, describing the socialisation of the children into the family *community of practice* (see Chapter 3). Paugh performed a corpus-based study of 16 middle-class American families. She demonstrated that how the families' talk about work embedded in their narratives of everyday experience, 'socialises children to particular understandings about what work is, expectations for how to morally and competently conduct oneself at work, and other values and goals regarding work and family' (p. 72). Sterponi (2003) has also demonstrated how the family serves as a locus for negotiating cultural norms such as moral ideologies and moral order. She investigated spontaneously occurring account episodes in the dinner table talk of twenty middle-class Italian families. She notes that in these families when a problematic event, such as a child's misbehaviour at school, is raised by the parents, the child is provided with the discursive space to account for his/her actions. She claims that this convention of parents requesting an account from their children reflects a moral practice of 'innocent until proven guilty' within these Italian families.

2.2.3.4 *Social class*

Studies into the connection between language use and social class have shown how speakers may seek to imitate socially prestigious language forms in order to gain access to the socio-economic capital that seems to accompany them (see Labov, 1966) or that they reject these forms and preserve their own in order to strengthen in-group solidarity and emphasise their membership of the group (see Trudgill, 1974; Milroy, 1982; Edwards, 1985). Watts (1989) focussed on the family unit in order to explore the perceptions that native speakers have of the use of discourse markers which, he maintains, 'is essentially one way of stereotyping their own class prejudices' (p. 204; cf. Bernstein, 1971). He found that self-styled educated native speakers show a tendency to stigmatise users of these markers. These speakers attach a symbolic significance to the markers so that they can be used as linguistic out-group markers. The 'outsiders' usually belong to a particular socio-economic status, geographical area and level of education. What is striking about the study is that while the family members are evaluating others'

use of discourse markers (usually negatively), they themselves are using the markers. Watts (1989) maintains that studies of this type are of ‘considerable importance in analysing the role language plays in helping the individual to constitute for her/himself a social and ethnic identity and to qualify as a valid member of an in-group’ (p. 227).

In previous studies of family discourse, the typical target family has been a relatively homogenous one. Many of the studies have focussed on urban, white, middle-class, Western families. While there are some exceptions to this (Nilep, 2009; Vuchinich, 1984), researchers such as De Geer (2004) have pointed out that it is important to determine whether or not groups with different social or ethnic backgrounds share the behaviours found in the target families. This is especially pertinent for researchers examining the connection between a family’s social practices and early literacy development (see Gee, 2004). Of course, key studies in family discourse such as those by Blum-Kulka and, more recently, those that have emerged from Europe’s Nordic region have acknowledged the influence of cultural traits in accounting for differences between families’ verbal behaviour. However, these cultural differences occur within the same socio-economic class, whereas researchers such as Bernstein (1971) and Youmans (2001) have shown that cultural differences manifest in language are more pronounced in the lower social classes that are less mobile and more geographically and socially isolated. Therefore, the present study, which compares two distinct ethnic and socio-economic grouping, is probably better suited to an analysis of the influence of these factors on individual family’s pragmatic language use.

2.3 Conclusion

Pragmatics is essential to our understanding of family discourse as it provides us with the means to make the distinction between what is *said* and what is *meant*. The challenge for the researcher is to appropriately identify and describe the non-linguistic factors that lead speakers to make a particular language choice. As has been explored in this chapter, family discourse, in common with other speech contexts, is heavily influenced by a range of both micro- and macro-social factors. In addition, power

structures within the family further add to this complex range of influences. What emerges is a picture of a speech context made distinctive by a series of unique characteristics that echo through the forthcoming chapters:

- The family is one of the primary units of language socialisation. In relation to pragmatic socialisation, the family acts as a vehicle for socialising children in socio-culturally appropriate language-use patterns;
- Although a central facet of our everyday ‘linguistic lives’, family discourse remains little researched especially in comparison to other spoken context-types. The available research is further reduced when the researcher, as in the present study, moves beyond the realm of the relatively narrow focus of previous studies that are dominated by the dinner table talk of urban, white, middle-class, Western families;
- Speaker roles and relationships in the family are, at once, both hierarchic and intimate. This relationship hierarchy exists at many different levels; parent → child, father → mother and older sibling → younger sibling;
- In common with other context-types, the macro-social categories of *gender*, *age*, *ethnicity* and *social class* exert an influence on family discourse. However, they have an idiosyncratic influence on family discourse, for example, as the children get older, their relationship with their parents changes from a hierarchical to an egalitarian one and this is marked by a corresponding change in both parties pragmatic systems.

A central aspect of any study of language variation is to seek to explain the reasons for that variation (or lack thereof). According to Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006: 245), ‘it is only through looking at localised practice that we begin to understand not only what sorts of language patterns correlate with which groups but *why* people use the language features they do.’ Within the realm of pragmatics as a whole, there is a pressing need for abstract social factors such as ethnicity or gender to be interpreted at a local rather than global level (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 2006; Barron and Schneider, 2005; Fought, 2002; Holmes, 2001). The present study aims to address this

lacuna. Small corpus studies of family discourse can provide the researcher with valuable samples of localised data, enabling a non-homogenous interpretation of the influence of social factors on our pragmatic systems. In addition, the present study necessitates a ‘mixed’ approach in order to examine the research questions raised in Chapter 1. It is proposed to synergise two distinct frameworks and construct one that allows the analysis of pragmatic language use patterns within a localised grouping. This synergy of *variational pragmatics* and *community of practice* is discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

Theoretical framework

3.0 Introduction

Any study of language variation should make reference not only to the linguistic outcomes of variation, but also to the social or extralinguistic factors influencing it. Milroy and Gordon (2003: 5) postulate that ‘a major goal of the variationist enterprise is to specify and order the constraints which lead to one choice rather than another.’ Therefore, this chapter introduces *variational pragmatics* as the primary theoretical framework for the present study. Variational pragmatics allows the researcher to account for the influences of different factors such as age, gender or social class on pragmatic choices made. Schneider and Barron (2008: 21) maintain that variational pragmatics is ‘contrastive by definition’. Therefore, it provides a framework through which the analysis of pragmatic similarities and differences can be performed between and within different language varieties. Inter-varietal studies of pragmatic variation focus on comparing two or more language varieties, for example, Netherlandic and Belgian Dutch (Plevoets *et al.*, 2008). On the other hand, intra-varietal studies concentrate on variation within the same language variety, as is the case in the present study which investigates pragmatic variation within Irish English. Section 3.1 will explore variational pragmatics in detail in this context. However, this chapter also proposes to investigate employing another complementary theoretical framework in order to account for the effects of the family unit itself on pragmatic variation and, therefore, three models that have been employed to investigate domain-specific variation are examined – *speech community*, *social network theory* and *community of practice*.

The concept of speech community has traditionally provided the researcher with a framework that accounts for the social stratification of language. However, increasingly, models that have their roots in disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and education such as social network theory and community of practice have enabled the sociolinguistic researcher to address some of the criticisms that have been levelled at the speech community model. This chapter presents an analysis of the merits of each framework in relation to the data for the present study. It begins with a discussion of the speech community (Section 3.2) and continues with the notion of social network theory (Section 3.3). Briefly, the speech community has as its pivot a large group defined by social and geographical

limitations, whereas social network theory is ‘anchored’ around the individual. However, the family is comprised of a small set of individuals and, therefore, could be said to occupy the ‘space’ between speech community and social network, one which community of practice may be seen to fill (Section 3.4). Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999: 190) maintain that:

Although notions of speech community and of social network have both been very useful in sociolinguistic inquiry, neither directs attention to what people are doing as they engage with one another. It is what people are DOING which gives their interactions real bite.

The DOING that Eckert and McConnell-Ginet refer to here can be glossed as the linguistic practices of a family. Therefore, this chapter also seeks to broadly operationalise the community of practice in relation to the shared ‘pragmatic repertoire’ of the families contained in the present study.

3.1 Variational pragmatics

Variational pragmatics was first proposed as an analytical framework by Schneider and Barron (2005) in order to address research gaps that existed in both modern dialectology and pragmatics. According to Schneider and Barron (2008: 1), variational pragmatics ‘investigates pragmatic variation in (geographical and social) space.’ In this sense, variational pragmatics represents the interface between pragmatics and variational linguistics, a subset of modern sociolinguistics (see also Barron and Schneider, 2009). Variational pragmatics has as its primary concern how the choice of one pragmatic strategy over another encodes macro-social indices of region, socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender or age in everyday language use. However, this is not to suggest that these five types are a closed set; the impact of other macro-social factors such as education and religion can also form part of this research framework. In addition, various micro-social factors, for example, power and social distance or register which impact on pragmatic language variation can also be considered. Barron and Schneider (2009: 427) point out that the crucial difference between these two types of factors is that macro-social factors ‘concern individual speakers’, whereas micro-social factors ‘concern speaker constellations’, hence the presence of the community of practice model in the present study.

The impact of both macro- and micro-social factors on pragmatic choice is essential to our understanding of language-use differences. Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006: 93) state that ‘knowledge of when and how to use certain forms is just as important for communication as the literal understanding of structures and words.’ However, they acknowledge that the study of how language is used in context is a relatively recent development in dialectology, especially when compared to the traditional focus on language form (pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar). This general lack of focus on the pragmatic features of a language in modern dialectology is noted as a ‘serious shortcoming’ by Schneider and Barron (2008: 3). This is all the more acute in the study of Irish English. Barron and Schneider (2005) argue that, despite recent efforts, research into the pragmatic system in Irish English represents a desideratum. In addition, in terms of the study of pragmatics, two criticisms of contemporary, cross-cultural pragmatics are posited by Schneider and Barron (2008). The first is that these studies are based on the assumption that language communities of native speakers are homogenous wholes when language variation is considered, thus, in a sense, negating any suggestion of an impact of social variables on language communities. Furthermore, Schneider and Barron (*ibid.*) claim that many researchers in this area employ participants from student communities, often from their own courses, thereby compromising representativeness. While these studies are undoubtedly insightful, this lack of representativeness makes it difficult to formulate reliable generalisations about typical language use.

In general, Schneider and Barron maintain that studies into pragmatic variation can be criticised in relation to both their scope and representativeness, however, as exceptions they cite two studies that concentrate on regional language variation in English. These studies, Tottie (1991) and McCarthy (2002), are corpus-based studies. Both of these studies focus on the differences between backchannels (or response tokens) in British and American English. Tottie employs the London Lund Corpus (LLC) and the Santa Barbara Corpus (CSAE), and McCarthy the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE) in addition to a similar-sized sample of the Cambridge North American Spoken Corpus (CNASC). McCarthy (2002) maintains that cross-corpora comparisons of different varieties of the same language are useful for a number of reasons. Crucially for the study of variational pragmatics, he notes that they provide safer ground for generalisations –

all four corpora employed by Tottie and McCarthy have been specifically designed to represent standard British (LLC and CANCODE) and American (CSAE and CNASC) English, thereby mitigating some of the criticisms aimed at cross-cultural pragmatic research. Indeed, one of the strengths of corpus linguistics is that it has long been concerned with issues of representativeness (see Chapter 4 for a full discussion of representativeness in relation to the present study).

Schneider and Barron (2008) identify two compositional components of a framework for variational pragmatics; *type of language variation* and *level of pragmatic analysis*. In terms of this practical research agenda, they suggest that:

Currently, variational pragmatics concentrates primarily on macro-social variation. It aims at determining the influence of each macro-social factor on language use individually...At a later stage it will be necessary to systematically include micro-social variation and to investigate the interaction between micro-social and macro-social factors.

(*ibid*: 18)

Therefore, the five types of pragmatic variation they specify are based on this primary focus on macro-social variation, *viz.* regional, socio-economic, ethnic, gender and age variation. Schneider and Barron point out that this variation can take place inter-varietally, such as between American English and British English (see, for example, the studies by Tottie (1991) and McCarthy (2002) cited above) or intra-varietally such as between different registers within the same language (see, for example, Farr and O’Keeffe, 2002). Chapter 1 has touched upon the fact that that datasets for the present study were compiled in such a way as to ensure that some of these macro-social factors, for example, region and gender are largely comparable (this will also be further elaborated on in Chapter 4). Therefore, the present study focuses primarily on the impact of the macro-social impact of age, ethnicity and social class on the pragmatic language use of two families. In addition, it seeks to advance the variational pragmatic research agenda by examining the interaction of these macro-social factors with micro-social factors such as the power structure of family discourse and their influence on the pragmatic system of the family.

Schneider and Barron (2008: 19-21) identify five levels of pragmatic variation: *formal, actional, interactional, topic* and *organisational*. They maintain that ‘these

distinctions are based on an integrative model of spoken discourse which incorporates approaches to pragmatics from different disciplines, including speech act theory, discourse analysis and conversation analysis’ (p. 19). A brief description of each of these levels of analysis is presented in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1: Schneider and Barron’s (2008) levels of pragmatic analysis

Level	Description
<i>Formal</i>	This level concerns the analysis of linguistic forms such as discourse markers or hedges.
<i>Actional</i>	This level focuses on the realisation and modification of speech acts.
<i>Interactional</i>	The focus here is on sequential patterns such as adjacency pairs, exchanges or phases (for example, openings and closings).
<i>Topic</i>	The focus is on how conversational topics are selected, addressed, developed etc.
<i>Organisational</i>	This level deals with turn-taking phenomena such as pauses, overlaps, interruptions or backchannels.

Therefore, working from Table 3.1, the present study is concerned with the analysis of linguistic forms, specifically high frequency forms such as person and demonstrative pronouns, temporal adverbs, vocatives and hedges. Schneider and Barron (*ibid*: 20) maintain that this formal-level analysis ‘is aimed at determining the communicative functions these forms may have in discourse. Thus analyses of this type can be characterised as form-to-function mappings’ (see also Barron and Schneider, 2009).

Variational pragmatics is undoubtedly of value to the researcher seeking to account for the relationship between social differentiation and pragmatic variation and, as such, is particularly relevant to the present study. However, as a theoretical framework it does not appear to account for the *domain* within which this pragmatic variation happens. Trudgill (2002: 473) defines domain as the ‘relational arenas within which variable linguistic behaviour takes place.’ Therefore, in addition to

accounting for the effects of macro- and micro-social factors on pragmatic variation, it is also necessary to account for aspects particular to social groupings that affect linguistic behaviour. This enables the researcher to answer questions as to the affect of a person's identity as *youngest child in the family* on pragmatic variation. Accordingly, attention now turns to three frameworks that consider variation within human societies, relationships and behaviours, *speech community*, *social network theory* and *community of practice*, in order to decide which one best complements a variational pragmatic analysis of family discourse.

3.2 The speech community

No study of language variation can afford to ignore the groundbreaking sociolinguistic studies conducted by Gumperz, Hymes and Labov during the 1960s and 1970s. These studies used techniques such as the sociolinguistic interview to examine linguistic change and variation in the speech of large numbers of people across different social and geographical boundaries. They gave rise to the foregrounding of the concept of *speech community* (SpCom), a controversial but nonetheless essential element of any variationist study in the intervening decades. According to Patrick (2002: 573), 'there is remarkably little agreement or theoretical discussion of the concept in sociolinguistics, though it has often been defined.' Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999: 178) further claim that despite the significance of the SpCom to the study of language variation, there is no single, agreed upon definition. Indeed, Patrick (2002: 573) refers to the speech community as 'the intersection of many of the principal problems in sociolinguistic theory and method'. The discussion below aims to highlight the main areas of disagreement and contextualise them in relation to the present study of the linguistic conventions of settled and traveller speech in Ireland.

The term speech community was first posited by Bloomfield (1926) who claimed that any community wherein certain utterances are alike or partly alike is a speech community. This early hypothesis raised the problem of linguistic heterogeneity, to wit, how alike or partly alike the utterances must be in order to point towards people belonging to the same community. In an attempt to address this he later remodelled his definition to 'a speech community is a group of people who interact by means of

speech' (1933: 42). However, this still did not address the problems presented by issues of scale and overlapping communities (Patrick, 2002: 579). Subsequently, theorists attempted to place some boundaries on Bloomfield's generalisations. Gumperz (1968 and 1972) introduced two elements to the SpCom, both shared by Hymes and Labov, and vitally important to ensuing interpretations. Gumperz (1968: 381) defines the SpCom as 'any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs.' This 'shared body' echoes previous studies and reiterates the necessity of a common linguistic repertoire. Furthermore, he claims that 'to the extent that speakers share knowledge of the communicative constraints and options governing a significant number of social situations, they can be said to be members of the same speech community' (Gumperz, 1972: 16). Here, shared knowledge of norms of communication is posited as essential for membership of a SpCom, a point echoed in Labov's work (Patrick 2002). However, Gumperz (1972: 16) also appears to struggle to place boundaries on his definition of the SpCom adding that 'speech community boundaries tend to coincide with wider social units such as countries, tribes, religions or ethnic groupings.'

This concept of shared knowledge is mirrored by Hymes' (1972: 54) assertion that 'tentatively, a speech community is defined as a community sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety.' As in the classic definition, SpCom members are an identifiable group located and bounded by a shared knowledge of social norms. Hymes (1974: 120) also stresses the need for a shared grammar 'the starting point for description is...a repertoire of ways of speaking...a speech community defined through the concurrence of rules of grammar and rules of use'. Both shared grammar and shared norms are seen by Hymes as necessary conditions for membership of a SpCom. Finally, Hymes, like Bloomfield and Gumperz, struggles to delimit the SpCom. He states that for the purposes of sociolinguistic study 'it appears most useful to reserve the notion of community for a local unity, characterised for its members by common locality and primary interaction' (*ibid*: 51). Here he appears to overly delimit the speech area in direct contrast to Bloomfield's boundary-less interpretation and Gumperz' 'wider social units'. The Travelling community in Ireland, as this

discussion will demonstrate, is neither characterised by common locality nor primary interaction.

Unlike Hymes', Labov's seminal studies of language variation are empirically rooted. For Labov, any definition of a SpCom must be arrived at through analytical and interpretive practices which yield outcomes, not assumptions (Labov, 1994: 4-5). In his study of Martha's Vineyard (1962) and Lower East Side New York (1966), he demonstrated how macro-level factors such as class or gender affected people's use of language. He proposed the following definition of the SpCom:

The speech community is not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements, so much as by participation in a set of shared norms. These norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behaviour, and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation which are invariant in respect to particular levels of usage.

(Labov, 1972: 120-121)

Labov's definition is not concerned with adherence to a particular linguistic behaviour, rather with reference to a shared set of norms (Patrick, 2002). He found that speakers use these norms to locate and identify themselves as members of a particular speech community. For example, members of a SpCom might agree that a particular pronunciation pattern is prestigious, however, they may evaluate this pattern positively or negatively depending on their centrality in the SpCom. This reflects Labov's preoccupation with both evaluative behaviour and patterns of variation. When a significant group of speakers differs on both levels, the model treats them as a distinct SpCom. Hence, African-American speakers were treated separately due to their phonological variation but also because they 'reverse white attitudes towards the cultural values of NYC speech' (Labov, 1966: 370). Working from this Labovian viewpoint, it should correspond that the settled and Traveller community comprise two individual speech communities due to their different evaluative behaviours and (assumed) linguistic variation. However, it is hypothesised that both communities will also share certain similarities especially in the processes involved in the day-to-day business of being a family and the consequences of this for definitions of SpCom need to be addressed.

The importance of the SpCom to studies of language variation cannot be overstated. However, as suggested earlier, it is a concept that has proven controversial. This controversy and its impact on studies such as this one can be discussed under three broad headings: *social class*, *geography* and *local speech communities*. From a social class viewpoint, Labov (1966) and Trudgill (1974), among others, use multi-index scales of social stratification where people are assigned a social class based on occupation and women are given the same social class as their husbands. Social class seems to be based on status and power where status refers to the amount of respect a person is accorded and power to the social and material resources a person can command (Jones, 1999). Hence, according to Milroy and Gordon (2003: 95), ‘a class is rather vaguely said to consist of a group of persons sharing similar occupations and incomes, lifestyles and beliefs.’ The process of applying a label such as ‘working class’ to the Traveller Community is problematic in this context. They share similar occupations and incomes to the traditional working class but their lifestyles, and many of their beliefs, differ radically. Milroy and Gordon (*ibid*: 90) repeatedly emphasise the need to interpret social class locally rather than globally. Therefore, for the purposes of this study Travellers are considered ‘classless’ due to the fact that social class appears to be a ‘settled’ concept devised by those in a more powerful position in order to make some kind of social judgement about others (Thornborrow, 1999). In comparison, the concept of *community of practice* permits a focus on social categories (such as nerds, gangsters, drop-outs, families etc.) rather than abstract categories like class and gender. Bucholtz (1999) maintains that the SpCom is designed to analyse sociolinguistic phenomena at a macro-level; the speech community approach is a *top-down* approach whereas the community of practice is a *bottom-up* theory (see Section 3.3).

Geographically speaking, the Traveller Community cannot be accurately defined as a SpCom due to their nomadism and interpretation of geography. According to Milroy and Gordon (2003: 133), the classical procedure in describing a speech community is for the researcher to specify a particular geographical location. For example, Labov’s (1966) study locates itself within Lower East Side New York, while Trudgill (1974) examined language variation in the city of Norwich. Current models of the SpCom do, however, stress the need for a ‘geographical area delimited by non-linguistic criteria, such as demography or socio-political boundaries’

(Kerswill, 1994: 23). In terms of the present study, McDonagh (2000: 31) points out that Irish settled people organise themselves within parishes and communities, whereas Travellers organise themselves within families unbounded by notions of geography. As already mentioned, MacLaughlin (1995: 16) has described the Travellers as having a highly developed geographical imagination. For the SpCom to be applied to the Traveller Community, a shift in the concept of the 'space' language occupies is needed. Whereas the traditional SpCom is bounded by the *where*, a modern, more mobile version might be better served by being bounded by the *who*.

Finally, according to Hazen (2002: 505), large scale sociolinguistic studies have most often focused on the speech community as the place where sociolinguistic variation happens, in contrast to the individual or small social units being the locus of variation. Bucholtz (1999: 209) maintains that in the SpCom, 'the role of the individual is merely to instantiate the practices of the group.' Rickford (1986, 1987) claims that the concept of the SpCom is a limited approach not tailored to the local speech community. In addition to this factor, previous SpCom research treated a series of isolated individuals as representative of particular social categories in contrast to theories such as that of the *social network* which study small-scale, pre-existing social groups (see Section 3.3). The pitfalls of focussing on the individual as representative of a larger social group are demonstrated by Labov's (1972: 89-90) interview with Dolly R. This interview was interrupted by a telephone call from one of her cousins. Labov notes how her 'intimate family style' contrasts dramatically with her 'seemingly informal and casual' interview style. Hazen (2002: 501) sees the family as the intermediate grouping between the individual and the speech community. He claims that the study of the family from a variationist perspective offers a middle ground and allows patterns of language variation in individuals to be compared to be compared to subgroups of the SpCom that in turn can be used to construct a picture of the overall speech community. One theory which does offer the researcher a focus on the individual as opposed to the group is *social network theory* and its suitability for the present study is assessed below.

3.3 Social network theory

As has already been discussed, large-scale sociolinguistic studies have most often focused on the speech community as the place where sociolinguistic variation happens, in contrast with the individual or small social units being the locus of variation (see also Hazen, 2002). Milroy (1987) redirected the focus of the analysis to the individual with the study of social networks in Belfast. Social networks move the focus from features such as status, gender, ethnicity, etc., to characteristics of the social interaction between people. Although macro-social features are seen as relevant, it is the social interaction that provides the overriding influence in accounting for patterns of speech (Holmes, 2001). Researchers such as Milroy (1987, 2002) have used social network analysis to explain how some social groups maintain non-standard dialects or minority languages, despite pressures to adopt the national standard. Milroy and Milroy (1985) propose that patterns of language variation are maintained in communities by solidarity social patterns. In determining whether or not a person is in fact engaged in these solidarity patterns, it is important to consider two factors:¹

1. **Density** This refers to whether members of a person's network are in touch with one another. For example, if your friends know each other independently of you, then your network is a dense one.
2. **Plexity** This is a range of the different types of interaction people are involved in with different individuals. A *uniplex relationship* is one where the link with the person is in only one area (e.g. colleagues). *Multiplex relationships* involve interactions with others along several dimensions (e.g. colleagues who are friends that are members of the same book club).

¹ Adapted from Holmes (2001).

A social network may be seen as a limitless web of ties that stretches through the whole of a society, linking people to one another, however remotely (Milroy, 2002: 550). Indeed, Gumperz and Levinson (1996) have described the speech community as a collective of social networks. However, analysis is generally focussed on first order network ties, formed by the people an individual directly interacts with. Milardo (1998: 26-36) distinguishes between two types of network – *exchange* and *interactive*. Exchange networks are comprised of family and close friends and offer the individual aid, advice, criticism and support. Interactive networks are characterised by frequent contact but the network offers the individual no material or symbolic resources. Portes (1998: 2-3) claims that there are two sources which must co-exist in order to fully maximise the power of social capital: firstly, the existence of the social relationship that allows the individual to claim access to resources possessed by their associates and secondly, the amount and quality of these resources. Significantly for this study, Li (1994) identifies a *passive* network relevant to migrant or mobile individuals. Passive ties apply to physically distant relatives or close friends who are not in regular contact but are nonetheless valued as a source of influence or moral support. As has been discussed, Travellers orientate themselves geographically in terms of the extended family. Although their contact may at times be infrequent, the ties between them can still be viewed as both dense and multiplex. When social ties between people are both dense and multiplex, language patterns will be maintained. At the lowest and highest levels of status in society, network strength is historically high (see Milroy, 1987). It is predominantly in the middle range social classes that social and geographical mobility lead to the development of relatively weak ties (Milroy, 1991).

The Belfast study of language variation conducted by James and Lesley Milroy (see Milroy and Milroy, 1985; L. Milroy, 1987 and 2002; J. Milroy, 1991) has sought from its inception to find a way of explaining why highly divergent language forms and varieties can be maintained for long periods of time. In Northern Ireland, the Catholic/Protestant divide is similar to that of the settled/Traveller in that there is a deep-rooted history of mistrust, residential segregation is almost total, and social encounters, outside of those in professional or administrative contexts, are rare. According to Milroy (1987), the major hypothesis of the study is that even when variables such as age, sex and social class are held constant, the closer an

individual's network ties are with his/her local community, the closer his/her language approximates to local vernacular norms. Milroy and Milroy's research rejects the Labovian premise that prestige is the primary agent of language change and instead claim that the individual's social network is the determining factor in maintaining or precipitating change. They do not consider ethnicity as sociolinguistically relevant to Northern Irish English as their research failed to discern any systematic phonological differences between Protestants and Catholics (see Milroy and Milroy, 1985; Milroy, 1987). Their rationale for this was that making any ethnic-based linguistic differentiations was difficult due to generations of high-level Protestant/Catholic residential segregation. They further claim that community members in Northern Ireland referred to accents in geographical terms, for example east Belfast, as opposed to marking accents in terms of Protestant or Catholic. Therefore, the chief dimensions of variation in Belfast are associated with urban location and with locally constituted networks (Milroy and Gordon, 2003). However, in contrast to this, McCafferty (1998, 1999) maintains that ethnicity does indeed play a role in language variation and change in Northern Ireland. His studies of Londonderry/Derry English (LDE) demonstrate that strength of social network is not grounds enough to overlook ethnic differences. McCafferty (1999: 264) claims that Catholics, of whatever class, are more likely to use variants characteristic of LDE, whether these are local innovations or older ones that are dying out in other parts of Northern Ireland. Conversely, Protestants are more willing to adopt variations from the rest of the North, mainly Belfast, and are less likely to use localised forms, old or new.

Social networks are relevant to the present study because they provide a set of procedures for studying small groups, such as ethnic minorities, migrants or rural populations, where speakers are not discernable from one another in terms of any kind of social class index (Milroy, 2002: 556). Analysis of these networks has highlighted a disjunction between the networks of male and females. Eckert (2000), Dubois and Horvath (1998) and Chambers (1995) have all noted that women seem to form ties across a wider social spectrum than men. Male speech often appears more localised and conservative than female speech and Milroy (1999) attributes this behaviour to the particularly constraining effect of male peer networks. Some language differences between Traveller men and women may be best explained by

the social networks they are involved in. Traditionally, Traveller women interact not only with members of their own community but also with members of the settled community. Therefore, their social networks are larger than the Traveller men who are traditionally more suspect of the settled community. Correspondingly, Traveller women's speech may resemble the standard to a greater extent. As is the case with social class, the need for a localised interpretation of ethnicity is essential. Milroy and Gordon (2003: 110) maintain that, like social class, 'ethnicity means different things in different communities, and its significance for patterns of linguistic variation needs to be understood with reference to local conditions and local social practices.' For example, Dubois and Horvath (2000), in a study of Cajun English, demonstrate how language change is intimately linked to changing socio-historical contexts particular to that community. Similarly, McCafferty (1998) claims that the divide between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland is more cultural or ethnic than religious. It has its origins deep in the history of the region and has a profound relevance to contemporary society.

Dubois and Horvath (2000) investigated the influence of social networks on features of social English in the Cajun community. They maintain that when examining language change in the Cajun community, 'we have to understand that the speech community we are dealing with is a subordinate cultural enclave, which for several generations has been forced to change in the direction of the dominant culture' (p. 304). Similarly, the Travelling Community has been forced to adapt to the policies of settled institutions such as the educational system which from the 1960's to the 1980's was viewed as a method of settlement, a way of taking the 'Traveller out of the child' (Pavee Point, 2009: paragraph 3). Dubois and Horvath (2000: 291) claim that the Cajun way of speaking has become 'socially charged' for the younger generation who use Cajun features as sociolinguistic markers of Cajun identity. Interestingly, they found that being Cajun is now socially and economically advantageous and therefore the younger generation now take pride in their Cajun identity. They found that women in open networks tend to ignore the Cajun renaissance whereas men in open networks participate strongly in it. This, they maintain, can be explained by the young man's current role of torchbearer for Cajun identity. Interestingly, the converse appears to be true in the case of Irish Travellers. Traveller women traditionally have more open social networks and more contact

with the settled community than Traveller men (Gmelch, 1989). Therefore, these women are at the forefront of establishing a Traveller identity in settled contexts.

Although social network theory offers much to the study of family discourse, it is deemed unsuitable for this particular study for a number of reasons. The first is that a social network is, by definition, concerned with a limitless web of different social ties stretching through a society. However, this study is concerned primarily with the ties that exist within the family – those that exist between family members and individuals outside the family are incidental to the study. Secondly, Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999: 180) maintain that one of the fundamental differences between social network theory and the community of practice is that a social network requires *quantity* of interaction while a CofP requires *quality* of interaction. The focus of this study is not the process of language maintenance and change through the existence, or not, of dense, multiplex or passive networks, it is instead the shared linguistic practices that have emerged from the members of the family engaging in the everyday, mutually defining process of ‘being a family’. Finally, a social network has at its centre an ‘ego’, described as ‘the person who, for analytic reasons, forms the “anchor” of the network’ (Milroy, 2002: 550; Milroy and Gordon, 2003: 119). The concept of community of practice permits a focus on social categories such as the family, the combined members of which constitute the community of practice. Thus, the researcher is provided with a ‘bridge’ between the individual, represented by social network theory, and the wider speech community. Similarly, as Section 3.3 will demonstrate, the *community of practice* also provides a link between micro-level variation, for example at the level of the family, and that at a macro-level which constitutes categories such as social class, ethnicity or gender.

3.4 The community of practice

The Community of Practice (CofP) model stems from the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) on situated learning and was extended by Wenger (1998). Lave and Wenger (1991) originally proposed the CofP model as an alternative to traditional educational models. They used the CofP to explain how different apprentices, for example, tailors in Liberia or midwives in México, progressed to mastery of their craft without engaging in formal educational modes such as the teacher/student dyad

or examinations. They maintained that rather than learning taking place in the classroom, learning took place through a process of social participation (Wenger, 1998). This learning, claim Lave and Wenger (1991), is characterised by what they term ‘legitimate peripheral participation’:

By this we mean to draw attention to the point that learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community.

(Lave and Wenger, 1991: 29)

Therefore, as apprentices directly participate in the social practices of the community, learning takes place and, ultimately, the apprentice becomes a master. In the family, the parents can be seen as the expert practitioners or ‘old timers’ (*ibid*: 56) and the children are the novices or apprentices. Lave and Wenger (*ibid*: 32) observe that ‘children are, after all, quintessentially legitimate peripheral participants in adult social worlds.’ Children can be broadly viewed as apprentice members of society, learning through observation and participation in activities what it means to be a ‘functioning’ member of society. Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999: 174) maintain that ‘the process of becoming a member of a CofP – as when we join a new workplace, a book group or a new family (e.g. through marriage) – involves learning...a CofP inevitably involves the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence.’ It will be argued in this study that this has a particular resonance for any sociolinguistic study of the family as it is the primary unit of socialisation, where we first learn how to behave linguistically (see also Ochs and Schieffelin, 1983).

Although Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999) highlight entry to a family CofP through marriage, perhaps more fundamentally, entry to a family can also be achieved by birth. The child must then acquire a sociolinguistic competence within the family that not only allows him/her to become a full participant in the family but has implications outside of the family in other CofPs. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999: 189) maintain that ‘styles and frameworks constructed in experientially central communities of practice are likely to have become “second nature”, sustained by a powerful set of dispositions.’ Without doubt, the family is one of these ‘central’ CofPs which aid in establishing a person’s ability to manage their involvement in

any CofP. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (*ibid.*) argue that ‘the CofPs to which people belong at relatively early life stages probably have special importance for certain aspects of speech style and interpretation.’ It is argued here that the family provides a grounding for interactions in future CofPs. It is in this context that we first receive the rules of apprenticeship required to move from peripheral to central membership that people can apply as they move beyond the family CofP.

The term community of practice was introduced to sociolinguistics by the work of Penelope Eckert (1989, 2000) which centres on sub-groups of American high school students such as *burnouts* and *jocks*. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992: 464) define community of practice as:

...an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices, emerge in the course of this mutual endeavour.

To date, the concept of the CofP has been adopted most frequently by researchers studying language and gender (for example, Bucholtz, 1999; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1999; Freed, 1999; Holmes and Meyerhoff, 1999; Meyerhoff, 1999; Mills, 2003; Paechter, 2003a, 2003b), sub-cultures (for example, Bucholtz, 1998; Eckert, 1989, 2000) and the workplace (for example, Holmes and Meyerhoff, 1999; Wenger *et al.*, 2002; McCarthy and Handford, 2004; Vaughan, 2007, 2008). According to Hazen (2002: 506), ‘innovative scholarship bearing on the sociolinguistics of the family has come from Community of Practice theorists.’ Although Hazen neglects to cite examples of any of this innovative research that focuses specifically on the family as a CofP, many of the most prominent researchers working with the notion of community of practice label the family a CofP. For example, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999: 186) maintain that ‘a CofP can develop out of a formally or informally constituted enterprise: a choir, a gang, a secretarial pool, a family, a garage band, a friendship group or an academic department.’

Interestingly for this study and future studies of family discourse, Davies (2005: 561) observes that ‘a family group certainly constitutes a small community of practice whilst all its members live in the same house.’ However, she also poses a question as to what happens the family CofP as the siblings grow up, move out and

have families of their own, ‘even if those family members live locally and meet relatively infrequently, their interaction will be to some degree different to that shared in their home environment’ (*ibid*: 562). This raises the question of membership of a CofP that does not engage in regular, face-to-face interaction (see Gee, 2005). While this is borne in mind, it is important to note that in the present study, the siblings of both families have not yet left the family home. More significantly, it can be seen that when CofP theorists mention the family, they do so in passing with little in-depth application of the concept to the family. Therefore, in order to further explore the family as a CofP, attention now turns to a consideration of Wenger’s (1998) three constitutive features of a CofP, and these are applied to the context of family discourse.

Wenger (1998) outlines three criteria which must be met in order to talk of a group as a CofP, *mutual engagement*, *joint enterprise* and *shared repertoire*, and all three are readily applicable to the context of family discourse. Firstly, Wenger (*ibid.*) maintains that there must be mutual engagement between community members. This is interpreted by Meyerhoff (2002: 527) as suggesting that ‘members need to get together in order to engage in their shared practices.’ This mutual engagement typically involves regular, face-to-face interaction – members meet individually or in small or large groups on a casual, intensive and comprehensive basis (Holmes and Meyerhoff, 1999). According to Wenger (1998: 74), ‘for a family, [mutual engagement] can be having dinner together, taking trips on weekends, or cleaning the house on Saturdays.’ Therefore, it seems that mutual engagement can take place within the family regardless of whether or not they all live under the same roof; the older siblings may return home to have dinner with their parents, for example. Nevertheless, both families in this study routinely encounter one another face-to-face within the setting of the family home. They interact on a number of levels; *casually* as their paths cross at various points during their day-to-day contact, *intensively*, for example when a parent and child discuss a problem and *comprehensively* when more general issues such as work or school are explored around the dinner table. However, Wenger (1998) claims that this regular engagement can be either harmonious or conflictual and, therefore, a CofP is not necessarily created among a group of friends or allies, or indeed a functional family.

The second criterion is that the members of the CofP share a joint enterprise. This concept has fast emerged as critical to the consideration of any CofP as it embodies the ‘practice’ element of the community. Paechter (2003a: 71) points out that ‘shared practices are what holds these communities together, what makes them communities of practice.’ Meyerhoff (2002: 528) cautions that ‘linguists who wish to use the notion of CofP in their analyses have to exercise caution and ensure that as researchers they are not attempting to constitute “CofPs” for which a shared enterprise is explanatorily vacant.’ In relation to joint enterprise in the family, Wenger (1998: 6) maintains that:

Families struggle to establish an habitable way of life. They develop their own practices, routines, rituals, artifacts, symbols, conventions, stories, and histories. Family members hate each other and they love each other; they agree and they disagree. They do what it takes to keep going. Even when families fall apart, members create ways of dealing with each other. Surviving together is an important enterprise, whether surviving consists in the search for food and shelter, or in the quest for a viable identity.

Therefore, the family are constantly engaged in the shared enterprise of ‘surviving together’ and creating an identity of ‘being a family’ for one another. A return to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet’s (1992: 464) definition of the CofP cited above indicates that the practices of a community consist of ‘ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations’. This can have a variety of different meanings for each individual family. For example, for one family at the dinner table, there may be particular seats assigned to particular family members, and to sit in the seat not allocated to you would represent a ‘break’ from practice. On the other hand, another family may not have pre-assigned seats, and, indeed, may not eat dinner together at all. In relation to the present study, one of the conversations recorded of the settled family concerns the erection of their Christmas tree. During the conversation an exchange about suitable decorations for the tree takes place which is featured in extract (3.1):

(3.1)

- <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 mam.
<Mother> Now+
<Son 1> He's white.
<Mother> +take it off.

Son 1, Jimmy, wants to put a decoration, a robin, on the tree. Both the daughter and son 2 reprimand their younger sibling for this. Their reasoning is that no decoration is permitted on the tree that is not a certain colour or pre-approved by their mother. This is obviously a practice that has developed within the family that the older siblings are acutely aware of as part of their shared repertoire but the younger son, in his position of apprentice, has perhaps not learned. This practice is upheld by the mother who tells her younger son to remove the decoration from the tree.

It should also be highlighted that these practices are by no means fixed, but are constantly 'being shifted, renegotiated and reinvented' (Paechter, 2003a: 71). It is a natural process for the child to leave the family community of practice and enter other communities. They then return with different practices which may be integrated into the family CofP. In addition, as the children get older, they begin to renegotiate their identity with their parents, moving from 'child' to 'adult' and this also has implications for the practices the family engage in. However, Wenger (1998) maintains that joint enterprise is a process dependent on mutual understanding of personal roles within the CofP. For the family, roles such as youngest son or mother are pre-established, stable and hierarchic, and the understanding of these roles is learned by the children through a process of legitimate peripheral participation in the practices of the family. These roles remain a defining feature of the family CofP, even as the children enter adulthood. This enables the community of practice of the family to survive, even when, as Wenger (*ibid*: 6) points out above, 'families fall apart'.

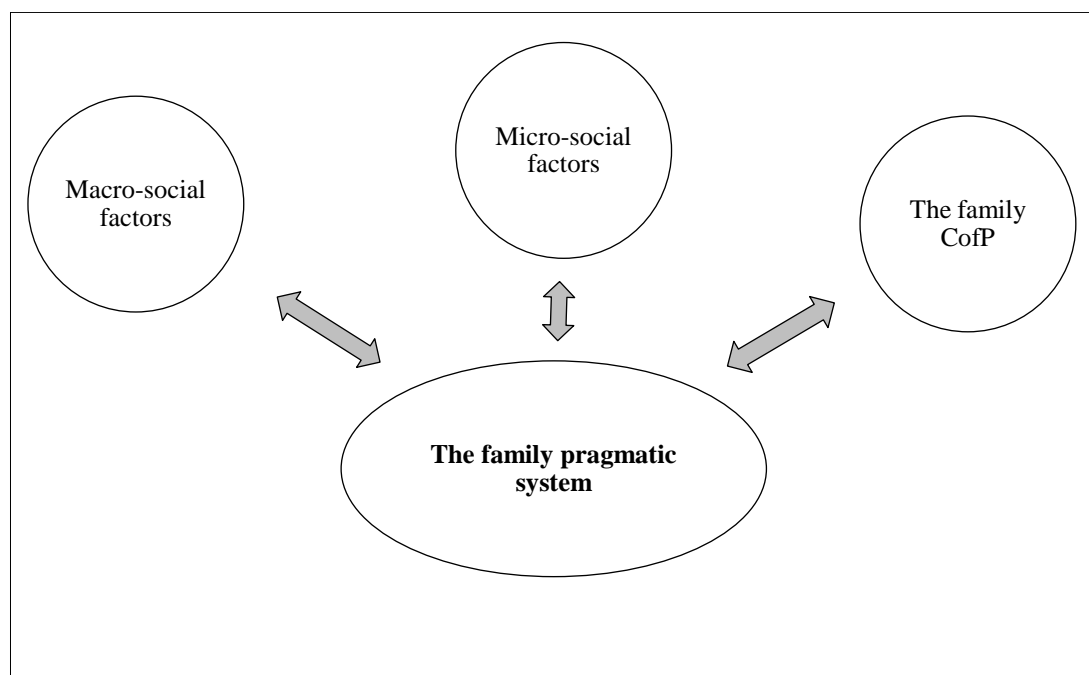
Wenger's (1998) final criterion for the community of practice is shared repertoire. According to Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999: 176), shared repertoire refers to 'linguistic resources such as specialised terminology and linguistic routines, but also resources like pictures, regular meals, and gestures.' Shared repertoire refers to any resource, linguistic or otherwise, that has become part of the community's practice.

Therefore, shared repertoire in particular highlights the CofP's emphasis on the social and linguistic practices of a community, as opposed to other sociolinguistic models for analysing language variation such as the speech community which focus solely on linguistic practices. This repertoire is a result of shared practices becoming integrated into the CofP. Holmes and Meyerhoff (*ibid.*) observe that 'over time, the joint pursuit of an enterprise results in a shared repertoire of joint resources for negotiating meaning.' The settled family, for example, appear to sit down to dinner at almost exactly the same time every evening and the dinner itself followed a particular pattern which culminates in the parents sitting at the table alone discussing the day's events. Similarly, the Traveller family mealtime has its own patterns, the younger children seem to have set mealtimes and they eat first, followed by their elder siblings. For the present study, shared repertoire provides the richest vein for the researcher due to the fact that the repertoire of both families is manifest in their linguistic practices.

3.5 How does the community of practice complement a variational pragmatic approach to family discourse?

From a variational pragmatic viewpoint, the present study represents an intra-varietal examination of pragmatic language variation within a single language variety, Irish English. However, it is different from other intra-varietal studies as defined within the framework of variational pragmatics because it is an 'intra-register' study, characterised by the investigation of the similarities and differences between high frequency items emblematic of the pragmatic system of two distinct families. This, therefore, necessitates an extra theoretical dimension that enables the comparison of social group linguistic practices at an extremely localised level, hence the suitability of the CofP model. The present study also seeks to account for the reasons for any similarities and differences that exist between the pragmatic language use of the Traveller and settled family. The combination of a variational pragmatic and a CofP approach allows for a more nuanced examination of these reasons and, therefore, a more coherent picture of the pragmatic systems of the families. Figure 3.1 illustrates the factors affecting the family pragmatic system:

Figure 3.1: Factors influencing the pragmatic system of the family



As can be seen, the family pragmatic system is affected by a wide range of factors. Variational pragmatics provides a framework to account for the influence of these macro- and micro-social features. However, as already stated, it does not provide for the influence on a pragmatic system of formally or informally socially constituted groupings such as the family. Each CofP has its own series of unique shared practices and these may have an influence on how pragmatic behaviour is determined within a group, thereby necessitating the inclusion of the CofP in the present study.

Another benefit that the CofP framework brings to the present study and, indeed, to small corpus studies as a whole, is the further potential it offers for generalisation. Where variational pragmatics allows the researcher to account for how the choice of one pragmatic strategy over another encodes macro-social indices of region, age, gender, ethnicity and social class, the community of practice framework enables the families in the present study to be analysed as a unit rather than a series of disparate individuals. This facilitates a 'localised' interpretation of linguistic choice, thereby avoiding any criticisms of homogeneity that have, in the past, been attributed to the results of large-scale studies in modern dialectology. Obviously, the present study involves a corpus-based analysis of two families, and, therefore, any attempt to

generalise must be treated with caution. However, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999: 191) maintain that ‘illuminating generalisations’ emerge when the CofP is examined not in isolation, but in conjunction with other social variables such as ethnicity or social class. As Eckert (2000: 24) points out, the meanings associated with variation in a CofP do not ‘emerge with no relation to larger social patterns.’ For example, Eckert’s (1989, 2000) study of adolescents in the suburban Detroit area yielded the finding that the jock girls are more standard in their pronunciation than the jock boys, indeed Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999: 195) maintain that ‘standard language use seems to be actively pursued by those young women [the jock girls].’ The jock community of practice is viewed by Eckert as associated with their school’s corporate culture and middle class aspirations. Therefore, according to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (*ibid.*), ‘such data suggest an extension of the generalisation that women have to do much more than men simply to maintain their place in the standard language market.’ It can be argued, then, that the framework of community of practice has much to offer in relation to the study of two families at both a local and more global level.

Although, as Figure 3.1 illustrates, the pragmatic systems of the two families are affected by macro-social influences, many of these have fundamental differences in meaning for each family. For example, the concept of ethnicity is likely to have inherent differences in importance between the two families. As Chapter 1 has demonstrated, the two families fundamentally differ both in terms of social class and ethnicity, and also in other macro-social categories such as educational achievement. However, micro-social factors such as the power structure within the family are broadly comparable. Adding another, more complex, layer is the impact of the family community of practice, which can also be seen to ‘feed in’ to the families’ pragmatic systems. The impact of the CofP is two-fold. On the one hand, it could be argued that all ‘western’ families have certain shared practices such as family meals, birthdays or religious customs. The singing of ‘Happy Birthday’ is, for example, an illustration of the universality of certain family practices. On the other hand, all families will develop their own distinct practices over a period of time, for example, the division of household chores, who sits where at the dinner table or who controls the television remote control (see Section 3.4). In sum, there are both similarities and differences in factors affecting the two families. It is hypothesised here that the

similarities appear to support the notion of a ‘shared pragmatic repertoire’ between the two family communities of practice. However, it is also acknowledged that there are notable differences between the pragmatic repertoires of the two families. The notion of a ‘shared pragmatic repertoire’ (or not) will be further explored in Chapter 4 and expanded on in the analysis chapters.

3.6 Conclusion

Barron and Schneider (2005: 12) propose that ‘VP [variational pragmatics] does not impose any theoretical or methodological orientation, but puts pragmatics on the map of dialectology and variational linguistics. As such it is as varied as pragmatics itself.’ Although they have since refined this proposal by adding a systematic analytical framework focusing both on type and level of variation as outlined in this chapter, they have not, as yet, specified one particular methodological orientation. Therefore, Chapter 4 will investigate the benefits of applying a corpus methodology to both variational pragmatics and community of practice. Corpus linguistics will be shown to further the research agenda of both frameworks for a number of reasons. Firstly, it allows for the identification of high frequency pragmatic items through the detailed examination of word frequency lists. Secondly, it enables the researcher to make the connection between occurrences of pragmatic features and macro- and micro-social factors due to the detailed demographic information provided by many modern spoken corpora. Finally, corpus linguistics addresses some of the criticisms of both variational pragmatics and the community of practice. It provides variational pragmatics with representative samples of naturally occurring discourse and the community of practice with quantitative support of the qualitative insights offered by the framework.

Chapter 4

Research methodology

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the data that comprises the study, the spoken language of a middle class Irish family and a family from the Irish Traveller community, is examined in detail. As was discussed in Chapter 3, insights from the theoretical frameworks of variational pragmatics and the community of practice are employed to explain the variations between the two datasets. However, corpus linguistic tools are largely responsible for highlighting these variations in the first instance and allowing them to be drawn forth from the datasets and further examined. Word frequency lists allow the identification of both the presence (and absence) of high frequency items that may be characteristic of pragmatic systems of the particular ‘familylects’ (Søndergaard, 1991), while concordance lines provide a tool through which these items may be ‘plucked’ from the data and further analysed, thus enabling comparison and/or contrast of the two datasets. In this respect, the present study corresponds with a recent trend for the ‘blending’ of different theoretical and methodological techniques. Recent studies have also highlighted the suitability of, for example, the combination of conversation analysis, which deals with small amounts of text, and corpus linguistics, which, traditionally, deals with large amounts of text (see Walsh and O’Keeffe, 2007).

In addition to examining the data in more detail, there are a number of issues that are addressed in the chapter. Due to the fact that a family from the Traveller community in Ireland forms part of the data, ethical issues in relation to the portrayal of minority groups in sociolinguistic research such as confidentiality and the role of the researcher are considered. These ethical issues, although initially thought to apply exclusively to the Traveller community, are also shown to have resonance for the settled family.

4.1 The data

The data was collected according to specific design criteria. The two datasets represent spoken language collected in the home/family environment: one from a middle class Irish family and one from a family belonging to the Irish Traveller community (see Table 4.1). The data from the settled family consists of one hour of

audio recordings. The total number of members of the family is six (two parents and four siblings); however, not all recordings feature six speakers. In addition to conversations featuring both parents and children, the dataset also contains instances of conversation that feature the siblings in interaction with one another in the absence of the parents. Parent-parent conversations, without the presence of siblings, proved impossible to collect due to the settled family’s unwillingness to record themselves. The researcher is a member of the settled family. As Table 4.1 shows, data from the Traveller family is composed of forty-five minutes of audio recordings¹. The total number of members of the Traveller family is eight (two parents and six children). All conversations feature at least one parent in conversation with his/her children.

Table 4.1: Description of the two datasets

	Settled family	Traveller family
Length of recording	60 minutes	45 minutes
Number of speakers	6	8
Number of words	12531	3172

Obviously, family discourse is extremely sensitive in nature, and, therefore, relatively difficult to access. This was compounded by the fact that the Traveller community is, to a certain degree, ‘closed’ to the wider Irish society (see also Section 4.3). Both families were told that the researcher was interested in comparing English in different parts of Ireland but was not told the specific language focus. This gave them no opportunity to react to any given situation and adjust their speech accordingly. On the researcher’s part, no effort was made to adapt conversation in any way and no leading questions were used during conversation. In both instances, the recordings were strictly limited to immediate family only. For the settled family, this referred to the six member family and for the Traveller family, this referred to the eight member family. No other person, regardless of their relationship with the

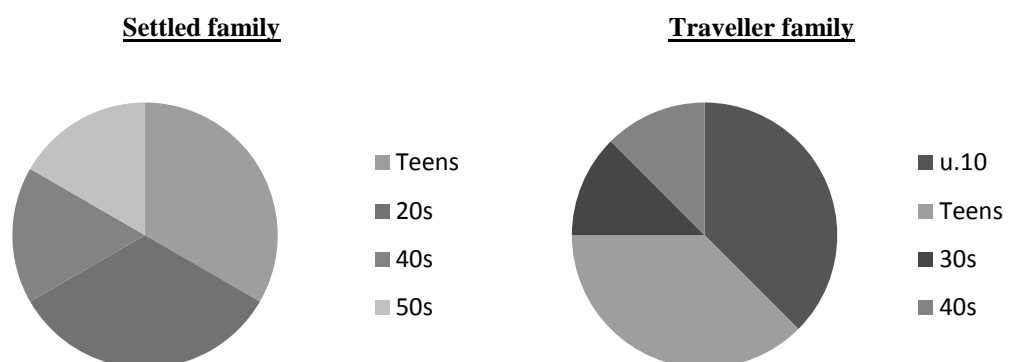
¹ The disparity in size between the two datasets will be addressed in Section 4.3.2 and 4.4.

families, was included in the recordings. The recordings were restricted to the home environment – in the case of the settled family, a house, and for the Traveller family, a mobile home. The recording equipment was not moved beyond these boundaries to other shared spaces such as a car. The recordings also took place over a period of weeks. All names have been anonymised and any references that could identify the exact location of the data have been removed (see Section 4.5 for more details). Apart from these changes, that data remains uncensored. Therefore, the data collected is naturally occurring, spontaneous, casual conversation.

4.1.1 The participants

In relation to the participants in both families, detailed speaker information sheets were collected for both families. As mentioned, the Traveller family represented has eight members, the settled family, six. The gender profile for both families is the same with equal numbers of male and female participants. The settled family is composed of one mother, one father and four siblings (two male and two female). The Traveller family consists of a mother, father and six siblings (three male and three female). These family members are compared across age in Figure 4.1:

Figure 4.1: Participants by age in both datasets



As Figure 4.1 demonstrates, although the gender profile is identical, the age profile of the two families is markedly different. In relation to the parents, in the Traveller family, the mother is in her thirties and the father in his forties. In the settled family, the father is in his fifties and the mother in her forties. This is typical of the Traveller community in comparison to their settled counterparts. According to the Central

Statistics Office (2007a), 20% of Travellers were aged less than 15 years in 2006 compared with 10% for the population as a whole. Travellers of 65 years or over account for just 2.6% of total Traveller population compared with 11% of the general population. As already mentioned, Traveller life expectancy levels are equivalent to those of the general population in the 1940s. Traveller men can, on average, expect to live ten years less and women twelve years less than their settled equivalents. In terms of the siblings, in the settled family, two of the children are in their teens and two in their twenties. In the Traveller family, three of the children are ten years of age or younger and three are in their teens.

4.2 Spoken corpora and corpus size

Building a spoken corpus can initially be a daunting experience. Assembling a large amount of spoken data is associated with high costs because of the difficulties involved in recording, transcribing and coding the data. In addition, the representativeness and balance of many large spoken corpora could be questioned as there is no definitive list of spoken genres and certain speech contexts, for example, family discourse, have proven difficult to access (see McCarthy, 1998). However, this has not deterred corpus builders. It is now possible to access a range of spoken corpora designed for a variety of purposes. Corpora such as the American National Corpus (ANC) and the British National Corpus (BNC) are designed to represent the language varieties of American and British English respectively and are also designed to be comparable across genres. The BNC contains 100 million words, of which 10 million are spoken². In order to achieve representativeness, one part of the spoken corpus was collected by a process of demographic sampling. Texts were collected from individuals and demographic information such as name, age, occupation, sex and social class was noted. This was further subdivided into region and interaction type (monologue or dialogue). The demographically sampled corpus was complemented by texts collected on context-governed criteria. These texts related to more formal speech contexts such as those encountered in educational or business settings (see Aston and Burnard, 1998 for a full description of the design of the BNC).

² Almost 15 million words of the ANC are currently available. This is divided into approximately 11.5 million words of written language and 3.5 million words of spoken language (see www.anc.org).

The International Corpus of English (ICE), a project that has been in place for almost twenty years and involves eighteen research teams in different countries across the globe, comprises of 60% spoken texts and 40% written. The ICE corpus, when complete, will provide a range of one million word corpora of English from countries where English is a first or major language. Similar to the BNC, the spoken component of ICE contains 60% dialogic and 40% monologic material; these are divided into public and private dialogues into scripted and unscripted monologues (see Meyer, 2002). In the ICE corpus, the speakers chosen were adults of eighteen years of age or older that had received a formal education through the medium of English to at least secondary school level (however, this design proved to be flexible in the case of well-known, established political leaders and radio or television broadcasters whose public status made their inclusion appropriate). Information was also recorded about sex, ethnic group, region, occupation and status in occupation and role in relation to other participants (Greenbaum, 1991).

In relation to exclusively spoken corpora, the five million word Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE) is a corpus designed to represent spoken British (and some Irish) English. In their initial corpus design phase the CANCODE team developed a set of spoken text-types to correspond to existing text typologies for the written language. They adopted what McCarthy (1998) terms a 'genre-based' approach where not only is a population of speakers targeted, but the context and environment in which the speech is produced is also taken into consideration. The framework used for CANCODE sought to combine the nature of speaker relationship with goal-types prevalent in everyday, spoken interaction. The nature of the speaker relationship was divided into five broad contexts; *transactional*, *professional*, *pedagogical*, *socialising* and *intimate*. For each of these contexts, three goal-types were identified; *information provision*, *collaborative task* and *collaborative idea* (see Section 4.3 for a definition of the terms) and these are operationalised in Table 4.2:

Table 4.2: CANCODE’s matrix of speech genres (operationalised)³

	Collaborative Idea	Collaborative Task	Information Provision
Pedagogical	Group tutorial	Individual tutorial - discussing student's work	Lecture
Professional	Collaborative office meeting	Colleagues moving furniture	Work presentation
Transactional	Chatting with bank clerk	Buying a stereo system	Commentary by library tour guide
Socialising	Chatting with friends about shared experiences	Assembling shelves	Telling jokes
Intimate	Discussing family matters	Cooking together	Relating story of film seen

This genre-based approach, according to McCarthy (*ibid*: 9), ‘offers the possibility of linking their [the data] contextual and social features directly with the lexicogrammatical ‘nuts and bolts’ of their step-by-step creation.’ More recently, the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (LCIE), a one million word corpus of naturally occurring spoken Irish English, was built to parallel CANCODE’s matrix of speech genres and allow for a full description of spoken Irish English in these contexts (for a full description of the design of LCIE see Farr *et al.*, 2004).

There are also a number of register-specific spoken corpora available to the language researcher. The Michigan Corpus of Spoken Academic English (MICASE), designed to examine the characteristics of contemporary American academic speech, has approximately 1.8 million words. The MICASE designers also employed context-governed criteria in collecting the data. The corpus contains speech events across the major academic disciplines in a university, for example, biological and health sciences, physical sciences and engineering and humanities and the arts. Demographic information such as age, gender, academic role and first language

³ Adapted from McCarthy (1998: 10).

were also recorded. Recently, two additional corpora, the British Academic Spoken English corpus (BASE) and the Limerick-Belfast Corpus of Academic Spoken English (Li-Bel CASE), have been designed as companions to MICASE. The BASE corpus contains 1.6 million words, whereas Li-Bel CASE, when completed, will hold one million words. In addition to this, there are a number of spoken corpora that represent specific social groupings. For example, the Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language (COLT) is a half a million word corpus of spontaneous teenage talk. This corpus distinguishes between speaker-specific (for example gender, age, social class etc.) and context-specific (location and setting) information.

Thus far, it seems that major spoken corpora are quite substantial at over half a million words at least. In relation to corpus size, Sinclair (2004: 189) maintains that 'there is no virtue in being small. Small is not beautiful; it is simply a limitation.' However, in spite of this, it may be the case that small corpora are more adept than larger ones at explaining the fine-grained distinction that exists between registers. Biber *et al.*'s (1999) forty million word Longman Spoken and Written English Corpus (LSWE) is divided into six registers; conversation, fiction, newspaper language, academic prose, non-conversational speech and general prose. However, within each of these registers is an enormous amount of variation. For example, Hunston (2002) notes that newspaper language contains a variety of newspaper types (for example, broadsheet and tabloid) in addition to a range of article types (hard news, letters, sport, business etc.). Indeed, it could be argued that conversation contains an even wider variation of types. Therefore, for larger corpora such as the one used in Biber *et al.*'s (1999) grammar, 'to make distinctions between 'smaller' registers would quickly become unmanageable' (Hunston, 2002: 161). Small corpora studies have highlighted a range of variation that exists both in and between different language varieties and registers.

Small corpora have allowed researchers to identify linguistic characteristics of particular spoken registers. Vaughan (2007, 2008) uses a 40,000 word corpus of meetings of English language teachers (C-MELT) to explore particular linguistic features characteristic of this community of practice. For example, the size of C-MELT allowed specific instances of humour to be isolated in order that they might be assigned a function. Vaughan (2007: 186) found that teachers 'use [humour] to

establish the social space they share, and implicitly define who they are, and what their attitude is to the work they do.’ Farr (2007) claims that, in relation to teacher education, ‘a spoken language corpus can be a valuable instrument in the toolbox of professional development’ (p. 254). Farr’s 80,000 word POTTI corpus has allowed the identification of areas for development and also areas of professional strength within this context. For example, Farr (2005) explores the use of relational strategies present in the data to demonstrate how trainers work to lessen asymmetrical speech relationships. She claims that small talk, in particular talk about health issues, is a typical way of establishing solidarity between speakers in this context. Furthermore, she demonstrates how shared socio-cultural references such as *muinteóir*, the Gaelic word for *teacher*, are a method of diluting institutional power on the part of the teacher trainer in interaction with the trainee.

O’Keeffe (2005) employs a 55,000 word corpus from radio phone-in to focus on question forms in this context and illustrates that, although many asymmetrical norms of institutional discourse apply to this context, there is widespread downtoning of power at a lexico-grammatical level. In addition to using hedges, the presenter of the radio show employs a variety of features such as first name vocatives, latching and reflexive pronouns, as in *What are you doing with yourself nowadays?*, to create a ‘pseudo-intimate’ (p. 340) environment between speaker and caller. Koester (2006) investigated a 34,000 word corpus of American and British office talk and demonstrated the influence of local contexts on frequency and use of various words or patterns. For example, she found that modal verbs of obligations are more frequent in collaborative genres (for example, decision making or planning) than in unidirectional genres (for example, giving instructions). Finally, Cutting (2001) investigated the evaluative speech acts of six students as they became members of an academic discourse community, on a taught Master’s course in Applied Linguistics. Cutting isolated and tagged each of these speech acts and found that positive acts increase as the course progresses and participants build solidarity. She also found that negative speech acts are most common in conversations about the course. Cutting deliberately limited the corpus used to 26,000 words so that she ‘could become familiar enough with each one’s [participants] linguistic idiosyncrasies, personalities and attitudes to interpret the findings’ (p. 1208-1209), an approach that would be very difficult with a larger corpus. Similarly, in this

study, it is proposed that the datasets used provide a basis for a more in-depth interpretation of the linguistic characteristics of both families. Therefore, the data from the settled family and from the Traveller family will subsequently be referred to as SettCorp and TravCorp respectively.

4.3 The synergy of variational pragmatics, community of practice and a corpus linguistic methodology

This section investigates the benefits that a corpus methodology offers both variational pragmatics and the community of practice. McEnery and Wilson (2001: 77) maintain that ‘there has recently been a move in social science research towards multi-method approaches which largely reject the narrow analytical paradigms in favour of the breadth of information which the use of more than one method may provide.’ One of the primary benefits of applying a corpus-based methodology to these theoretical frameworks is the quality of data offered by many spoken corpora. In relation to the synergy of sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics, De Beaugrande (1999: 132) maintains that this represents a fresh initiative whereby the long tradition of using ideal, invented language in sociolinguistics is replaced by one with an emphasis on real language, ‘sociolinguists who work with abundant real data are referring the language back to the real community who produced or received those data.’ Andersen (2010: 549-555) also highlights a number of advantages that corpora offer the sociolinguist such as multi-modal and annotated corpora. Corpus linguistics allows the option of an alternative methodology to those that traditionally characterise research into either sociolinguistics, for example, the sociolinguistic interview, or pragmatics, for example, discourse completion tests.

In relation to the community of practice, Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006: 247) point out that:

Although studies based on communities of practice often involve in-depth analysis of small groups and small samples of language (including, for example, individual stretches of conversation), they nonetheless rely on language patterns revealed in large scale studies.

Therefore, a notable strength afforded to the investigation of community of practice by corpus linguistics is the quantitative support it provides to the qualitative insights offered by the framework. As Sections 4.3.1 and 4.4 outline, the present study utilises corpus tools such as frequency lists and concordance lines. The frequency lists allow the researcher, amongst other things, to address issues of representativeness by comparing word frequency lists between, for example, the settled family data and the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (see Section 4.3.2). In addition, the use of concordances can provide contextual evidence of the pragmatic behaviour of an individual word or phrase, thus providing the researcher with informed, qualitative analysis. Corpus linguistics also offers investigations of variational pragmatics and community of practice additional advantages and these are explored in detail below.

4.3.1 Highlighting similarities and differences

Jautz (2008: 146) maintains that one benefit that corpora offer the variational pragmatist is ‘large amounts of naturally-occurring data, i.e. language in use, but also large amounts of comparable data from different varieties of one language.’ In addressing this benefit, in relation to the synergy of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and corpus linguistic methodology, Orpin (2005: 39) cautions that ‘an attendant danger in using a large corpus is that the researcher may feel swamped by the huge amount of data s/he is faced with.’ Small corpora such as TravCorp and SettCorp can help overcome a feeling of being overwhelmed by the sheer volume of results produced by the data contained in many modern corpora such as the ANC, BNC or CANCODE. Orpin (*ibid.*) also maintains that a good entry point for researchers in CDA is the corpus frequency list and this holds true for variational pragmatics. When applied to the study of variational pragmatics, the contrasting of word frequency lists may allow the identification of both the presence (and absence) of items that may be characteristic of the pragmatic system of a particular language variety. For example, Table 4.3 shows a direct comparison of the frequency lists for the top 25 words of SettCorp and TravCorp:

Table 4.3: Top 25 word frequency counts for SettCorp and TravCorp

Number	SettCorp		TravCorp	
	Word	%	Word	%
1	<i>the</i>	3.94	<i>you</i>	3.81
2	<i>you</i>	2.76	<i>the</i>	3.78
3	<i>it</i>	2.71	<i>go</i>	2.49
4	<i>I</i>	2.01	<i>it</i>	2.08
5	<i>to</i>	1.86	<i>to</i>	2.02
6	<i>a</i>	1.81	<i>on</i>	1.64
7	<i>and</i>	1.55	<i>a</i>	1.57
8	<i>of</i>	1.34	<i>now</i>	1.51
9	<i>that</i>	1.29	<i>out</i>	1.45
10	<i>in</i>	1.22	<i>I</i>	1.42
11	<i>is</i>	1.21	<i>no</i>	1.35
12	<i>yeah</i>	1.17	<i>and</i>	1.29
13	<i>no</i>	1.14	<i>there</i>	1.17
14	<i>it's</i>	1.07	<i>get</i>	1.13
15	<i>on</i>	0.99	<i>me</i>	1.07
16	<i>what</i>	0.89	<i>in</i>	1.01
17	<i>do</i>	0.88	<i>that</i>	1.01
18	<i>we</i>	0.82	<i>here</i>	0.94
19	<i>now</i>	0.78	<i>I'm</i>	0.91
20	<i>was</i>	0.76	<i>daddy</i>	0.88
21	<i>have</i>	0.73	<i>goin</i>	0.85
22	<i>one</i>	0.72	<i>way</i>	0.85
23	<i>there</i>	0.71	<i>what</i>	0.85
24	<i>like</i>	0.66	<i>yeah</i>	0.85
25	<i>all</i>	0.64	<i>look</i>	0.82

Table 4.3, in addition to highlighting some *potential* pragmatic similarities (marked ■) between SettCorp and TravCorp, may also point toward likely differences (marked □). For example, in relation to personal pronouns characteristic of the deictic system in many languages, *you* (position one in SettCorp and two in TravCorp) features more frequently than *I* (position four in SettCorp and ten in TravCorp). In contrast, the pronoun *we* is in 18th position in SettCorp but does not appear in the top 25 words in TravCorp. Furthermore the item *that*, which can potentially function as a deictic marker and the item *now*, traditionally associated with both temporal deictic and discoursal functions, features on both word frequency lists. Further variational between the two datasets that might be indicated by the frequency lists is the term of address *daddy* which occurs in 20th position in TravCorp but is not present on the SettCorp frequency list in Table 4.3. Finally, one token with the potential to hedge in Irish English, *like*, appears in SettCorp (position

24) but does not feature within the top 25 items on the TravCorp list.⁴ These similarities and differences between the two corpora offer fertile ground for the researcher, especially in the initial stages of the research. For the researcher of variational pragmatics, they offer a fledgling variational profile, whereas they offer a tantalising glimpse of the presence (or not) of a shared linguistic repertoire for those investigating the community of practice.

Corpus word frequency lists are, admittedly, a raw measure of comparability, based on, as Table 4.3 demonstrates, the potential of a word form rather than its actual function. Jautz (2008) examines the BNC and the Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English for expressions of gratitude in British and New Zealand radio phone-in and broadcast interviews. She comments that based solely on frequency, there are 287 expressions of gratitude in the British corpus and 129 in the New Zealand corpus, suggesting that the British are more polite because they use more expressions of gratitude. However, Jautz demonstrates that when these expressions are analysed more closely, the opposite appears to be the case. Similarly, Farr and O’Keeffe (2002) examine the occurrences of the hedges *I would say* and *I’d say* in three spoken corpora: LCIE, CANCODE and a corpus of American spoken data from the Cambridge International Corpus. They found that these hedges are used twice as frequently by Irish speakers than by their American counterparts. However, they label this initial finding ‘restrictive in its insightfulness’ (p. 29) due to the fact that the quantitative and geographically-constrained results generated by larger corpora do not further an understanding of how or why hedges are used in face-to-face interaction.

Many corpus studies recommend that frequency analysis be complemented by a detailed consideration of the environment of key words through the use of concordances and collocational tools. For example, O’Keeffe and Adolphs (2008: 93) maintain that when there is a need to disambiguate form and function, corpus linguistics provides ‘direct access to the source files and the exact location in the original conversations in which the items occurred.’ For example, to add further insight into their raw frequency results, Farr and O’Keeffe (2002) explore the use of

⁴ See Chapter 8 for more details on the use of *like* in the pragmatic systems of the two families.

would as a hedging device in an Irish setting using two varietal sub-corpora from LCIE, a 55,000 word corpus of radio phone-in and a 52,000 word corpus of post-observation teacher training interaction. Based on a qualitative examination of the hedges as they appear in context, in addition to confirming that Irish speakers soften face threatening acts such as disagreement or giving advice, they also found that very often speakers downtone when speaking about themselves, even where the propositional content is undisputed. This led them to conclude that hedges have a broader pragmatic function in Irish English settings. They propose that in order to fully understand why speakers hedge it is necessary to consider the Irish socio-cultural context. They maintain that ‘in Irish society, directness is very often avoided...‘forwardness’, which ranges from being direct to being self-promoting, is not valued’ (p. 42). Therefore, Irish speakers may feel added pressure to hedge in situations where British or American speakers may think it unnecessary. Farr and O’Keeffe’s study demonstrates the merit of a two-pronged approach to the use of corpora in variational pragmatics, where intra-varietal, qualitative research involving smaller corpora is used to inform inter-varietal, quantitative corpus research.

Corpus-based variational pragmatic analysis can be further complemented by the demographic speaker information that accompanies conversations contained in many modern spoken corpora, thereby allowing both a micro- and macro-social interpretation of the corpus results. O’Keeffe and Adolphs (2008) analyse the form and function of response tokens across British and Irish English. To examine form, they analysed two one-million word corpus samples from CANCODE and LCIE. From these samples, they generated word and cluster lists and these were manually cross-checked with transcripts using concordancing. They demonstrate that, in terms of overall frequency, listener response tokens are far more frequent in British English than in Irish English. In order to compare the data functionally, they analysed two 20,000 word subcorpora of casual conversation taken from LCIE and CANCODE. The demographic information provided by CANCODE and LCIE allowed them to closely match their data in terms of gender, age, social relationship, socio-economic class and genre of discourse. Accordingly, in both subcorpora the participants were female university students in shared accommodation, that were close friends and of similar age (around 20). By controlling for macro-social categories of gender, age and socio-economic class, O’Keeffe and Adolphs were

able to make an accurate generalisation across two varieties of the same language. They again found that listener response tokens were more frequent among the British participants. However, their analysis revealed no pragmatic variation in the function of the response tokens across the two subcorpora. Orpin (2005) maintains that corpus analysis allows the researcher to construct a detailed ‘semantic profile’ of a word. Similarly, the synergy of the variational pragmatic research agenda with a corpus linguistic methodology allows those working in variational pragmatics to construct a detailed ‘pragmatic profile’ of individual words, clusters or acts.

4.3.2 The issue of representativeness

As already mentioned, representativeness is an issue that has been highlighted by Schneider and Barron (2008) as a weakness of previous, cross-cultural pragmatic studies. In Chapter 3, it was also proposed that the community of practice offers variational pragmatics a vehicle through which generalisations may be made (see Section 3.5). In relation to a corpus methodology, Leech (1991: 27) maintains that a corpus is representative if ‘findings based on its contents can be generalised to a larger hypothetical corpus.’ Therefore, in the case of a corpus said to represent a language variety, it is in fact representative if its findings can be generalised to the said language variety. According to Tognini-Bonelli (2001: 2), ‘a corpus can be defined as a collection of texts assumed to be representative of a particular language put together so that it can be used for linguistic analysis’ (see also Sinclair, 2004). She maintains that a corpus is constructed with a number of underlying assumptions: the language is naturally occurring; it is gathered according to explicit design criteria; it has a specific purpose in mind; and it has a claim to represent larger chunks of language selected according to a specific typology (see also Biber, 1993). These assumptions were primary considerations when the design and construction of both SettCorp and TravCorp was undertaken. As discussed, both TravCorp and SettCorp contain a collection of texts that were gathered according to specific design criteria (Section 4.1). In terms of the representativeness and balance of the texts to be included in the corpora, a similar approach to that of CANCODE was adopted. Both corpora were designed to ensure that McCarthy’s (1998) three conversational goal-types, *collaborative idea*, *collaborative task* and *information provision*, were included. Collaborative ideas, according to McCarthy (*ibid*: 10), ‘are concerned with

the interactive sharing of thoughts, judgements, opinions and attitudes.’ Collaborative task refers to conversational participants interacting with their physical environment while talking and information provision ‘is primarily uni-directional, with one party imparting information to others’ (*ibid.*). Thus SettCorp features, for example, the family putting up the Christmas tree (collaborative task), talking about being a student in university (collaborative idea) and providing information about a city one of them is going to visit (information provision). Similarly, TravCorp contains goal-types such as the family cleaning their home (collaborative task), discussing the ownership of a mobile phone (collaborative idea) and relating a workplace story (information provision).

Both TravCorp and SettCorp are domain-specific, specialised corpora in that they represent a particular register (family discourse) and, therefore, questions of representativeness and balance should be considered with this in mind. In order to examine to what extent findings from these corpora can be generalised to a larger corpus, frequency lists were generated for TravCorp, SettCorp and a reference corpus, the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (LCIE). The frequency lists for SettCorp and LCIE are shown in direct comparison in Table 4.4 (types with similar frequency are marked ■, notable differences between the two corpora are marked □):

Table 4.4: Top 25 word frequency counts for SettCorp and LCIE

Number	SettCorp		LCIE	
	Word	%	Word	%
1	<i>the</i>	3.94	<i>the</i>	3.84
2	<i>you</i>	2.76	<i>I</i>	2.65
3	<i>it</i>	2.71	<i>and</i>	2.59
4	<i>I</i>	2.01	<i>you</i>	2.51
5	<i>to</i>	1.86	<i>to</i>	2.20
6	<i>a</i>	1.81	<i>it</i>	1.99
7	<i>and</i>	1.55	<i>a</i>	1.94
8	<i>of</i>	1.34	<i>that</i>	1.62
9	<i>that</i>	1.29	<i>of</i>	1.52
10	<i>in</i>	1.22	<i>yeah</i>	1.49
11	<i>is</i>	1.21	<i>in</i>	1.46
12	<i>yeah</i>	1.17	<i>was</i>	1.14
13	<i>no</i>	1.14	<i>is</i>	1.09
14	<i>it's</i>	1.07	<i>like</i>	0.95
15	<i>on</i>	0.99	<i>know</i>	0.88
16	<i>what</i>	0.89	<i>he</i>	0.80
17	<i>do</i>	0.88	<i>on</i>	0.79

18	<i>we</i>	0.82	<i>they</i>	0.79
19	<i>now</i>	0.78	<i>have</i>	0.75
20	<i>was</i>	0.76	<i>there</i>	0.72
21	<i>have</i>	0.73	<i>no</i>	0.72
22	<i>one</i>	0.72	<i>but</i>	0.72
23	<i>there</i>	0.71	<i>for</i>	0.70
24	<i>like</i>	0.66	<i>be</i>	0.69
25	<i>all</i>	0.64	<i>what</i>	0.67

While it is acknowledged that SettCorp is significantly smaller in size than LCIE, word frequency lists generated by Wordsmith Tools™ provide the frequency of occurrence of an individual type, for example *the*, as a percentage of a total number of tokens in the corpus. From Table 4.4, it can be seen that there are thirteen tokens (marked □) on both frequency lists that have very similar frequencies. For example, *the* accounts for 3.94% of the tokens in SettCorp and 3.84% in LCIE. Similarly, *you* accounts for 2.76% of tokens in SettCorp and 2.51% in LCIE and *there* 0.71% in SettCorp, 0.72% in LCIE. There are also notable differences in the frequency of some tokens between LCIE and SettCorp (individual tokens marked ■) and possible reasons for these will be offered below.

Similarities and differences in word frequency are also apparent when TravCorp is compared to LCIE in Table 4.5:

Table 4.5: Top 25 word frequency counts for TravCorp and LCIE

Number	TravCorp		LCIE	
	Word	%	Word	%
1	<i>you</i>	3.81	<i>the</i>	3.84
2	<i>the</i>	3.78	<i>I</i>	2.65
3	<i>go</i>	2.49	<i>and</i>	2.59
4	<i>it</i>	2.08	<i>you</i>	2.51
5	<i>to</i>	2.02	<i>to</i>	2.20
6	<i>on</i>	1.64	<i>it</i>	1.99
7	<i>a</i>	1.57	<i>a</i>	1.94
8	<i>now</i>	1.51	<i>that</i>	1.62
9	<i>out</i>	1.45	<i>of</i>	1.52
10	<i>I</i>	1.42	<i>yeah</i>	1.49
11	<i>no</i>	1.35	<i>in</i>	1.46
12	<i>and</i>	1.29	<i>was</i>	1.14
13	<i>there</i>	1.17	<i>is</i>	1.09
14	<i>get</i>	1.13	<i>like</i>	0.95
15	<i>me</i>	1.07	<i>know</i>	0.88
16	<i>in</i>	1.01	<i>he</i>	0.80
17	<i>that</i>	1.01	<i>on</i>	0.79
18	<i>here</i>	0.94	<i>they</i>	0.79
19	<i>I'm</i>	0.91	<i>have</i>	0.75

20	<i>daddy</i>	0.88	<i>there</i>	0.72
21	<i>goin</i>	0.85	<i>no</i>	0.72
22	<i>way</i>	0.85	<i>but</i>	0.72
23	<i>what</i>	0.85	<i>for</i>	0.70
24	<i>yeah</i>	0.85	<i>be</i>	0.69
25	<i>look</i>	0.82	<i>what</i>	0.67

Again, it is acknowledged that LCIE is a significantly larger corpus than TravCorp, however, Table 4.5 demonstrates that there are a number of similarities across the corpora. In the case of TravCorp and LCIE, there are seven tokens (marked ■) with largely comparable frequencies. For example, *the* accounts for 3.78% of occurrences in TravCorp and 3.84% in LCIE. Similarly, *it* accounts for 2.08% of tokens in TravCorp and 1.99% in LCIE and *what* 0.85% in TravCorp and 0.67% in LCIE. Unsurprisingly, there are a number of differences also (marked ■).

The similarities apparent between the three corpora may point towards the representativeness of both SettCorp and TravCorp, given that LCIE is considered a representative corpus of Irish English. Tables 4.4 and 4.5 demonstrate that SettCorp is more similar to LCIE than TravCorp. This similarity is largely unsurprising given the many parallels between SettCorp and LCIE; LCIE is predominantly comprised of casual conversation in informal settings between members of the settled community in Ireland (see Farr *et al.*, 2004). However, there are some differences in both the frequency and the ordering of tokens across the three corpora. These differences occur because of the nature of TravCorp and SettCorp as specialised corpora. Flowerdew (2001: 76) claims that ‘in order for there to be a particular value in creating a specialist corpus, it must be demonstrated that the specialist corpus has a different make up to a general corpus; otherwise an already available general frequency list could be used to the same end.’ The differences may also indicate the register-specific nature of TravCorp and SettCorp as corpora of family discourse, whereas LCIE was compiled to represent conversation from a range of everyday contexts (see CANCODE matrix Section 4.2). As the analysis chapters will show, the differences in regularity of occurrence of high frequency items may point towards characteristics of a specific register. For example, in this study, the differences in frequency between *you* and *I* in TravCorp and SettCorp in comparison to LCIE occur precisely because of the uniqueness of family discourse. In addition to this, these differences, rather than reflecting the fact that either corpus is

unrepresentative, may point towards the cultural differences manifest in language between members of the settled and Traveller communities (see Section 5.3.1).

McEnery *et al.* (2006: 18) maintain that ‘the research question one has in mind when building (or thinking of using) a corpus defines representativeness... representativeness is a fluid concept.’ TravCorp and SettCorp were constructed in order to consider the impact of various factors on the pragmatic systems of two families. The specific areas of variation focussed on are deixis, vocatives and hedging. All of these are notable for their presence, or absence, on the word frequency lists illustrated in Table 4.3. McEnery *et al.* (*ibid.*) further maintain that corpus size is dependent on the frequency and distribution of the linguistic features under consideration. Hakulinen *et al.* (1980) argue that corpora employed in the quantitative study of grammatical features are relatively small because the syntactic freezing point is fairly low. For example, Biber (1993) contends that a sample of 1,000 words may be sufficient to examine the number of past and present tense verbs in English (see also Biber, 1990).

Sinclair (2005) refers to the balance of a corpus as a rather vague notion but important nonetheless. Balance appears to rely heavily on intuition and best estimates (Atkins *et al.*, 1993; Sinclair, 2005; McEnery *et al.*, 2006). In terms of a general corpus, the Longman Spoken and Written English Corpus (LSWE) is considered ‘balanced’. According to Biber *et al.*, (1999: 25), the registers contained within the corpus were selected on the basis of balance in that they ‘include a manageable number of distinctions while covering much of the range of variation in English.’ For example, conversation is the register most commonly encountered by native speakers whereas academic prose is a highly specialised register that native speakers encounter infrequently. Between these two extremes are the popular registers of newspapers and fiction. For a more specialised corpus, balance is reliant on the corpus containing a range of texts typical of what the corpus is said to represent. In the case of TravCorp and SettCorp, as pointed out, every effort was made to include McCarthy’s (1998) three conversational goal-types and, therefore, both corpora are as balanced as was possible given the difficulties in accessing the data. It must be conceded, however, that neither SettCorp nor TravCorp are proportionally balanced but as Atkins *et al.* (1992: 6) argue:

It would be short-sighted indeed to wait until one can scientifically balance a corpus before starting to use one, and hasty to dismiss the results of corpus analysis as ‘unreliable’ or ‘irrelevant’ because the corpus used cannot be proved to be ‘balanced’.

Similarly, McEnery *et al.* (2006: 5) maintain that if specialised corpora were discounted on the basis of sampling techniques used, then ‘corpus linguistics would have contributed significantly less to language studies.’ Biber *et al.* (1999: 247) maintain that ‘for language studies...proportional samples are rarely useful...a proportional corpus would be of little use to studies of variation, because most of the texts would be relatively homogenous.’ Indeed, sociolinguistic studies have shown that relatively small samples that could be considered technically unrepresentative are sufficient to account for language variation in large cities (see Sankoff, 1988; Tagliamonte, 2006).

McEnery *et al.* (2006: 73) claim that although representativeness and balance are features that must be considered in relation to corpus design, they often depend on the ease with which the data can be collected and, therefore, ‘must be interpreted in relative terms i.e., a corpus should only be as representative as possible of the language variety under consideration.’ They believe that corpus building is ‘of necessity a marriage of perfection and pragmatism’ (*ibid.*). Without doubt, a spoken corpus is more difficult and more expensive to compile than a written one (see Atkins *et al.*, 1992; Crowdy, 1993; McCarthy, 1998; McEnery *et al.*, 2006). McCarthy (1998: 11) observes that ‘all kinds of data can be very sensitive and participants reluctant to release it.’ He cites conversations in the intimate genre, as featured in both TravCorp and SettCorp, as an example of this sensitive data. TravCorp represents family discourse collected from a culture within Irish society that is ‘hidden’ and difficult to access from a settled person’s viewpoint, thereby making the data particularly difficult to access. This, coupled with other factors such as transcription issues (see Section 4.5), has resulted in TravCorp being necessarily small. As Hunston (2002: 26) maintains:

Arguments about optimum corpus size tend to be academic for most people. *Most corpus users simply make use of as much data as is available* [my emphasis], without worrying too much about what is not available. As well as the very large, general corpora designed to assist in writing dictionaries and other reference books, there are

thousands of smaller corpora around the world, some comprising only a few thousand words and designed for a particular piece of research.

Finally, Hunston (*ibid.*: 30) argues that ‘the real question as regards representativeness and balance of a corpus should be taken into account when interpreting data from that corpus.’ In this study, due to the size of both TravCorp and SettCorp, all corpus-based findings are treated with caution. Further research, or indeed statistical calculation, will be required in order that these results may be tested in relation to a wider population. Where the findings are similar for both corpora, a tentative hypothesis regarding family discourse in general will be proffered. In the case of differences between TravCorp and SettCorp, the findings will be attributed to the individual ‘familylect’. Furthermore, the interpretation of these differences is suggested in relation to findings from previous research that suggests differences in interactional style are due to factors such as social class, ethnicity and age. Both Hunston (*ibid.*) and McEnery *et al.* (2006) caution that interpreting the results of a corpus is an enterprise that both builder and reader participate in. According to Hunston (2002: 23 [my emphasis]), ‘a statement about evidence in a corpus is a statement about *that* corpus, not about the language or register of which the corpus is a sample.’ With this in mind, the focus of the chapter will now switch to the corpus tools that aid the researcher in identifying and analysing the variation that exists between SettCorp and TravCorp.

4.4 Corpus linguistic tools

4.4.1 Word frequency lists

Tables 4.4 and 4.5 have already illustrated frequency counts for SettCorp and TravCorp in comparison to LCIE. Tognini-Bonelli (2001: 4) claims that ‘frequency of occurrence is indicative of frequency of use and this gives a good basis for evaluating the profile of a specific word, structure or expression in relation to a norm.’ Therefore, frequency lists are often a good starting point for the analysis of a corpus. According to Baker (2006: 47), ‘used sensitively, [frequency lists] can illuminate a variety of interesting phenomena.’ Table 4.6 again illustrates the frequency counts of TravCorp and SettCorp in direct comparison (this study

employs WordSmith Tools™ Version 5, Scott (2007)). A *Wordlist (F)* generated by WordSmith Tools™ is a list of all the *types*⁵ in a corpus (highest frequency first), coupled with their frequency of occurrence (*Frequency* column) and the overall proportion that this particular word contributes towards the whole corpus (% column):

Table 4.6: Frequency lists for top 25 words in TravCorp and SettCorp

TravCorp				SettCorp			
Number	Word	Frequency	%	Number	Word	Frequency	%
1	<i>you</i>	121	3.81	1	<i>the</i>	494	3.94
2	<i>the</i>	120	3.78	2	<i>you</i>	346	2.76
3	<i>go</i>	79	2.49	3	<i>it</i>	339	2.71
4	<i>it</i>	66	2.08	4	<i>I</i>	252	2.01
5	<i>to</i>	64	2.02	5	<i>to</i>	233	1.86
6	<i>on</i>	52	1.64	6	<i>a</i>	227	1.81
7	<i>a</i>	50	1.57	7	<i>and</i>	194	1.55
8	<i>now</i>	48	1.51	8	<i>of</i>	168	1.34
9	<i>out</i>	46	1.45	9	<i>that</i>	162	1.29
10	<i>I</i>	45	1.42	10	<i>in</i>	153	1.22
11	<i>no</i>	43	1.35	11	<i>is</i>	152	1.21
12	<i>and</i>	41	1.29	12	<i>yeah</i>	146	1.17
13	<i>there</i>	37	1.17	13	<i>no</i>	143	1.14
14	<i>get</i>	36	1.13	14	<i>it's</i>	134	1.07
15	<i>me</i>	34	1.07	15	<i>on</i>	124	0.99
16	<i>in</i>	32	1.01	16	<i>what</i>	111	0.89
17	<i>that</i>	32	1.01	17	<i>do</i>	110	0.88
18	<i>here</i>	30	0.94	18	<i>we</i>	103	0.82
19	<i>I'm</i>	29	0.91	19	<i>now</i>	98	0.78
20	<i>daddy</i>	28	0.88	20	<i>was</i>	95	0.76
21	<i>goin</i>	27	0.85	21	<i>have</i>	92	0.73
22	<i>way</i>	27	0.85	22	<i>one</i>	90	0.72
23	<i>what</i>	27	0.85	23	<i>there</i>	89	0.71
24	<i>yeah</i>	27	0.85	24	<i>like</i>	83	0.66
25	<i>look</i>	26	0.82	25	<i>all</i>	80	0.64

In Section 4.3, frequency lists were compared using the % column. However, frequency lists also allow for the normalisation of raw frequency counts between corpora. In this study, due to the contrasting size of the corpora, when normalised, results are given per 10,000 words. For example, *the* in TravCorp occurs 120 times in 3,172 words. Therefore, in order to normalise per 10,000 words: $120 \times 3.15 = 378$ instances of *the* per 10,000 words. On the other hand, *the* occurs 494 times in 12,531 words in SettCorp. Therefore, in order to normalise, $494 \div 1.25 = 395$ instances of *the* per 10,000 words. It should be pointed out here that the raw frequencies in Table

⁵ A *type* refers to a unique word form in a corpus.

4.6 are calculated on the basis of individual types. Therefore, *I* appears in position 10 of the frequency list for TravCorp, and *I'm* appears at position 19. Similarly, *is* appears at position 11 in SettCorp and *it's* at position 14. Accordingly, where a grammatical term such as *I* is analysed (see Chapter 5), it is the lemma *I* that is analysed. The lemma of a word is its canonical form, therefore, the *I* lemma consists of the lexemes *I'm*, *I've*, *I'll* and *I'd*.

WordSmith also generates a *Wordlist* (*S*) which calculates a standardised type/token ratio. A type/token ratio is 'the average number of tokens per type' (Baker, 2006: 54). If a corpus is above 2,000 words in size, WordSmith Tools™ calculates the standardised type/token ratio based on taking a type/token ratio every 2,000 words in the corpus and then calculating a mean of all these ratios. The standardised type/token ratio of TravCorp is 29.47, SettCorp is 32.68, whereas the ratio for the informal spoken conversations from the British National Corpus is 32.96⁶. These ratios, although slightly 'crude' in nature, may again point towards the relative representativeness of SettCorp and TravCorp. Baker (2006: 71) maintains that 'frequency lists can be helpful in determining the focus of a text, but care must be taken not to make presuppositions about the way that words are actually used within it.' In order to look at the way in which words are actually used within the corpora, *concordance lines* provide a tool which enables the researcher to perform a much closer examination.

4.4.2 Concordance lines

According to Sinclair (2003: 173), 'a concordance is an index to the places in a text where particular words and phrases occur.' Visually, as Figure 4.2 shows, the software programmes used to generate concordances, generally present results in a Key Word in Context (KWIC) format, which features a *node* word, the subject of the query by the researcher, surrounded by the *cotext*, words that occur before and after it:

⁶ Type/token ratio for the British National Corpus taken from Baker (2006: 52).

Figure 4.2: Concordance lines for *this* (SettCorp)

N Concordance

1 +there's a dials. There's a dial here. Beside this yoke. She asked me did it mean they
2 this then do I mam? Hm? I wipe off with this yoke? the dog. No you have to put on
3 Aah. Do you like the tree FX? Now this year you're not going to eat the
4 Oh I wish yeah I wish. Ah no I've no exams this year like. This is my first year now with
5 We're supposed to be makin the film this weekend shur. I wouldn't say that's goin
6 I've more energy now then I usually have at this time of the night. They're very good . I
7 the letter a. You press that to get out of all this . there's nothing in Nottingham. I
8 self. It's hard work now . I wipe it off with this then do I mam? Hm? I wipe off with this
9 did not run." Feckin hell what's wrong with this then? It happens with the colour print
10 FX came back from America at that time this summer came back from America ravin
11 bold. . Shall we go for a walk? He'd go like this shall we say ah. MX. He'd be great for
12 Is that up to two hours you've done now this semester? I did loads today for about
13 interrupted I like this one now+ Yeah. +this one's really nice. Yeah yeah. Do we
14 the book? No look . coughs Which? This one here is it? No no it's not it's the
15 printer. Which one is our? There you go . This one is it? Yeah right click. It's not that
16 it in the wrong one it just doesn't go like. This one so is it? Yeah. Good. . All right.
17 the other thing. recording interrupted I like this one now+ Yeah. +this one's really nice.
18 him now hang on. B yeah. How's a goin? Is this MX is it? Oh how's a goin MX? Not too
19 and she got black pud= white pudding this morning so. pause of one second Don't
20 after every sentence? I'll show you this mam. "In the city in the city are
21 I wish. Ah no I've no exams this year like. This is my first year now with no exams so
22 show me how to do my masters hopefully. This is the letter a. You press that to get out
23 in yeah go back in anyway we'll just see. This here then is it? Yeah and go back down
24 sellotape. I'll stay here. Show me. I'll do this bit. You're just great. Absolutely

On first viewing, concordance lines can prove difficult to interpret because they are generated in the order in which they occur in the corpus. Sinclair (2003: xvi-xvii) recommends a seven-step procedure for ‘uncovering the mysteries of most concordances’ (p. xvi). These steps are:

1. *Initiate*: Look at the words that occur directly to the left and right of the node (Sinclair recommends working with no more than a single screen of concordances at any one time). Note any that are repeated. Employ the strongest pattern you find as a starting point.
2. *Interpret*: Look at the repeated word and formulate a hypothesis that may link them or most of them (for example, they may all have similar meanings).
3. *Consolidate*: Look for other evidence, for example from adjoining words, to support your hypothesis. Be prepared to ‘loosen’ your hypothesis based on this.
4. *Report*: When you have exhausted the patterns you can observe, formulate an explicit, testable hypotheses.

5. *Recycle*: Following from the *initiate* step, employ the next strongest pattern in the vicinity of the node and repeat steps two – four. Continue until all repeated patterns have been exhausted.
6. *Result*: Make a final list of hypotheses based on the node.
7. *Repeat*: Gather a new selection of concordances of your node word from the corpus. Repeat the steps and confirm, extend or revise your hypotheses as you progress.

This process is a rigorous one to say the least and, therefore, it is argued here that the small samples of concordances provided by both SettCorp and TravCorp mean that they are ideally suited to this degree of manual sorting. In addition to interpreting the concordance lines, the small corpora allow the application of the sociolinguistic variables such as gender and age to each concordance line in order that the results can also be interpreted sociolinguistically.

In the case of vocatives, the occurrences of these were also annotated according to type, function and position in utterance (see Chapter 7). Although automatic annotation such as parts of speech (POS) tagging has a very high success rate, McEnery *et al.* (2006) maintain that the annotating of pragmatic features should be done by hand due to the high level of manual correction that is needed if annotation is done automatically. This, again, is quite a time consuming process more suited to small corpora than large ones. Figure 4.3 illustrates the concordance lines for *dad** [kt]⁷ (the lemma DAD + the pragmatic tag kin title [kt]). The concordance is further sorted 1R (Main Sort) and 2R (Sort 2) and these bring into relief both the function of the vocative and its position in the utterance. Sorting the concordance lines in this manner highlights that the kin title *dad** is primarily used with a mitigator ([mit]) or summons ([sum]) function and primarily occurs in either initial ([initial]) or final ([final]) position. Therefore, despite there being only 19 concordance lines, there is evidence of the pragmatic behaviour of this vocative.

⁷ The sort item *dad** includes the types *dad* and *daddy*.

Figure 4.3: Concordance lines for DAD lemma (TravCorp), sorted 1R then 2R

N	Concordance
1	black man as well. It's too early daddy [kt] [mit] [final]. We watched a film of tha
2]. Here. No. It's too big dad [kt] [mit] [final]. D'you wanna have
3	any veggies ? No. Take that daddy [kt] [mit] [final].
4	Thank you MX [fn] [rel] [final]. Daddy [kt] [mit] [initial] don't give me this.
5	tick. you run out with a towel daddy [kt] [mit] [middle] the birds are back on it
6	ave it there I'll try it in a minute. No daddy [kt] [mit] [middle] I'm afraid I'm goin to h
7	Will you have c=? Sorry dad [kt] [rel] [final]. Who's the
8	You're not sendin me out alright daddy [kt] [rel] [final]. You're not sendin me out
9	Where? Proper order to bring out his one daddy [kt] [rel] [final]. he= he= he's
10	e job daddy [kt] [topic] [final]? Daddy [kt] [rel] [initial] sorry
11] [final]? I'm down to MX. Daddy [kt] [sum] [initial] tell MX to stop
12	You you atin this? Daddy [kt] [sum] [initial] look at my next .
13	there. I'm goin to town. Dad [kt] [sum] [initial] do you have an oul
14	[middle] down the carnival . Daddy [kt] [sum] [stand alone]? Daddy I k
15	What? Who gave ye the jam? Daddy [kt] [sum] [stand alone]? There
16	Mammy [kt] [sum] [stand alone]! Daddy [kt] [sum] [stand alone]! They're pullin
17	goin daddy. away on the job daddy [kt] [topic] [final]? Daddy [kt] [
18	t stuffs for you. Is your mother over daddy [kt] [topic] [final]? Wha?
19	s MX callin at? Two o clock? What's that daddy [kt] [topic] [final]? .

There are, however, some caveats concerning concordance lines. The first is that although concordance lines provide information on a node, they do not interpret it. As is evident in Sinclair's (2003) seven-step process to concordance analysis, it is the responsibility of the researcher to determine the patterns that are salient and construct hypotheses as to why these patterns occur. Therefore, as Baker (2006: 89) states 'a concordance analysis is...only as good as its analyst.' In addition to this, corpora such as TravCorp and SettCorp which are small enough to produce only a dozen concordances of a linguistic feature under consideration will not be able to provide a reliable basis for quantification (McEnery *et al.*, 2006: 72). What they do provide, however, is a guide to inform a basis for the qualitative analysis of a corpus. According to McEnery and Wilson (2001: 75), '...it is not essential that corpus data be used solely for quantitative research and, in fact, many researchers have used it as a source of qualitative data.' Thus, it is not claimed that this study wholly corpus-based, nevertheless, corpus tools are employed to provide a quantitative complement to a largely qualitative sociolinguistic analysis.

4.5 The ethics of researching minority ethnic communities

According to Edge and Richards (1998: 334), any investigation of ‘contextualised experience’ such as the present study, ‘requires that the researcher’s findings take sensitive account of the interpretations and constructions of other who live in the context being explored.’ One of the defining ethical issues in the present study is that the researcher is not a member of the Traveller community. Furthermore, the education profile of the Traveller community is vastly different to that of the settled community, reflected in the differences in educational attainment between the members of SettCorp and TravCorp (see Section 8.2.2). Ryan (1996: paragraph 7) maintains that the members of ethnic communities that participate in research projects:

...are often in relatively powerless positions, lacking cultural and/or institutional power. In this respect, the question of ethics assumes salience – the researcher is generally not a member of the community, she or he is generally qualified, with specialised technical language and she or he has the final say about the content of a research report and the dissemination of research findings (largely through the medium of print).

Therefore, it can be argued that the members of TravCorp do not have access to the language of research and, as a result, have little power over how the research is carried out and reported (although this argument, to a lesser extent admittedly, could be made regarding the SettCorp also). However, every effort was made on the part of the researcher to ensure that members of both TravCorp, and indeed SettCorp, were broadly informed about the purpose of the research. This effort to ensure an ethical research practice on the part of the researcher will be discussed under the headings of *informed consent* and Ryan’s (*ibid.*) notion of *do no harm*.

In relation to informed consent, in order to avoid arising issues from the researcher not being a member of the Irish Traveller community, possible project participants from the Traveller Community were approached through an intermediary. The intermediary identified was the Limerick Traveller Development Group (LTDG). The management of the group was approached initially and they agreed to approach a group of Traveller women on the researcher’s behalf. When the group had been informed of the project, they agreed to meet the researcher in order to raise any

questions that they had. This meeting took place on the LTDG premises. The researcher met the group and questions regarding the nature of the project, issues of confidentiality, the amount of speaker information required and, interestingly, the perceived reluctance of Traveller men to become involved in the project were discussed. The group was then given the opportunity to approach the researcher on a one-to-one basis should they want their participation in the project to remain private from the rest of the group. Initially, four of the group approached the researcher and they were given recording equipment and instructions on how to use it.

Ryan (*ibid.*) identifies the need for sensitivity, the need to ensure participation is voluntary and the need to ensure confidentiality as key issues in ensuring that no ‘harm’ is done to research participants. At all times during the initial stages leading up to recording, it was made clear that participation in the project was on voluntary basis. In relation to confidentiality, any identifiable markers were removed from the spoken transcripts and names were replaced by pseudonyms (see Extract 4.1 below), with fictitious place names also inserted where necessary. Issues of confidentiality are particularly relevant in the case of Irish Travellers due to the compactness of the community. Initially, it was thought that the Traveller community might provide a research assistant that would transcribe the data, resulting in more accurate transcription and the active involvement of the community in the research. However, Travellers with the sufficient educational attainment needed to transcribe the recorded spoken data were only available outside of the family represented in TravCorp and it was felt that some of the data recorded was of too sensitive a nature to allow them to transcribe. Accordingly, all transcription was done by the researcher.

Transcribing spoken data presents a unique set of challenges to the language researcher (see McCarthy, 1998: 6 and Baker, 2006: 35). For example, as participants move around within their environment, recordings can become unclear. Casual conversation in general contains numerous overlaps and interruptions and it may be that these increase as the level of formality decreases. These challenges, while present when transcribing the settled family data, were exacerbated by contextual features particular to the Traveller family and, indeed, the Traveller community as a whole. Firstly, the notion of the family home, while ‘restricted’ to a house for a settled person, extends to the open air outside the mobile home for a

Traveller. Conversations in the Traveller family often feature multiple participants both inside and outside the home, whereas the microphone and recorder remained static within the home. This made some conversation quite indistinct. Secondly, some characteristics of Traveller speech seem to have developed, in part, to be deliberately obtuse to members of the settled community. This is especially prevalent in the language of the Traveller men (see Chapter 1). Finally, in relation to both the settled and Traveller families, the multiple participants featured in the recordings, coupled with the intimate context type, often results in the conversation fragmenting into simultaneous dialogues among various groups of family members. This rendered some data untranscribable.

The families were transcribed using a broad approach (a full list of the transcription conventions used is provided in Appendix C). Each speaker is identified according to their position in the family. Therefore the speaker tags <Father>, <Mother>, <Son> and <Daughter> feature across both corpora. In some extracts, as in Extract 4.1 below, the tags <Son 1>, <Son 2>, <Daughter 1>, <Daughter 2> etc. feature. These tags were awarded as the speakers appeared in the conversation and, therefore, the <Son 1> that appears in one extract from SettCorp, for example, may not be the <Son 1> that appears in the next extract. Where necessary, the introduction to the extract or the discussion of it will provide the information necessary to distinguish between the siblings. Extralinguistic information such as laughter or prosodic nuances is also included in the transcriptions and is represented in square brackets as in extract 4.1 (shown in bold):

(4.1)

<Son 1> Well you know there's no television so it's really conversation.
[Mother laughs]
<Son 2> Catch Connor. Catch.
<Son 1> Hah?
<Son 2> There you go Connor.
<Father> What are you doin now?
<Son 1> Having a conversation.

In extract (4.1), the father asks *What are you doin now?* which relates to the researcher placing the audio recorder on a table. This raises an issue relevant to methodological discussion – that of the presence of the recorder in the family environment and the effect that this has on the naturalness of the language produced. Bucholtz (2000: 1440) claims that ‘the responsible practice of transcription...requires the transcriber’s cognizance of his or her own role in the creation of the text and the ideological implications of the resultant product.’ As already discussed, the researcher is a member of the settled family featured in SettCorp and also transcribed the data, therefore, a discussion of the position of the researcher in the research is of particular relevance to this study.

4.6 The position of the researcher in the research

In sociolinguistic research, Labov (1966) first highlighted that the ‘observer’s paradox’ undermines the goal of collecting naturally occurring speech in its social context and how it can, potentially, call into question the validity of any sociolinguistic enquiry. He maintained that while the aim of linguistic research is to examine how people interact with one another when they are not being observed, linguistic data is often only available through observation (see also Labov, 1972). Bell (1976), drawing on the work of Labov, suggests that all sociolinguists should consider the *principle of formality* – observation of a person’s speech creates a context in which conscious attention will be paid to that speech, therefore making it difficult to observe the true ‘vernacular’. Sarangi (2002) extends the metaphor of observer’s paradox to include both *analyst paradox* and *participant paradox*. The analyst’s paradox refers to the need to align the analyst’s perspective with that of the participant in order that participant insights can be used to inform analysis. The dual identity of the researcher as both researcher and participant within the settled family may serve towards reducing the impact of this particular paradox. Furthermore, the researcher (indeed any researcher) is likely to be a member of a hypothetical, universal community of practice, that of ‘the family’, and, therefore, is in a position to draw on this experience in order to inform the analytical process.

Sarangi (*ibid*: 120-121) claims that it is not necessarily the case that the presence of the observer has a notable effect on the participants in the interaction. He states that:

For instance, some participants may be completely oblivious to the presence of the researcher-observer and/or the recording equipment during various stages of the interaction. Indeed, many participants admit this to be the case after a recording session.

Extract (4.1) featured the father commenting on the presence of the recording equipment, however, it seemed to have little or no effect on the conversation that followed. This can also be said to be true of the Traveller data. This is supported by the fact that some of the information that was recorded in both families, for example gossiping sequences, is sensitive in the extreme. It is argued that this would not be the case if the family members were acutely conscious of the presence of the recorder and/or researcher. Interestingly for this study, Cukor-Avila and Bailey (2001: 256) claim that ‘the role of familiarity has received little attention in sociolinguistics, but our research over the last 15 years suggests that it is a crucial factor affecting linguistic behaviour in interviews.’ They demonstrate using three interviews that, as the familiarity between interviewer and interviewee increase, so too does the occurrence of features such as unsolicited narrative and intimate personal information (see also Rickford and McNair-Knox, 1994). Cukor-Avila and Bailey (2001) found that the interviewee, once familiar with the interviewer, also participated in topic selection. They deduce that ‘increasing familiarity reduces interviewer effect and leads to richer linguistic data’ (p. 258). The researcher is a member of the settled family represented by SettCorp and, therefore, it is proposed that the language data is as natural as is possible with an observer/researcher present.

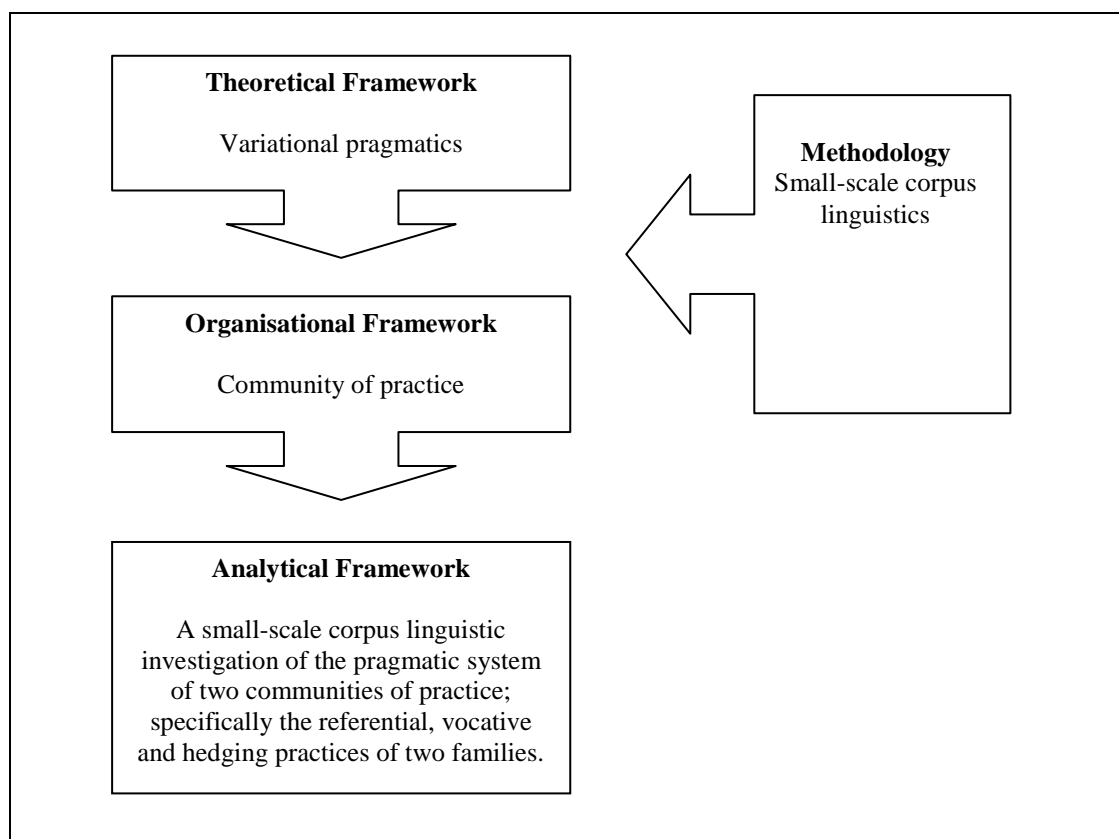
Although Cukor-Avila and Bailey (2001) focus on a different method of data collection (the sociolinguistic interview) than the one used in this study, they raise many issues of relevance in relation to the observer’s paradox in sociolinguistic fieldwork. They draw attention to the fact that much of the evidence of African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) comes from fieldwork performed by whites and raise the question of the effect of race of the interviewer on data derived from the sociolinguistic interview. Although their study found no significant effects that result from the interviewer’s race, they were ‘not prepared...to conclude that the race of the interviewer has no effect.’ They maintain that their results may be affected by two factors not adequately controlled for in their study - the differences in age and

experience of the interviewers. Obviously, an experienced interviewer will have the advantage over an inexperienced one in collecting the speech that informants use when they are not being interviewed. Similarly, an interviewer of a similar age to the informant(s) could be more successful in recovering authentic language. In order to minimise the influence of factors such as these, the TravCorp data was collected with no researcher present. The researcher approached the Traveller family through an intermediary and gave them the recording equipment which they used to record themselves in the home/family environment. This served to avoid any effect of that the researcher might have on the spoken language produced by the Traveller family such as instances of accommodative phenomena.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter brings to an end the process which Edge and Richards (1998: 351) refer to as *authentication*. They maintain that this process involves ‘the honest presentation of data. It is an individual process in the sense that it represents what is, finally, the record of experience, perception and interpretation for which the researcher seeks to take responsibility.’ The analysis chapters which follow will address Edge and Richards’ (1998: 352) concept of *legitimation* – ‘the process by which data is transformed by its organisation in evidence for (or against, or in addition to, or despite, or separate from) a reasoned argument or stance.’ Before providing a brief synopsis of the analysis chapters, it is useful to provide a visual summary of the ground covered thus far. Figure 4.4 illustrates how the complementary theoretical, organisational and methodological elements in the present study synergise and work together:

Figure 4.4: Visual hermeneutic of the synergy of theory, method and analytical frameworks



The chapters covered under the analytical framework include:

Chapter 5: Articulating a shared familial context I: Personal pronouns

This chapter begins the analysis through an examination of the ways in which two families articulate their shared familial context. In particular, the chapter focuses on the families' use of personal pronouns. Therefore, the starting point is the corpus frequency lists. In terms of a shared pragmatic repertoire, it is demonstrated that there are marked similarities between the two families' use of personal pronouns, especially the singular pronouns *you* and *I*. These demonstrate the families' orientation towards a non-egocentric deictic centre which runs contrary to traditional accounts of the nature of the deictic system. Personal pronouns are also shown to play a notable role in the families' identity creation process, both as members of their family community of practice and as members of other social groupings. This process of identity creation is shown to be inter-connected with the influence of macro-and micro-social factors and the community of practice.

Chapter 6: Articulating a shared familial context II: The demonstratives *this* and *that* and the case of *now*

Building further on Chapter 5, this chapter aims to further explore how the families orientate themselves within their immediate familial context. Firstly, an examination of the families' demonstrative system is undertaken through an examination of *this* and *that*. This analysis is shown to reinforce the notion of the existence of a shared pragmatic repertoire between the two families, a pragmatic system which bucks traditional trends in deictic research. The findings are again attributed to the influence of micro- and macro-social factors on the families' pragmatic practices. The second half of the chapter aims to contribute to the discussion of the distinctiveness of the pragmatic system of the families through an examination of a single item, *now*, which has been intuited as emblematic of Irish English. An intra-varietal analysis of *now* in Irish English is presented and what emerges is that *now* is more frequent in family discourse than in other context-types in Irish English. This finding is in marked contrast to the available literature on *now*, which suggests that it is used in more formal contexts (Aijmer, 2002; Defour, 2008). The final stage of the analysis drills down into the data and unearths a distinctive pragmatic function of *now* in family discourse which is shown to emerge primarily due to the uniqueness of the family community of practice.

Chapter 7: Facilitating community maintenance I: The use of vocatives

The focus of the chapter is the occurrence of vocatives across both SettCorp and TravCorp. It is shown that the Traveller family use vocatives notably more frequently than the settled family. This pragmatic variation is examined from three viewpoints: form, function and position. For example, in terms of vocative form, the presence of kin titles such as *daddy*, *mam*, *son* or *children* may be seen to point to the fact that the family community of practice is at the core of the Traveller value system. It is argued that the importance of 'position' within Traveller family groups is evidenced through the use of these kin titles. On the other hand, full first names are the most commonly used vocative in the SettCorp, showing that the settled family community of practice may be characterised by a greater focus on the child's individuality. Therefore, ethnicity is seen to have a defining influence on the

families' pragmatic systems. In terms of the contextual function of the vocatives in both corpora, it is demonstrated that vocatives perform a predominantly mitigating function in both datasets. It will be argued that this function is necessary to offset the influence of factors such as the family power structure. Finally, vocative position is shown to strongly correlate with function. The utterance position of vocatives is explored and the possibility of a connection between this position and attention to face within the family community of practice is posited.

Chapter 8: Facilitating community maintenance II: The use of hedges

Continuing the theme of mitigation, this chapter examines politeness in family discourse through an analysis of hedging. It is already known that in family discourse hedges occur relatively infrequently when compared to discourse in other contexts (Clancy, 2005). It is shown, for example, that hedges such as *I think* and *just* occur considerably less frequently in Traveller family data than in settled family data, whereas others such as *kind of/sort of* occur with comparable frequencies in both datasets. This pragmatic variation between the two corpora is attributed to the influence of the macro-socio factors of ethnicity, social class and age. In terms of ethnicity, it will be hypothesised that those hedges prevalent in SettCorp, but not in TravCorp, may indicate those that are critical to politeness in 'mainstream' Irish culture. It is argued that hedges such as *I think* and *just* which occur more frequently in SettCorp are the absolute minimum needed for polite interaction among participants in Irish society and ensure a smooth transition from the family community of practice to the wider social world. They are in a sense 'redundant' within the Traveller family given that they rarely move into the realm of mainstream society.

Chapter 5

Articulating a shared familial context I: Personal pronouns

5.0 Introduction

This chapter begins the exploration of the families' reference systems through an analysis of their use of personal pronouns. The topic of reference is continued in Chapter 6 which examines the pragmatic properties of the demonstratives *this* and *that* and the item *now*. Specifically, the present chapter deals with occurrences of the personal pronouns *I*, *you*, *we* and *they*. The analysis presented demonstrates that both families, through their use of personal pronouns, primarily orientate themselves to the key stakeholders in the discourse, other family members. It could be argued that this orientation to people within the immediate discourse environment, especially through the use of *I* and *you*, is no different to discourse in other spoken contexts such as the workplace. However, what is unique, and common to both families, is that the personal pronoun *you* occurs with higher frequency than *I*. Schiffrin (2006) maintains that key to the creation of an identity for the 'self' is the creation of an 'other' in relation to whom the 'self' is defined. Personal pronouns which, by and large, enable the creation of both a linguistic 'self' in the form of a speaker/writer and 'other' in the form of a hearer/reader, are fundamental to the identity creation process. It is argued that the families' use of personal pronouns strengthens the community of practice (CofP) by emphasising the joint enterprise of 'being a family'. For example, the use of the personal pronoun *you* by parents with young children allows them to construct two simultaneous identities – *caretaker* and *friend* (see Section 5.3.1) – and these identities are fundamental to ensuring that the family runs smoothly. In addition, both families employ an inclusive *we* and an anaphoric *they* to primarily refer to the family 'in-group', thus further reinforcing the attention paid to the CofP.

In terms of a variational pragmatic viewpoint, personal pronouns provide some especially fruitful insights. Schiffrin (2006: 131) maintains that 'a reference must be grasped to begin to understand not only the meaning of an utterance in text, but also how the contextual meaning of utterances contribute to the social worlds in which we construct our identities.' In addition to its role in providing meaning in-text, *you* will be shown to index both micro-social and macro-social factors such as *social roles* (see Section 2.2.1) and *age*. Furthermore, the division of *we* into its inclusive and exclusive perspectives demonstrates the marked social differences between the

two families. The use of this pronoun is shown to index macro-social markers of *social class, ethnicity and educational background*. Understanding systems of reference is essential to the understanding of language and communication (Brown, 1995; Schiffrin, 2006). Therefore, by extension, understanding the reference system is central to any attempt to ‘decode’ the reasons behind pragmatic variation in the corpora in the present study. *Context* frequently provides the key to interpreting reference, and, indeed, pragmatic features in general, and it is to this notion that attention is first turned.

5.1 The notion of context

According to Thomas (1995: 9), ‘in order to understand an utterance we not only have to assign sense to words but also to assign reference.’ In using the word *sense*, Thomas is referring to a word’s dictionary or core meaning, thus, in extract (5.1), which features the settled family putting lights on their Christmas tree, it is possible for a non-family member to understand the sense of words like *multi-action* and *lights*, especially when considered in relation to the task in hand.

(5.1 SC)¹

- <Daughter> Would they be multi-action lights now?
<Mother> They are yeah.
<Daughter> That was the ones we have outside.

However, in using the word *reference*, Thomas is concerned with how interlocutors use the context to determine who or what is being referred to. Words like *they, that, we* and *outside* used in extract (5.1) belong to a grouping called deictic expressions (see Section 5.2). Rauh (1983) illustrates that, as stand alone linguistic items, many of the most common deictic expressions, *I, you, here* or *now*, are ‘empty’ lexically when compared to linguistic items that function as symbols, such as *man, house* or *hour*, ‘which characterise their referents in that the contents of the words evoke images of their referents in a way unknown to deictic expressions’ (p. 10). Therefore, in extract (5.1), a non-family member would have difficulty

¹ In order to fully distinguish between extracts taken from SettCorp and TravCorp, the extract number is followed by initials; SC = SettCorp, TC = TravCorp.

understanding the meaning of certain words that occur in the extract such as *we* and *outside*. According to Goodwin and Duranti (1992: 3), ‘the focal event cannot be properly understood...unless one looks beyond the event itself to other phenomena (for example cultural setting, speech situation, shared background assumptions) within which the event is embedded.’ Participant knowledge of contextual features such as the cultural setting, speech situation and shared background assumptions is essential in assigning meaning to referents like *we* and *outside* (it is also helpful if this knowledge extends to the researcher). Both *we* and *outside* refer to the daughter’s place of work; *we* referring to her membership of the staff of the organization and *outside* referring to the location of the workplace, perhaps in contrast to the ‘inside’ context of the family home.

The notion of context is one which has proven difficult to grasp (see Lyons, 1981; Levinson, 1983; Cook, 1990; Duranti and Goodwin, 1992; Janney, 2002). Ochs (1979: 1) claims that ‘the scope of context is difficult to define...one must consider the social and psychological world in which the language user operates at any given time’ (see also Cutting, 2008). Janney (2002: 457) notes that ‘in some ways...we are still grappling with the difficulty of defining what the study of context is the study of, although Goodwin and Duranti (1992: 2) note that this is ‘not a situation that necessarily requires a remedy.’ In this study, context will be regarded as including ‘minimally, language users’ beliefs and assumptions about temporal, spatial and social settings; prior, on-going and future actions (verbal and non-verbal), and the state of knowledge and attentiveness of those participating in the social interaction in hand’ (Ochs, 1979: 5). However, despite difficulty in determining exactly what context *is*, what is accepted is that context is constructed by factors both ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ the text or utterance.

Context ‘inside’ text is referred to as co-text, that is, grammatical and lexical cohesion within texts. Janney (2002: 458-459) maintains that ‘in any stretch of discourse, interpretations of utterances depend on information provided by earlier utterances in the sequence and, at the same time, constitute information necessary for interpreting later utterances in it.’ Co-textual references are used to refer backwards and forwards in a text but the contextual information required to understand them is already present; the interlocutors have no need to move ‘outside’

the utterance in order to attribute meaning. In contrast, the context ‘outside’ the text can be subdivided into *situational context* and *background knowledge context*. Goodwin and Duranti (1992: 6) maintain that situational context is derived from the ‘setting’, ‘the social and special framework within which encounters are situated.’ Cutting (2008: 5) demonstrates how situational context is ‘the immediate physical co-presence, the situation where the interaction is taking place at the moment of speaking’ by using the analogy of two people speaking on the phone. She observes that speakers on the phone often use gesture while speaking, however, these gestures are in a sense redundant as they do not add meaning to the words because the interlocutors are not engaged in face-to-face interaction. Background knowledge context can be either *cultural*, ‘knowledge that people carry with them in their minds about areas of life’ (Cutting, 2008: 6) or *interpersonal*, ‘specific and possibly private knowledge about the history of the speakers themselves’ (*ibid.*). This chapter (and Chapter 6) is concerned with how the ‘cooperative exploitation’ (Green, 1989: 47) of this shared situational, cultural and interpersonal knowledge by family members emerges in the families’ reference systems.

5.2 Deixis and anaphora

According to Levinson (1983: 54), ‘the single most obvious way in which the relationship between language and context is reflected in the structures of languages themselves, is through the phenomenon of deixis.’ Huang (2007: 132) defines deixis as ‘the phenomenon whereby features of context of utterance or speech event are encoded by lexical and/or grammatical means.’ Green (1995: 18) maintains that this grammatical or lexical encoding ‘links the objective world with the subjective world of the encoder.’ Deixis enables interlocutors to refer to entities in context thereby allowing both speakers and addressees to identify referents, hence the classification of deictic expressions as *pointers*²; words such as *him*, *that* or *there* point backwards, forwards and outside the discourse or text to a wider textual context (Carter and McCarthy, 1997: 13). In addition to the ‘pointing’ function where a deictic expression identifies a referent in context, deixis has an indexical function which

² Deictic expressions have also been termed *indices* (Pierce, 1932), *indicators* (Goodman, 1951), *indexical expressions* (Bar-Hiller, 1954), *shifters* (Jespersen, 1965; Jakobsen, 1971) and *referential indexicals* (Silverstein, 1976).

relates the referent to a common ground that exists between speaker and addressee (Grundy, 2008). Hanks (1992: 51) maintains that ‘a single deictic word stands for minimally two objects: the referent is the thing, individual, event, spatial or temporal location denoted; and the indexical framework is the *origo* (‘pivot’ or zero point) relative to which the referent is identified.’ Since the work of Bühler (1934), deictic reference has been organised around an *origo* or ‘ground zero’ (Levinson, 2004). According to Levinson (1983: 55), ‘deixis concerns the encoding of many different aspects of the circumstances surrounding the utterance, within the utterance itself. Natural language utterances are thus *anchored* [my italics] directly to aspects of the context.’ Levinson (*ibid.*) outlines the following anchor points that constitute the deictic centre:

- (i) The central person is the speaker
- (ii) The central time is the time at which the speaker produces the utterance
- (iii) The central place is the speaker’s location at utterance time
- (iv) The discourse centre is the point at which the speaker is currently at in the production of his utterance
- (v) The social centre is the speaker’s social status and rank, to which the status or rank of addressees or referents is relative.

Therefore, deixis is typically organised in an egocentric manner (Lyons, 1977; Levinson, 1983; Rauh, 1983) in which ‘the speaker casts himself in the role of the ego and relates everything to his viewpoint’ (Lyons, 1977: 638). However, more contemporary accounts of deixis (Hanks, 1992; Jones, 1995) have challenged the notion of an egocentric *origo*. According to Jones (1995), theories in favour of the egocentricity of deixis fail to take into account that communication is a social act. He argues that ‘it is rather ironic that deixis is often cited as proof of the interdependence between language structure and communicative function and yet communication is quite often pictured as an act of pure self-expression by a lone individual’ (p. 32). Hanks (1992) maintains that acts of reference are interactively accomplished and ‘as interactants move through space, shift topics, exchange information, coordinate their respective orientations, and establish common grounds as well as non-commonalities, the indexical framework of reference changes’ (p. 53). Both Hanks (1992) and Jones (1995) posit the notion of a sociocentric *origo*

which is based on the common ground shared between conversational participants. This has particular relevance to the study of family discourse.

The degree of interpersonal shared knowledge is obviously extremely high within the family setting, reflecting the history of their relationship. Bernstein (1964: 60) claims that ‘...the speech of intimates...presupposes a ‘local cultural identity’ which reduces the need for the speakers to elaborate their intent verbally and to make it explicit.’ This notion of inexplicitness in the speech of intimates is echoed in studies of deictic reference. Grundy (2008) maintains that the more speaker and addressee share common ground, the more they can affect reference. Duranti and Goodwin (1992: 45) maintain that ‘a key property of the indexical ground is the way in which it encompasses and encodes the differential **access** [their emphasis] that participants have to relative events.’ Hanks (1992: 69) suggests that the more information participants share, ‘the more precisely they can individuate references.’ Participants that share detailed background knowledge ‘can mobilise potentially any shifter in the language. Proper and successful reference can be based on the presupposition that the interlocutor will identify the object (even a remote one)’ (*ibid.*). Therefore, hypothetically, it could be claimed that in order to fully understand or ‘decode’ family discourse, it is perhaps necessary to acknowledge a non-egocentric origo, and instead acknowledge a family-centric or, as Section 5.4.1 demonstrates, child-centric one. As De Fina *et al.*, (2006: 4) state:

The idea that signs are indexical goes way beyond simple referential anchoring to encompass the ability of linguistic expressions to evoke, and relate to, complex systems of meaning such as socially shared conceptualisations of space and place, ideologies, social representations about group membership, social roles and attributes, presuppositions about all aspects of social reality, individual and collective stances practices and organizational structures.

It is the sociocentric nature of family discourse that allows them to invoke reference like *outside* used in extract (5.1), which is impenetrable to all but those participants with a common shared knowledge.

Deixis is traditionally sub-divided into a number of categories. The most referred to are *person*, *place* and *time* deixis. Person deixis is concerned with ‘the identity of the interlocutors in a communication situation’ (Fillmore, 1997: 61), place deixis

involves ‘the place or places in which these individuals are located’ (*ibid.*) and time deixis covers ‘the time at which the communication act takes place – for this we may need to distinguish as the *encoding time*, the time at which the message is sent and as the *decoding time*, the time at which the message is received’ (*ibid.*). Two additional categories, *discourse* and *social* deixis, are also present in some of the most influential work done in the area (Lyons, 1977; Levinson, 1983; Fillmore, 1997). Discourse deixis is concerned with the ‘encoding of reference to portions of the unfolding discourse in which the utterance (which includes the text referring expression) is located’ (Levinson, 1983: 62). Similar to anaphora or cataphora, discourse deictics can be used to point to elements in the preceding or following discourse. However, there are a number of differences between discourse deictics and anaphoric or cataphoric reference (see Diessel, 1999: 100-103). As will be explored in Sections 5.3.2 and 6.1, an anaphoric reference is used to ‘track’ a preceding noun phrase. Discourse deictics, on the other hand, can be used to ‘focus the hearer’s attention on aspects of meaning, expressed by a clause, a sentence, a paragraph or an entire idea’ (*ibid.*: 101). Fillmore (1997) also includes deictic items peculiar to written discourse such as *above* or *below* in discourse deixis. In addition, Levinson (1983) specifies items such as utterance initial *but*, *therefore*, *in conclusion*, *well* and *however* in discourse deixis.

Social deixis, on the other hand, refers to ‘those aspects of language structure that encode the social identities of participants (properly, incumbents of participant-roles) or the social relationship between them, or between one of them and persons or entities referred to’ (Levinson, 1983: 89). Hence, social deixis contains information about the participants such as age, sex, kin relationship, social class or ethnic group. Vocatives are often included within this category (see Huang, 2007; Rühlemann, 2007) and Chapter 7 analyses the different ways in which vocative use varies in family discourse according to the relationship between the speakers. The sixth deictic category is often referred to as empathetic deixis. This notion was first posited by Lyons (1977), based on the speakers choice of *this* rather than *that*, *here* rather than *there* or *now* rather than *then*, ‘when the speaker is personally involved with the entity, situation or place to which he is referring or is identifying himself with the attitude or viewpoint of the addressee’ (p. 677). Rühlemann (2007: 192) maintains that empathetic deixis ‘seems to involve preference of deictics that are

characterised by being, literally or metaphorically, *nearer* to the deictic origo (*here* being nearer than *there*, *now* being nearer than *then* etc.). Therefore, when a speaker makes a choice of *that* rather than *this*, for example, he/she is signalling his/her emotional relationship with the propositional content of the utterance. Lakoff (1974) calls this use of demonstratives *emotional deixis*. She claims that the emotional-deictic *that*, where the subject alluded to belongs to neither the speaker nor the addressee, ‘appears to establish emotional solidarity between the two by implying that both participants in the conversation share the same views toward the subject of the discussion’ (p. 352). Both Argaman (2007) and Rühlemann (2007) note that little study has been devoted to empathetic deixis. Indeed, Rühlemann (*ibid*: 222) concludes that ‘empirical research based on corpus data might potentially advance the already existing knowledge on this intriguing type of deixis substantially.’

As already stated, anaphoric references such as the third person pronouns *he*, *she* or *they* serve to ‘track’ preceding noun phrases within the co-textual environment. Deixis and anaphora are often considered independently, however, just how independent they are from one another is a subject of debate (see Lyons, 1977; Levinson, 1983; Wales, 1996; Marmaridou, 2000; Rühlemann, 2007). In relation to discourse deixis, Levinson (1983: 89) contends that ‘the scope [of a proper theory of discourse deixis]...may be very large, ranging from the borders of anaphora to issues of topic/comment structure.’ He cites Lyons’ (1977: 670) notion of *impure textual deixis* which Lyons uses to account for noun phrases that fall between deictic and anaphoric usage. Indeed, Lyons (*ibid*: 676) maintains that a term can be used both deictically and anaphorically. Take the example *I was born in **Limerick** and have lived **there** ever since.*³ In this example, *there* simultaneously refers backwards to *Limerick* but also contrasts with *here* in the space deictic dimension, locating the utterance outside of Limerick. Similarly, in Halliday and Hasan’s (1976: 3) example *Wash and core **six cooking apples**. Put **them** into a fireproof dish*, *them* does not refer to the *six cooking apples per se* but rather to the washed and cored apples, a reference which is constructed on the basis of background contextual knowledge of the genre of recipes (see Wales, 1996). Rühlemann (2007: 63) maintains that ‘another difficulty in drawing the line between deixis and anaphora derives from the

³ Example adapted from Levinson (1983: 67).

fact that deictic items may well be used in institutionalised expressions in which only faint, if any, traces of the deictic origins persist.’ He cites examples such as the vague expression *this and that* and the discourse marker *there you go*. Anaphora and deixis, therefore, appear to be closely related and are discussed in the present study in relation to items which have the potential to embody both usages: the personal pronoun *they* (Section 5.3.2) and the demonstratives *this* and *that* (Section 6.1).

5.3 Personal pronouns in family discourse

In order to illustrate the importance of studying personal pronouns to the understanding of the pragmatic system of the family, frequency counts for the top 25 most frequently occurring words were generated for both TravCorp and SettCorp using *Wordsmith Tools* (Scott, 2007). In addition to this, a list was generated using the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (LCIE)⁴ as a reference corpus and all three lists are presented in Table 5.1. The personal pronouns that will be analysed in this chapter are highlighted in Table 5.1:

Table 5.1: Frequency list of top 25 words across TravCorp, SettCorp and LCIE

	TravCorp	SettCorp	LCIE
1	you	the	the
2	the	you	I
3	go	it	and
4	it	I	you
5	to	to	to
6	on	a	it
7	a	and	a
8	now	of	that
9	out	that	of
10	I	in	yeah
11	no	is	in
12	and	yeah	was
13	there	no	is
14	get	it’s	like
15	me	on	know
16	in	what	he
17	that	do	on
18	here	we	they
19	I’m	now	have
20	daddy	was	there
21	goin	have	no
22	way	there	but
23	what	like	for

⁴ The Limerick Corpus of Irish English (LCIE) is a one million word corpus of spoken Southern Irish English (for more details see Farr *et al.*, 2004).

24	yeah	all	be
25	look	not	what

These frequency lists bring into focus many of the notable elements of the use of personal pronouns in the family CofP that will be further explored in the analysis sections below. Firstly, it is evident from Table 5.1 that there are some differences between the use of personal pronouns in the three corpora. The personal pronoun *you* features strongly in all three corpora, occupying a position in the top four items. However, *I*, 2nd and 4th position in LCIE and SettCorp respectively, is ranked 10th in TravCorp (*I'm* is in position 19). In addition to this, *we* appears in 18th position in SettCorp but does not feature in the TravCorp or LCIE lists. Finally, the third person pronouns *he* and *they* (16th and 18th respectively on the LCIE frequency list) surface on the LCIE list but not on either SettCorp or TravCorp.

As has already been noted, person deixis is concerned with the identity of interlocutors in the communicative situation. One of the most obvious and most frequent manifestations of person deixis is personal pronouns. Biber *et al.* (1999: 327) describe personal pronouns as ‘economy devices’. They maintain that ‘rather than giving a detailed specification, they [personal pronouns] serve as pointers to the surrounding (usually preceding) text or speech situation’ (*ibid.*). Regarding the distribution of these pronouns, Biber *et al.* (*ibid.*: 333) have shown that the pronouns *I* and *you* are far more common in casual conversation than in other registers such as academic prose. Rühlemann (2007: 66-69) posits four reasons for the preferred use of *I* and *you* in casual conversation; (i) *I* is prone to repetition (*I* is repeated at a frequency of about 200 times per million words in conversation (see Biber *et al.*, 1999: 334)); (ii) *I* and *you* have a high frequency of collocation especially with cognitive verbs, for example, *I think* and *you know*; (iii) speakers in conversation show a clear tendency to prefer a direct mode than an indirect mode and (iv) conversation is co-constructed, with speakers taking turns and each new turn requires the reconstruction of the new speaker’s deictic system. From the point of view of other pronouns, Biber *et al.* (*ibid.*) have shown that the pronouns *he/him* and *she/her* are most common in fiction and to a lesser extent conversation, with the masculine pronoun more common than its corresponding feminine equivalent across all registers. Finally, *we* is more evenly distributed across registers and that except

for academic prose, the plural of each person is consistently less common than the singular.

Table 5.2 presents the normalised frequencies per 10,000 words of the personal pronouns *I*, *you*, *we* and *they* across TravCorp, SettCorp and LCIE. The personal pronoun lemmas contain the following forms: I includes *I* and *me*; YOU includes *you*, *ya*, and *ye*;⁵ WE includes *we* and *us* and THEY includes *they*, *them* and *'em*. The counts are for both deictic and anaphoric occurrences of the referents and possessive determiners have been excluded.

Table 5.2: Distribution of personal pronouns across the three corpora, normalised per 10,000 words

	TravCorp	SettCorp	LCIE
I	406	319	366
YOU	598	333	311
WE	88	114	95
THEY	119	122	156
	1211	888	928

Upon first examination, Table 5.2 shows that the personal pronoun lemmas I and YOU dominate TravCorp, SettCorp and LCIE, which is consistent with many other corpora of spontaneous, face-to-face casual conversation⁶. When the counts across the three corpora are combined, it can be seen that I occurs approximately three times more frequently than WE and THEY, whereas YOU, the most common form of personal reference in both family corpora but second to I in LCIE, occurs approximately four times more frequently than WE and THEY. These results demonstrate that speakers in the family primarily orientate themselves with regard to

⁵ *Ye* /ji:/ is commonly used in Irish English as a plural form of the second person pronoun *you*.

⁶ The findings of Biber *et al.* (1999), working with the LSWE Corpus have already been discussed. Similar findings have also been recorded by O’Keeffe *et al.* (2007) working with the CANCODE and CIC corpora and Rühlemann (2007) working with the BNC.

the people within the immediate discourse environment of the CofP and this becomes even more apparent upon examination of the pronouns WE and THEY in the analysis section below. Table 5.2 shows that the frequency of personal pronouns in SettCorp and LCIE are roughly comparable, perhaps pointing towards the link between SettCorp and the overall socio-economic profile of the speakers in the LCIE corpus. However, personal pronouns in general appear to be more common in TravCorp – 1211 occurrences versus 888 in SettCorp and 928 occurrences per 10,000 words in LCIE. In order to account for these pragmatic differences, but also to highlight similarities between the two families, the occurrences of the individual personal pronouns in both TravCorp and SettCorp are graphically represented in Figure 5.1:

Figure 5.1: Distribution of personal pronouns across TravCorp and SettCorp, normalised per 10,000 words

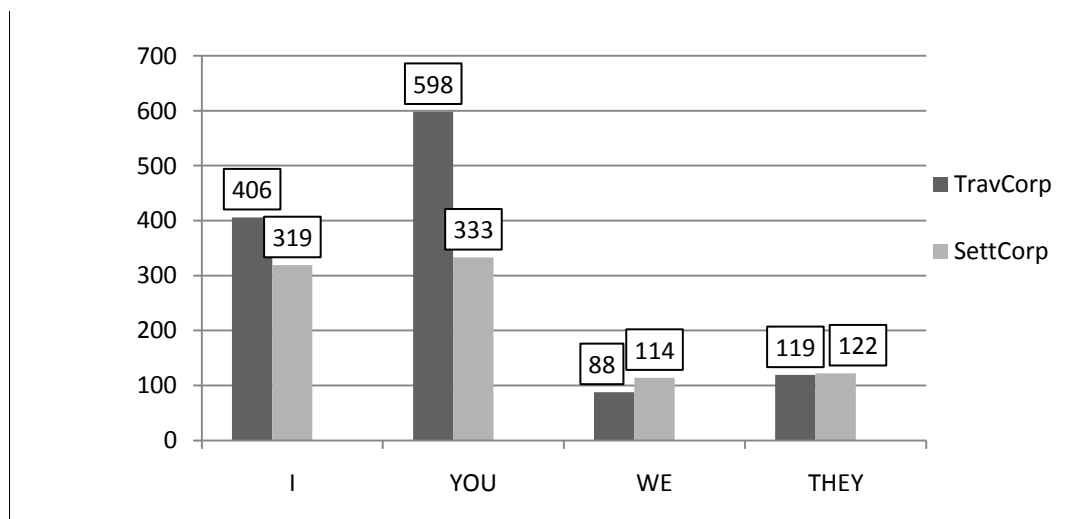


Figure 5.1 demonstrates that the personal pronoun lemmas I and YOU are more frequent in TravCorp than in SettCorp, I being approximately 1.3 times as frequent and YOU occurring approximately 1.8 times more frequently. In addition, YOU occurs 1.5 times more frequently than I in TravCorp, whereas the frequencies are roughly comparable in SettCorp. In contrast, WE occurs 1.3 times more frequently in SettCorp than in TravCorp. Finally, THEY occurs with similar frequency across both corpora. The analysis sections below will attempt to complement the quantitative data presented in Table 5.2 and Figure 5.1 through a detailed qualitative

examination of each lemma in an effort to account for the reasons for the apparent pragmatic variation between the two datasets.

5.3.1 YOU and I

The personal pronouns *I* and *you* play a large part in constructing the deictic centre among participants in conversation (see Lyons, 1977; Levinson, 1983; Fillmore, 1997). From Table 5.1, it can be seen that *I* and *you* place very highly in all three frequency lists and, according to Rühlemann (2007: 112), one of the most important reasons for this originates ‘in the fact that conversation is co-constructed, with speakers taking turns and each new turn requiring the reconstruction of the new speaker’s deictic system.’ As Table 5.2 shows, *I* is more frequent than *YOU* in LCIE, whereas *YOU* is more frequent than *I* in both TravCorp and SettCorp, perhaps marking this as a feature of the pragmatic system of the family CofP as opposed to casual conversation in general. One of the reasons for this can be found in studies examining participant deixis in the interaction of adults and children from the perspective of American families’ use of motherese, the language used by parents to talk to toddlers or infants. Wells (1977: 275 cited in Mühlhäusler and Harré, 1990: 256), maintains that ‘in BT [baby talk], the Receiver category is far more elaborated than in adult talk, even more so than the Sender category.’ In ‘normal’ everyday interaction the Sender category, which *I* is part of, dominates (cf. Rühlemann, 2007), however, the Receiver category, featuring *YOU*, is dominant in motherese. This, according to Wells (1977), is a reflection of the fact that the child is the centre of attention in the family. In this study, in TravCorp, 56% of the occurrences of *YOU* are enacted by the parents, while in SettCorp, that figure is 55%, this being despite the fact that the two parents in each family are often in conversation with at least two other children and sometimes, in the case of TravCorp, with more than four children. This runs contrary to the assertion that deixis is organised from an egocentric viewpoint (see Levinson, 1983) and points towards the possibility of a child-centred deixis in the pragmatic systems of these families. This can be seen in the following extract (5.2):

(5.2 TC)

- <Father> Are **you** goin w' **daddy**?
- <Baby> Yeah.
- <Son> Who's funeral's on now mammy?
- <Father> Eat the breakfast so and **we** go.
- <Mother> <name of funeral>
- <Baby> <\$O> <\$G?> <\\$O>
- <Son> <\$O> <\$G?> <\\$O>.
- <Father> Are **you** goin w' **daddy** in the motor car?
- <Baby> Oh sorry. I'm goin daddy.

In this extract, the father clearly aligns his own identity with that of his baby and this is achieved in a number of ways (marked in bold in the extract). Firstly, his utterance *Are you goin w' daddy?*, repeated twice, connects *you* with *daddy* thus establishing a shift from a lexical realisation of self for the father to the perspective of his child. The everyday identity the father carries with him is the *I*, however, to his son he is *daddy* and his awareness of this is evident. Secondly, in the utterance *Eat the breakfast so and we go*, the father combines his and his son's perspective into one and the same using an inclusive *we*. Thus, his utterances reflect a close connection with his son constituted by his use of indexicals (see also Tannen, 2007). Wales (1996) offers a number of possible reasons for parents' use of kin titles like *daddy* in talking to infants. She suggests that parents use them because they 'implicitly recognise the problematic 'shifting' nature of speaker/addressee roles, of *I* and *you* reference' (p. 56). She also claims that the use of kin titles 'actually promote the addressee's/child's perspective or world view' (p.57). This emphasis on the child's world view would be further strengthened by the parents switching the origo from themselves to their children through their use of *YOU*. Wells (1977: 275) maintains that:

...for the ordinarily most intricately organised and sensitive category Sender to be surpassed in intricacy and sensitivity by the normally unelaborated category Receiver, is a remarkable departure which forces a pragmatic interpretation of the subordination of Sender to Receiver in adult-child interaction.

While agreeing with Wells that the Receiver category is more elaborately developed and that the child is the centre of attention for both the families in TravCorp and SettCorp, it is argued here that Sender is not subordinate to Receiver, rather the Receiver category is more frequent due to the role played by indexicals such as YOU in establishing a child-centred deixis and also, as seen from further analysis of the occurrences of YOU in TravCorp and SettCorp below, in the construction and transmission of a parental identity.

In relation to the linguistic creation of identity, Tannen (2001; 2007) examines the discourse of American families using an interactional sociolinguistic approach. Much of Tannen's work (1994; 2001; 2007) builds on Bateson's (1972) and Goffman's (1981) concept of a linguistic *frame* as a way of understanding participants' interpretation of ongoing interaction. Tannen (2001; 2007) claims the unique situational characteristics of family discourse result in two parental frames, those of *caretaking* (instructing and taking care of children) and *socialising* (enjoying children's company), and these are critical to the understanding of family discourse (see also Marinova, 2007). Similarly, Blum-Kulka (1997a), working from a cross-cultural perspective, acknowledges that parents have to try to be sociable with children, while at the same time socialising them. This, according to Tannen (2007), results in parents performing subtle combinations of power (caretaking) and connection (socialising) manoeuvres. Therefore, parents are faced with a dual identity when it comes to dealing with their children; on the one hand, they want to be their friend, while on the other they need to be a parent and evidence of this can be seen in the use of YOU in both TravCorp and SettCorp. This, again, seems to result in the family deictic centre being constructed around the children in these families.

The role of YOU in establishing the dual identity of a parent is evident in extract (5.3) from TravCorp. In this extract, the father is in the family home with four of his children. The children want to go out and play but it is raining outside:

(5.3 TC)

- <Baby> Mm. I'm goin out.
- <Father> You're goin out with <male name> are ye?
- <Baby> Yeah.
- <Father> Watch the motor cars won't you? Where d'you think your man is gone boys and ye can go out play.
- <Baby> I can go out.
- <Father> Yeah but we can't leave ye out now cos it's rainin outside and ye'll get drenched wet. No don't go out in the rain ye'll get drownded wet. In here boys look watch the TV.
- <Baby> Yeah.
- <Father> Look at the television sit down Paddy Michael Gerard sit down there good boys can you see all of the television son?
- <Baby> Yeah.
- <Father> That's the good boy yeah now don't go out in the rain sure ye won't.
- <Son> I can't.
- <Father> Ye'd get drownded wet out there in the rain ye would.
- <Son> Hurry sit down sit down Paddy.
- <Father> Yes and mama'd be givin out then ye're wet.

In this extract, the father uses the YOU lemma on 12 occasions, however, he never uses the I, which is invoked only by his children. The father is faced with, on the one hand, being a parent and protecting the children from getting wet, and, on the other, enjoying his time with the children, therefore he does not want them to become upset if they are unable to go outside and play. At the beginning of the extract, the father immediately turns to his caretaker role with the utterance *Watch the motor cars won't you?*, and, although the utterance has an imperative form which signals a power manoeuvre, it features baby talk, *motor cars*, combined with *you* in order to allow the father to shift his perspective to that of his baby son, thereby lessening the impact of the command. The father also uses the plural form *ye* in the utterance *Yeah but we can't leave ye out now cos it's rainin outside and ye'll get drenched wet. No don't go out in the rain ye'll get drownded wet.* Here he is fulfilling his caretaker and socialising roles using the plural to appeal to all the children together as a group, thereby building solidarity between them by avoiding the targeting of one particular

child. Finally, his last move *Yes and mama'd be givin out then ye're wet*, he again addresses the children in the plural with a connection manoeuvre in that it is to the benefit of the entire family that the mother does not come home to a group of soaking children.

The use of YOU in these parental manoeuvres is also evident in SettCorp. In extract (5.4), the mother and her two sons are involved in using a steam cleaner to clean furniture in the living room:

(5.4 SC)

- <Mother> It's hard work now.
- <Son 2> I wipe it off with this then do I mam?
- <Mother> Hm?
- <Son 2> I wipe off with this yoke?
- <Son 1> <\$G4?> the dog.
- <Mother> No **you** have to put on the sockette now and clean it.
- <Son 2> Oh right.
- <Mother> It's hard work like. I had to wash the sockette three times and dry it while I was cleaning the chairs.
- <Son 2> Do you want to do it yourself like?
- <Son 1> Well what are you doin now at the moment like?
- <Mother> We're just+
- <Son 2> Steamin it up.
- <Mother> +lifting the dirt I'd say. Jimmy will **you** get the sockette and do it the way she said. Otherwise I'll do it <\$O> because <\\$O>+
- <Son 2> <\$O> She was <\\$O> doin that first <\$O> to</\$O>+
- <Mother> <\$O> But <\\$O> **you** don't do that. But <\$=> **you**'ll <\\$=> **you**'re only wastin steam then.

Here we see the settled family engaged in a collaborative task. The mother's first use of *you* (marked in bold) in the utterance *No you have to put on the sockette now and clean it* is simultaneously both a power manoeuvre and a connection manoeuvre. It encodes power in that the mother is giving the son a directive, however, *you have to* indicates that the obligation comes from outside the family, from a demonstration of

the steam cleaner's proposed effectiveness witnessed by the mother and son 2, thereby establishing a connection with the son by allowing the mother to disassociate herself from the imperative. According to Tannen (2007: 28), in family discourse 'we need to understand power (or hierarchy, or control) not as separate from or opposite to solidarity (or connection, or intimacy) but as inseparable from and intertwined with it.' This intertwining is repeated by the mother in *Jimmy will you get the sockette and do it the way she said*, where although the mother is again instructing the son on what to do, it appears that the *she* in the utterance is the authority and not the mother. The mother also signals her sympathy with the son by claiming *It's hard work like. I had to wash the sockette three times and dry it while I was cleaning the chairs*. Interestingly, the mother's final utterance, which contains *you* on three occasions (marked in bold), seems to signal a shift in the conversation to an outright power manoeuvre with the mother directly telling the son that what he is doing is wrong.

Figure 5.1 also shows that YOU is 1.8 times more frequent in TravCorp than in SettCorp. Insights from variational pragmatics and community of practice suggest a number of possible reasons for this and these reasons may also contribute to understanding why there is a disparity in the use of YOU and I in TravCorp that does not exist in SettCorp (YOU being 1.5 times more frequent than I in TravCorp). These discrepancies in frequency can be primarily attributed to the influence of the macro-social factor of *age*. Tannen (2001) claims that as children get older, family relationships change with the initial, hierarchical parent-child system being replaced with an egalitarian peer-peer system. The age profile of the children in TravCorp is lower than that of the children in SettCorp. Therefore, the high frequency of the YOU lemma in TravCorp may be indicative of the possibility of a more hierarchical parent-child relationship, with this relationship characterised by the presence of a child-centred origo. On the other hand, the frequency counts for both I and YOU in SettCorp may provide quantifiable evidence that as children get older, I replaces YOU as the dominant indexical as family discourse begins to take on the characteristics of the more symmetrical relationships in 'everyday' casual conversation. In addition to this, the size of the CofP itself may contribute to the pragmatic profiles of SettCorp and TravCorp. If, as hypothesised, the familial deictic centre is the child(ren), then YOU may occur more frequently in TravCorp because

there are more children in the Traveller family than in the settled family. Ó Riain (1997) points out that, in general, Traveller family size has decreased from an average of eight children per family in the mid-1980s. However, the Central Statistics Office (2004) estimates that the average Irish Traveller family size at 5.5 people as opposed to a national average of 2.94 people.

5.3.2 WE and THEY

As has already been illustrated in Figure 5.1, WE occurs 1.3 times more frequently per 10,000 words in SettCorp than in TravCorp. Mühlhäusler and Harré (1990) have shown that this pronoun is sufficiently flexible and multifunctional to encode any of the six persons that are usually referred to in English. Biber *et al.* (1999: 329) assert that ‘the meaning of the first person plural pronoun [*we*] is often vague: *we* usually refers to the speaker/writer and the addressee (inclusive *we*), or to the speaker/writer and some other person or persons associated with him/her (exclusive *we*). The intended reference can even vary in the same context.’ These are used to create a perspective of:

1. *I* the speaker + *you* the addressee(s) in the immediate context (‘inclusive *we*’) and
2. *I* the speaker + someone else not in the immediate context (‘exclusive *we*’).

The notion of an inclusive and exclusive WE was applied to the occurrences of the lemma in both TravCorp and SettCorp and the results are presented in Table 5.3:

Table 5.3: Frequency counts for inclusive and exclusive WE in TravCorp and SettCorp, normalized per 10,000 words

TravCorp		SettCorp	
No. of occurrences of WE = 88		No. of occurrences of WE = 114	
<i>inclusive WE</i>	<i>exclusive WE</i>	<i>inclusive WE</i>	<i>exclusive WE</i>
88	0	100	14

As Table 5.3 illustrates, inclusive WE is notably more frequent in both TravCorp and SettCorp, indicating that these families primarily utilise WE to create a perspective of *I*, the speaker + *you*, the addressee(s) in the immediate context. This use of inclusive WE is evident from the following extract (5.5) from SettCorp. The siblings are in the living room discussing the origins of the name of their dog:

(5.5 SC)

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| <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. |

Earlier in the conversation, son 1 has been complaining about the name of the dog, Goldie, and suggesting different names for her. The other siblings use *we* (marked in bold) in the repeated utterance *We didn't give her the name* as a form of 'safety in numbers' defence to deflect the criticism of the dog's name from themselves. Mühlhäusler and Harré (1990: 174) claim that in this integrative use of *we*, 'the social bonding aspect and the establishment of solidarity is of importance.' The siblings create an in-group, 'we the family', in opposition to the person who originally named the dog. Further to this, son 2 adds *We could've changed it. We could call her am Alex*, invoking the power that the family had, and still have, to change the name of the dog should they choose to do so. This inclusive WE (again marked in bold) is also evident in TravCorp but as extract (5.6) demonstrates, it has a more fluid nature. In this extract, the father is standing at the door of the family home:

(5.6 TC)

<Father> Yeah go on so boys go on down to the Ryan's. John's down there. Won't you go down to the Ryan's now? John is near. Run. [Conversation continues outside the home] Good afternoon to ye the lads looks like we got a shower of rain.

Initially in the extract the father is talking to his sons. Due to the unique home environment of the Traveller Community, the father is then able to change his speech context from the intimate context-type of the family to one of socialising involving other people on the halting site. Traveller family discourse is punctuated by reference to events occurring outside the immediate home environment (see also Section 7.2.2). Therefore, this occurrence of *we* is not a variation within this context, it, in fact, represents an inclusive *we* in a different context where *we* means *the people on the halting site* and this includes the TravCorp family. This shared cultural knowledge allows the father to utilise more 'flexible' personal and spatial boundaries. As many halting sites are populated by members of the same extended family, the use of an inclusive *we*, especially in extract (5.6), could be seen as an example of the fluid nature of identity in the Traveller family CofP. It could be hypothesised that the settled family CofP identify family as consisting of the traditional parent(s) + sibling(s) model, whereas the Traveller family view it as an extended notion, incorporating other participants, through the prism of pronominal reference, that may not be involved in the immediate, everyday discourse.

Table 5.3 also goes some way towards explaining the reasons behind the finding in Figure 5.1 that WE is used 1.3 times more frequently in SettCorp than in TravCorp. It demonstrates that in TravCorp, out of 88 occurrences of WE per 10,000 words, exclusive WE (*I*, the speaker + someone else not in the immediate context) does not feature. In contrast, exclusive WE accounts for 13 of 114 instances in SettCorp, thereby accounting for 12% of instances. A figure of 12% is not very notable in itself. However, when combined with other pragmatic features that distinguish SettCorp from TravCorp such as the use of hedges (see Chapter 8), it necessitates further discussion of a common hypothesis running through the research – the possibility of the existence of a 'shared pragmatic repertoire' between the two families. Both TravCorp and SettCorp are similar in that they primarily orientate themselves towards participants in the immediate context. However, the settled

family, in moving ‘outside’ the context, evidenced here through the use of an exclusive WE, may point towards fundamental macro-social differences between the settled and Traveller communities. Exclusive WE in SettCorp refers to a range of out-groups (marked in bold and underlined to the left of the extracts) and these are illustrated in extracts (5.7) – (5.10):

(5.7 SC)

Friends

- <Son> Yeah but the= or they often say members and regulars. But a bouncer would just turn around to you if you said anything like that and go they’re members.
- <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.

(5.8 SC)

Workplace

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

(5.9 SC)

Student

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

(5.10 SC)

Limerick

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

As can be seen, in SettCorp the ‘someone else’ referred to reflects many of the fixed aspects of people’s everyday lives. At various points, individuals within the settled family invoke membership of social groupings such as their friends, their co-workers, their fellow students and their city in their utterances. This use of exclusive WE could be evidence of an important cultural difference between the Traveller and settled communities. Exclusive WE demonstrates that the family in SettCorp, in addition to identifying themselves as members of their family CofP, also identify

themselves as members of a wider Irish society, thereby indicating differences in the macro-social factors of *socio-economic status* and *educational background*. On the other hand, the absence of exclusive WE in TravCorp might signal the more ‘closed’ nature of Traveller society, within which Travellers establish both their social and work identity. This finding may also indicate the nature of the different identities around which members of the families can construct their reference system. The settled family have several ‘pivots’, around which to organise reference such as other communities of practice to which they belong, for example, family, friends, the workplace or education. However, it appears that in relation to the Traveller family in the present study, their reference system ultimately pivots around the family itself.

As previously mentioned, Figure 5.1 illustrates that, in contrast to the use of I, YOU and WE, THEY occurs with almost the same frequency in TravCorp and SettCorp (119 and 122 occurrences respectively). According to Biber *et al.* (1999: 328-329), the plural pronoun *they* is commonly used with both personal and non-personal reference and can also be used in reference to people in general (non-deictic use). As already discussed, the first person pronoun *I* allows the person to identify themselves in the ‘role’ as the speaker, whereas the second person pronoun *you* enables the speaker to refer to the role of the addressee(s). Grundy (2008: 27) notes that third person pronouns ‘typically refer endophorically, either to antecedents, persons/objects mentioned in the discourse in the case of anaphoric reference, or occasionally to persons objects about to be mentioned (cataphoric reference).’ The use of anaphoric *they* (marked in bold) is evident in extract (5.11), in which the father is trying to get his young son to finish his breakfast:

(5.11 TC)

<Father> Hurry up baby son all the boys is finished their breakfast. [Child talking in the background] Here look there’s Martin and Patrick goin out now and Gerard **they**’re all **they**’re all finished. Do not go outside the gate inside now boys.

As can be seen, in the extract *they* refers back to the initial mention of a number of the young son’s siblings, *Martin*, *Patrick* and *Gerard*. Therefore, generally, it seems third person pronouns do not refer to any specific ‘participant role’ in the immediate

context, though on occasion *they* can be used to refer to the speaker or listener (Lyons, 1977: 638; Levinson, 1983: 69; Huang, 2007: 137).

Table 5.1 demonstrates that the personal pronouns *he* and *they* appear to be more common in the general LCIE corpus than in either SettCorp or TravCorp. Table 5.1 illustrates that *they* occurs in 18th position in the LCIE frequency list but does not occur in the top 25 words of either SettCorp or TravCorp. However, upon closer examination of the corpus word frequency list⁷, THEY occurs with a frequency of 133 occurrences per 10,000 words in LCIE, and, therefore, THEY has a roughly comparable frequency across the three corpora. Rühlemann (2007: 71-72) observes that HE and SHE, and, by extension, THEY, are frequent in conversation for a number of reasons. Firstly, as Biber *et al.* (1999: 335) note, similarly to *I* (see Section 5.4), *he*, *she*, *we* and *they* are all prone to repetition because their early clause positioning makes them vulnerable to a build-up of on-line planning pressure. Secondly, Rühlemann (2007: 71) maintains that ‘conversationalists frequently present extended stretches of past conversation which require the presenting speaker frequently to insert reporting clauses such as *I said/says* or *He/She said/says* to mark whose speech is being presented.’ Similarly, *They said/say* can also be used to mark a plural discourse-deictic reporting clause. Finally, Rühlemann (*ibid.*) claims that the frequency of HE and SHE is high in casual conversation because of the presence of conversational narrative, where conversational participants ‘exhibit a strong tendency to relate what happened to them and/or others’ (p. 71). Interestingly, although narrative sequences are frequently associated with family discourse (see Chapter 2), the structure *They said/say* only occurs on two occasions in SettCorp and does not occur in TravCorp, although the issue of corpus size makes it difficult to generalise about this finding.

Of note in relation to occurrences of *they** (*they*, *they’d*, *they’ll*, *they’re*, *they’ve*) in family discourse, is its frequency of use to refer to an ‘out-group’ – for example, objects that outside the immediate context of the conversation or people other than the immediate family members. Extract (5.12) illustrates the use of *they* (in bold) to

⁷ See Appendix D for the top 100 most frequent words in LCIE.

refer to an out-group. In the extract, the siblings are discussing gaining entrance to a nightclub:

(5.12 SC)

- <Son> I'd tackies⁸ on though.
- <Daughter 1> Had you?
- <Son> Mm.
- <Daughter 1> **They** stop <\$O> hordes of people <\\$O>.
- <Daughter 2> <\$O> Shur there's no <\\$O> running shoes.
- <Son> No.
- <Daughter 1> **They're** full of rubbish though. They stop hordes of people and **they** say lads members only and while **they're** talkin to them we'd all walk around the other side and walk in like.
- <Son> Mm.
- <Daughter 1> Did the other people that **they** stopped not go like you know.
- <Son> Yeah but the= or **they** often say members and regulars. But a bouncer would just turn around to you if you said anything like that and go **they're** members.
- <Daughter 1> 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."

In this extract, *they* is used to refer to two out-groups. One of these, for example, *They stop hordes of people*, refers to the security outside the nightclub. The other *they* reference, *they're members* and *they're gold cards*, is used to index patrons of the nightclub that gained entry when the family members did not. In both SettCorp and TravCorp this use of *they** to refer to out-groups is less frequent than its use to refer to people and objects in the immediate context of conversation. In SettCorp, 38.5% of the occurrences of *they** establish out-groups, whereas in TravCorp the figure is 24%. Therefore, although it appears that **THEY** is roughly comparable across TravCorp, SettCorp and LCIE, it may serve a different purpose in the family CofP (cf. Vaughan, 2009, for example). Instead of referring to the narrative adventures of others, **THEY** is instead used anaphorically to further strengthen the family CofP by indexing immediate, contextual family issues, events or concerns.

⁸ *Tackies* is used as part of Limerick English vernacular to refer to *trainers/sneakers*.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that the relationship between the context of the utterance and the referential practices therein characterises the very nature of the family pragmatic system. In terms of person reference, as discussed, the deictic references most frequently used are those that refer to the key stakeholders in the discourse – the individual family members. Although the SettCorp family members can, on occasion, be seen to move outside the immediate conversational context to refer to a range of out-group identities, the family members in both TravCorp and SettCorp primarily anchor their conversation around themselves and others in the immediate communicative situation, evidenced by their use of I and YOU. However, in contrast to other spoken context-types, YOU features more prominently than I in both families in the present study, illustrating the unique influence of micro-social factors such as *social roles* and macro-social factors such as *age* on family discourse. Furthermore, the number of members of the CofP itself was shown to have an impact on the frequency of occurrence of YOU in family interaction. In addition to YOU and I, THEY is primarily used anaphorically within the families to refer to the immediate discourse context. This orientation towards the ‘here and now’ within the families’ referential systems is further evidenced in Chapter 6 which examines the families’ use of place and time reference. Again, this will demonstrate that mutual engagement in the joint enterprise of ‘being a family’ is extremely localised. However, like personal pronouns, place and time reference will be shown to be influenced by the macro- and micro-social features affecting the two families portrayed in the present study.

Chapter 6

Articulating a shared familial context II: The demonstratives *this* and *that* and the case of *now*

6.0 Introduction

This chapter continues the discussion of many of the issues in relation to the families' reference systems raised in the previous chapter. Once again, both families will be shown to primarily orientate themselves in the immediate discourse environment through their referential practices. In relation to place reference, perhaps surprisingly, *that* (traditionally a distal reference) is more common in both SettCorp and TravCorp than *this* (traditionally a proximal reference). It will be demonstrated that *that* is illustrative of a shared linguistic repertoire and is used by a speaker in the family community of practice (CofP) to signal referents which are at once both familiar/shared and relatively (un)important. More specifically, in the usage patterns of *that*, the settled family display a preference for the anaphoric use of this pronoun, whereas the Traveller family prefer its exophoric reference. The macro-social factor *age* is again flagged as an important contributory factor to this pragmatic variation. In relation to time reference, the use of the multi-functional item *now* will be explored. Similar to *that*, *now* performs a variety of different functions in conversation, all of which are influenced by its temporal, deictic meaning. It will be argued that *now* is a particularly distinctive marker of intimate discourse in the Irish English context. This distinctiveness is apparent in its frequency patterns but also in the position it occupies in an utterance. One of the reasons posited for the prominence of *now* in the families' pragmatic practices is the influence of *power* on the context (see Section 2.2.2). Moreover, it is hypothesised that *now* has additional pragmatic and deictic properties in the discourse of both families and, therefore, in Irish English in general.

6.1 Place reference in family discourse: The demonstratives *this* and *that*

Traditionally, place deixis, also called *spatial* or *locational* deixis, has been primarily concerned with the location of people or objects relative to the deictic centre. This deictic centre frequently has the speaker at its core, therefore, these locations are often relative to the speaker's position (see for example Lyons, 1977; Levinson, 1983). Notions of place deixis are commonly expressed using demonstratives (*this*, *that*, *these*,

those), deictic adverbs of place (*here, there*) or verbs of motion (*come, go, bring, take*). However, locations can also be specified relative to other objects using prepositions of place such as *above, below, left, right, behind* or *from*. In many languages, there exists a fundamental distinction between *proximal* (or relatively close to the speaker) and *distal* (non-proximal, sometimes relatively close to the addressee) deictic expressions of place (Diessel, 1999; Levinson, 2004; Huang, 2007). However in Section 5.2, it was noted that this ‘Standard Account’ (Jones, 1995: 31) of the egocentric deictic centre has been challenged. Indeed, in Section 5.3.1, the ‘I’ origo was examined in relation to family discourse and it was posited that a family deictic centre appears to be created around the children. This section of the analysis will, in part, focus on an examination of the demonstratives *this* and *that* in order to determine 1) the suitability of the standard account of deixis for the analysis of demonstrative reference in the family and 2) whether or not the notion of a ‘child-centred’ deixis extends to the use of *this* and *that* in SettCorp and TravCorp.

At this stage it is pertinent to reintroduce the frequency list of the top 25 most frequent items in TravCorp, SettCorp and the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (LCIE). Table 6.1 presents these frequency lists with the demonstratives *this* and *that* shaded ■ and the temporal adverb *now* shaded ■ :

Table 6.1: Frequency list of top 25 words across TravCorp, SettCorp and LCIE

	TravCorp	SettCorp	LCIE
1	you	the	the
2	the	you	I
3	go	it	and
4	it	I	you
5	to	to	to
6	on	a	it
7	a	and	a
8	■ now ■	of	■ that ■
9	out	■ that ■	of
10	I	in	yeah
11	no	is	in
12	and	yeah	was
13	there	no	is
14	get	it’s	like
15	me	on	know

16	in	what	he
17	that	do	on
18	here	we	they
19	I'm	now	have
20	daddy	was	there
21	goin	have	no
22	way	there	but
23	what	like	for
24	yeah	all	be
25	look	not	what

As Table 6.1 demonstrates, the adverb *now* is present on both the TravCorp and SettCorp frequency lists. It is the only item with potential time deictic properties (with the exception of tense) to feature in the top 25 items in the three corpora (see Section 6.2.1). The demonstrative pronoun *that* features in the top 25 most frequently occurring words in the lists generated from TravCorp, SettCorp and LCIE (positions 17th, 9th and 8th respectively). The table also shows the non-occurrence of *this* in the top 25 words in all three corpora. This corpus finding would appear to be counter-intuitive, even allowing for the multi-functionality of *that*.¹ This is because, as discussed, traditionally deixis is typically organised in an egocentric manner around the ‘here-now-I’ (Bühler, 1990: 117) which features a proximal *this* and a distal *that*. Therefore, if deixis is organised egocentrically, then *this* should logically be more frequent than *that*. Both Hindmarsh and Heath (2000) and Strauss (2002) contend that this egocentric model is ‘static’ in nature, especially in relation to demonstrative reference. Hindmarsh and Heath (2000) used audio-visual recordings of workplace interaction within a telecommunications control centre to examine the role of demonstrative reference in this context. They claim that, rather than being a static process, reference is interactionally organised and involves the ‘dynamic activities of the speaker, co-participant(s) and even referent’ (p. 1876).

Strauss (2002) examined a 45,000 word corpus of spoken American English. She posits that proximity to the speaker frequently seems to have little or no relevance to the referents in question and that ‘in spontaneous talk, speakers do not seem to use the two

¹ Biber *et al.*, (1999: 350) describe *that* as one of the most common and most flexible word forms in English. In addition to its functions discussed in this section, it also has complementiser, relative pronoun and degree adverbial uses (see Section 6.1.1).

forms [*this* and *that*] with the systematicity suggested by the proximal vs. non-proximal distinction' (p. 134; cf. Biber *et al.*, 1999: 349). This is evident when extract (6.1) is examined. The settled family is at the kitchen table. The father, mother and son 1 are seated at the table whereas son 2 is seated at the family computer, also located in the kitchen (the demonstrative references in question are marked in bold):

(6.1 SC)

- <Father> What are you going to N= Nottingham for?
- <Son 1> I'm going for a course over there.
- <Mother> They're going to show him how to research.
- <Son 1> They're going to show me how to do my masters hopefully.
- <Son 2> **This** is the letter a. <\$O> You press **that** to get out of all **this** </\$O>.
- <Father> <\$O> <\$G?> </\$O> there's nothing in Nottingham.
- <Son 1> I know yeah there's nothing there shur there isn't.
- <Father> No.

In his only turn in the extract, son 2 uses a *this* → *that* → *this* sequence of demonstratives. In the first part of the utterance *This is the letter a*, *this* points to a new referent – the letter *a*, a key on the computer keyboard. He then says *You press that...* where he switches from using *this* to refer to the key, to using *that*. He is sitting at the computer, therefore, there is no change in 'distance' between him and the referent and, therefore, the proximal/distal distinction does not appear to explain the switch between the two demonstrative pronouns. Instead, it seems that the switch from *this* to *that* may indicate a move from introducing a new referent for the first time, *this* (key), to a referent that is already familiar to the interlocutors, *that* (key). Finally, in *...to get out of all of this* the son introduces another new referent, the computer screen, which he indicates by gesturing towards it.

Due to examples similar to that in extract (6.1), and many examples from her own data, Strauss (2002) constructs an alternative model of demonstrative reference, taking into consideration the relative importance of the referent being marked, the relative

‘newness’ or ‘givenness’ of that referent and, most importantly, the role of the hearer. Her alternative model is outlined in Figure 6.1 below:

Figure 6.1: Strauss’ (2002: 135) model for analysing demonstrative reference

	<u>Form</u>	<u>MEANING SIGNAL</u>	<u>Hearer</u>	<u>Referent</u>
<i>degree of attention hearer is asked to pay to the referent</i>	This	HIGH FOCUS	new information (not shared)	important
	That	MEDIUM FOCUS	↓	↓
	It	LOW FOCUS	shared information	unimportant

McCarthy (1994: 272) highlighted the fact that ‘*this* and *that* operate to signal that focus is either shifting or has shifted.’ In Strauss’ (2002) model, the term *focus* refers to ‘the degree of attention the hearer should pay to the referent’ (p. 135). According to Strauss, *this* and *that* (and, indeed, *it*) mark a shift in the relative sharedness or presumed sharedness of information the speaker presumes the hearer to have, and the relative importance of the referent itself to the speaker. Therefore, if the speaker presumes the referent to be new to the hearer and important, he/she will use *this*. Conversely, if the referent is presumed shared by the hearer and relatively unimportant, the speaker will use *that* or *it*.

In addition to critiquing the traditional model of demonstrative deixis, Strauss (*ibid*: 132) also comments on the fact that these analyses:

...make no formal distinction between written or spoken media in describing how the forms [*this* and *that*] are used in English, nor does there appear to be particular specification with respect to tendencies in American English, British English, Australian English or so forth.

Botley and McEnery (2001) used three 100,000 word corpora of English, the America Printing House for the Blind Corpus (a corpus of written narratives comprising biographies, historical and religious pieces and fiction), the Associate Press Corpus (a corpus of newswire stories) and the Hansard Corpus (a corpus of parliamentary debates), to show how features of the use of the demonstratives *this* and *that* (and indeed *these* and *those*) vary across genres. For example, they found that the Hansard Corpus contained a disproportionate amount of demonstrative reference in comparison with the other two corpora (both written corpora). They attribute this to genre – parliamentary debates are much more ‘limited’ in the lexical items they employ and the topics they can explore than, say, the Associated Press Corpus and this can result in, for example, a greater number of cases of anaphoric reference. Similarly, Biber *et al.* (1999) found that the demonstrative *this* is more common in academic prose than in conversation due to its use in marking immediate textual reference (for example, anaphora). In contrast, *that* shows a very high frequency in conversation as opposed to academic prose and some of the reasons for this will be explored in the analysis presented here. Therefore, in addition to applying Strauss’ (2002) model to the data in order to further examine the occurrences of the demonstratives *this* and *that*, it is also hoped to provide a context-specific base-level description of demonstrative use in an intimate, spoken Irish English context which future studies can build on.

Table 6.2 illustrates the frequency of occurrence of the items *this* and *that* in both TravCorp and SettCorp. The figures for *that* do not include the occurrences of *that* as a complementiser (*Well I asked Joe and he said [that] they flash*), relative pronoun (*Daddy where’s the balloon that was over the door?*) or stance adverbial (*He’s not that heavy*).

Table 6.2: Distribution of the demonstratives *this* and *that* across TravCorp and SettCorp

	TravCorp	SettCorp
<i>this</i>	12	28
<i>that</i>	42	193
	54	221

These initial results from SettCorp and TravCorp appear to contradict the egocentricity of the deictic centre as *this* accounts for only 22% of occurrences of the demonstratives in TravCorp and only 13% of the occurrences in SettCorp. On the other hand, *that* accounts for 78% of the demonstratives used in TravCorp and 87% of those used in SettCorp. In her study, Strauss (2002) noted that *that* was twice as frequent as *this*. She observes that ‘these results would make one wonder, then, why speakers refer to people, items, things, entities and times that are *not* close to them...Or, they might simply make one question the traditional semantic analyses of English demonstratives’ (p. 139 [my emphasis]). It is hypothesised that *this* is markedly less frequent than *that* due, in part, to the influence of contextual features of family discourse and the effects these have on the referents being invoked. This context is so immediate to the interlocutors, the family members, that very few referents will in fact be new or previously unknown. All conversations take place inside the family home, therefore the familiarity with the spatial nature of the layout of the home may mean that frequently referents have already been established spatially over a period of time. The families also share a family-specific ‘bank’ of knowledge of the history of each member. Both of these factors suggest an increased use of *that*.

The notion of ‘shared referents’ in the family is apparent in the exophoric use of *that* (marked in bold) in extract (6.2). Three members of the settled family are sitting around the kitchen table after their evening meal:

(6.2 SC)

- <Father> Are they gone the girls?
- <Mother> I don't think so. Are they?
- <Son> No. They're watchin telly I'd say.
- <Mother> They'd never go that quietly. Connor do you want **that?** It's from the post office.
- <Son> No.

Strauss (2002) maintains that *that* signals medium focus and tends to co-occur with information that maintains a relative sharedness, as well as with referents which rank comparatively low on the scale of importance. The mother asks the son *Connor do you want that?* in reference to a letter she is holding in her hand. The first question that should be asked in relation to this utterance is why did the mother not ask her son *Do you want this?* She is holding the referent in her hand, therefore, it is proximally located. In addition, the referent has not been previously invoked in the discourse. One reason for the choice of *that* instead of *this* may be gauged from the final part of the utterance *It's from the post office*. This section displays a reference to a bank of previous knowledge – every three months the siblings received a letter from this source. In addition, the majority of these letters remained unopened for some time. This previous knowledge appears to have resulted in the mother presuming the referent to be shared and relatively unimportant, thereby resulting in the use of *that* instead of *this*. This use of *that* may also be linked to McCarthy's (1994: 274-275) observation that it refers to entities that are 'other-attributed' (see Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 60). In this extract, the mother employs *that* to attribute the referent, the letter, to a third party – in this case the post office.

In order to more accurately investigate the differences in the frequency of occurrence of these demonstratives in the present study, *this* and *that* have been normalized per 10,000 words in Figure 6.2:

Figure 6.2: Distribution of the demonstratives *this* and *that* across TravCorp and SettCorp, normalised per 10,000 words

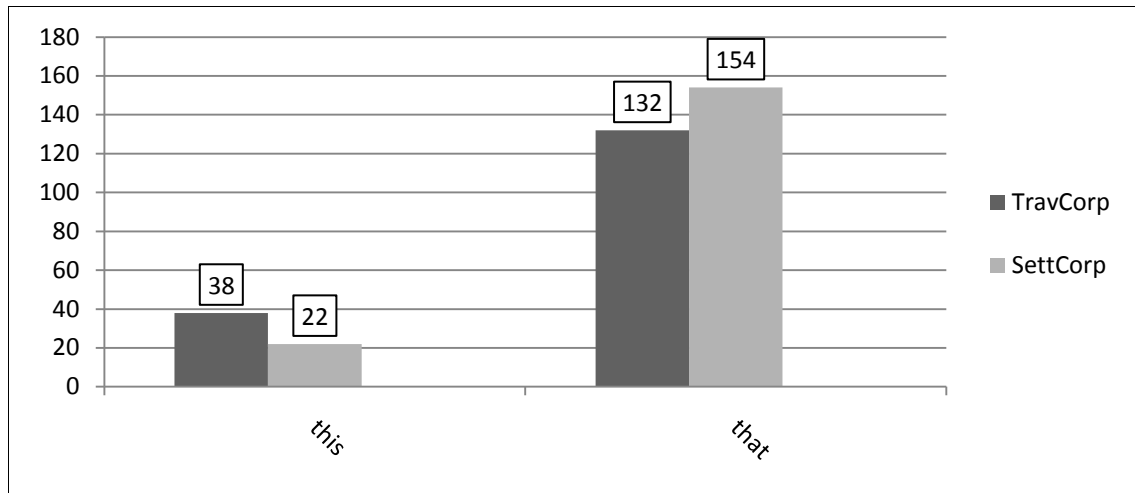


Figure 6.2 demonstrates that *this* is more common in TravCorp, *this* being approximately 1.7 times more frequent in TravCorp than in SettCorp. In contrast, the difference in the use of *that* between the two corpora is less pronounced; *that* is 1.2 times more frequent in SettCorp than in TravCorp. In order to analyse these differences and account for their possible causes, it is proposed to divide *this* and *that* according to their referential functions. *This* and *that* have a variety of referential functions; *exophoric*, *anaphoric*, *cataphoric* and *non-phoric* (see Lakoff, 1974; Diessel, 1999; Strauss, 2002). The exophoric function, where the referent can only be understood in relation to the immediate context, of *this* (marked in bold) is evident in extract (6.3):

(6.3 TC)

<Father> There look who gave ye jam?
 <Son> John.
 <Father> Michael do ye like the jam?
 <Son> D'you?
 <Father> I do. Did Paddy get jam?
 <Son> No.

<Father> You you atin² **this**?

In this extract the children have received some bread and jam from John, a family friend. It is easy to imagine the referent in *You you atin **this**?*, in this case probably a slice of bread with jam, as either pointed to physically or held by the father, and, therefore, it has been classified as exophoric reference. The demonstratives *this* and *that* can also have both *anaphoric reference* (see Section 5.2), where they point backwards to previous text, and *cataphoric reference*, where they point forwards to forthcoming text. The use of *that* anaphorically and *this* cataphorically (marked in bold) are illustrated in extracts (6.4) and (6.5)³:

(6.4 SC)

<Father> D'you know the book you got in the Times yesterday? There was a crab coconut there was a crab and coconut milk soup. Did you know **that**? Conor?

<Son> What?

<Father> There was a crab meat and coconut soup.

<Son> Oh.

In extract (6.4), in the father's utterance, *that* refers backwards to the information he is conveying to his son – in yesterday's *Times* newspaper there was a recipe for a crab and coconut soup. Extract (6.5), taken from LCIE, features two speakers, A and B, chatting in the workplace. The cataphoric use of *this* is marked in bold:

(6.5 LCIE)

A: You know aam there's **this** woman aam Jane Doe who's worki= who publishing about <\$G2> communication and corpus she works for [name of company].

B: Umhum.

A: And she's aam looking at the applications for [name of company].

B: Oh right.

² *Atin* /**eɪ**tɪn/ is an Irish English variation on the pronunciation of *eating* /i:teɪŋ/.

³ Extract (6.5) has been taken from LCIE as there are no examples of *this* or *that* with cataphoric reference in either SettCorp or TravCorp.

In extract (6.5), *this* is used with *woman* to refer forward to the woman's name *Jane Doe*.

The final category to discuss before examining the range of occurrences of *this* and *that* in both SettCorp and TravCorp is what Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Strauss (2002) refer to as *non-phoric*. Both of these studies cite the example of conversational narrative in relation to *this* with non-phoric reference, for example a story might begin with *There was this man...*⁴. 'This man', claim Halliday and Hasan (1976), does not occur previously in the narrative (anaphoric), is not subsequently introduced (cataphoric), nor does he exist with the context of the situation itself (exophoric). The proximal demonstrative *this* is used to refer to a person that exists in the imagination of the interlocutors. This phenomenon has been variously referred to as *deixis am phantasma* (Bühler, 1934: 121-140) and *deictic projection* (Lyons, 1977). Strauss (2002: 138) maintains non-phoric *that* 'seems to signal shared information.' In the following extract (6.6), the use of *that* (marked in bold) is classified non-phoric because it has not been used to refer to an entity in the surrounding speech situation and also because the speaker believes that the hearer knows that referent and the shared information:

(6.6 SC)

- <Mother> Where did you go on Saturday night after **that** Conor?
<Son 1> We didn't go anywhere.
<Mother> Didn't <\$O> you <|\$O>?
<Father> <\$O> Home <|\$O>.
<Son 1> Home.
<Son 2> Nosey.

In this extract, when the mother mentions *that*, she believes that the son has sufficient shared knowledge in order to assign reference. Here *that* refers to a bar in which the son met his parents the previous Saturday. This shared knowledge between the mother and son is confirmed when he responds *We didn't go anywhere* rather than ask for any

⁴ This example is taken from Halliday and Hasan (1976: 39).

clarification about the referent. The intimate context-type of this extract enables the speaker to invoke a non-phoric reference due to the high level of shared knowledge that exists in these speech situations. This use of *that* overlaps with Diessel’s (1999) concept of *recognitional deixis*. He claims that recognitional demonstratives are used to ‘mark information that is (i) discourse new, (ii) hearer old and (iii) private’ (p. 106). He defines private information as shared information between speakers due to common experience in the past and distinguishes it from the bank of general cultural information that speakers will typically share. This demonstrative use shows that the speaker believes that the hearer knows the referent due this shared experience. Diessel contends that this use of demonstratives is a subtype of the exophoric usage.

In order to further examine the range of referential functions of *this* and *that* in both families’ pragmatic systems, each occurrence of these two tokens was assigned a function, *anaphoric*, *cataphoric*, *exophoric* or *non-phoric*, and the results are presented in Table 6.3:

Table 6.3: Distribution of *this* and *that* across their referential functions (not normalised)

	anaphoric	cataphoric	exophoric	non-phoric	other	Total
<i>this</i>						
TravCorp	1	0	10 (83%)	1	0	12
SettCorp	0	0	23 (82%)	0	5	28
<i>that</i>						
TravCorp	10 (24%)	0	30 (71%)	2	0	42
SettCorp	114 (59%)	0	71 (37%)	7	0	193

As Table 6.3 illustrates, *this* is primarily used exophorically by both the settled family and the Traveller family. In addition, as the percentages show, the demonstrative is distributed equally in this category in both families – 83% of all occurrences in

TravCorp and 82% of those in SettCorp. In order to examine the functional distribution of *this* in both TravCorp and SettCorp more accurately, the figures in Table 6.3 have been normalised per 10,000 words in Figure 6.3:

Figure 6.3: Distribution of *this* across its referential functions in TravCorp and SettCorp, normalised per 10,000 words

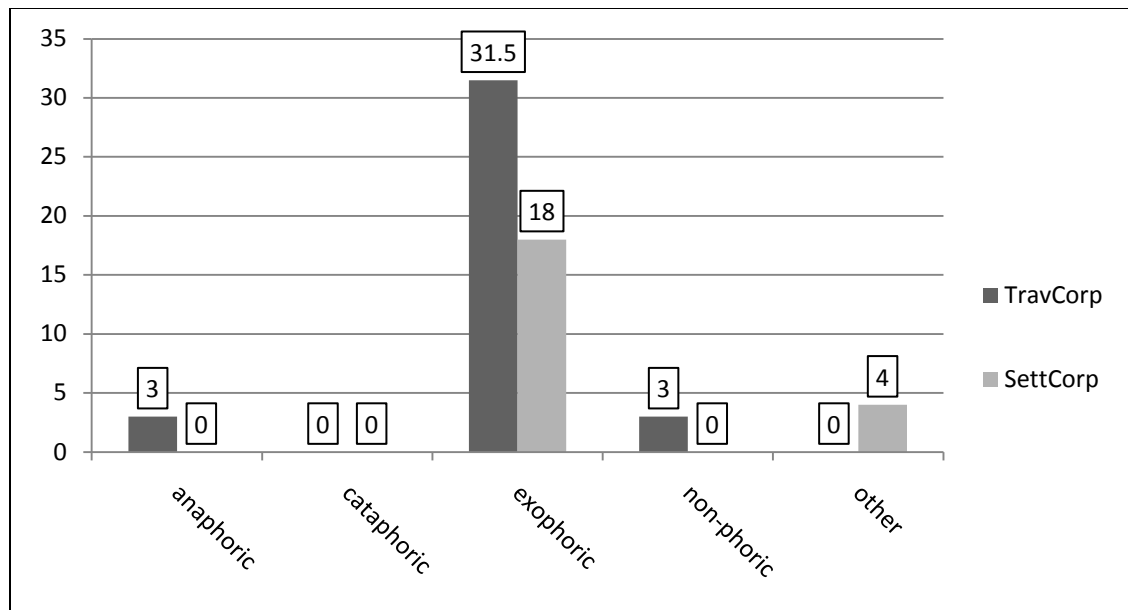


Figure 6.3 shows that, when the figures are normalised, the exophoric *this* is more frequent in TravCorp than in SettCorp. Strauss (2002: 141) proposes that exophoric *this* is ‘used to call a particular referent into the consciousness of the hearer...it can convey meaning for brand new and previously unknown information. It therefore also carries a strong association with the concepts of here and now.’ This element of the ‘brand new’ and ‘previously unknown’ referent is evident in the exophoric *this* (marked in bold) used in extract (6.6) from TravCorp:

(6.6 TC)

<Son> Come out. Get out. Get out.

[The baby is crying in the background]

<Mother> Are the boys on their way up the road no? He’s not getting anything more **this afternoon** him he’s well out of it. Be a good boy now Paddy son go way. Good boy Paddy.

In this extract, the baby is getting in everyone's way and, therefore, is told to *Get out* by his brother. The mother insinuates that the baby has had too much junk food to eat and that is why he is proving to be such a nuisance. She issues the directive *He's not getting anything more **this afternoon** him* which contains the referent *this afternoon* pointing to the time 'around now'. More pertinently, the directive is new information for the addressees, the other family members, and signalled as important by the mother, with the welfare of her baby her priority. This use of exophoric *this* is also evident in extract (6.7) which features two siblings from the settled family sitting at their computer, endeavouring to repair the printer (exophoric *this* is marked in bold):

(6.7 SC)

- <Daughter> Go into printer settings and the computer'll tell you it hasn't got colour <\$H> to print <\\$H>.
- <Son> Why do people hide the toolbar?
- <Daughter> I don't know. Print. Settings. Printers. You right click on our printer.
- <Son> Which one is our?
- <Daughter> <\$H> There you go <\\$H>.
- <Son> **This one** is it?
- <Daughter> Yeah right click.

Here it can be seen that the daughter is instructing the son to open a particular window on the computer screen in order to select the correct printer. The son's utterance *This one is it?* refers to a specific item on a list of different printer options on the computer screen. He has pointed towards the specific referent, in this case the correct printer option, by, for example, using his finger or highlighting the correct choice with the cursor. Both extracts (6.6) and (6.7) appear to correspond with McCarthy's (1994: 273) hypothesis that *this* 'seems regularly to function as a signal that an entity is understood as raised to current focus.'

Table 6.3 illustrates that the occurrences of *that* are evenly distributed across two functional groups. In SettCorp, 96% of all occurrences of the demonstrative are spread

between the anaphoric and exophoric functions. Similarly, 95% of the occurrences of *that* in TravCorp are to be found in these two functional groups. This again points to commonalities between the two families' pragmatic systems. In order to investigate the occurrences of *that*, its functional distribution, normalised per 10,000 words, across TravCorp and SettCorp is illustrated in Figure 6.4:

Figure 6.4: Distribution of *that* across its referential function in TravCorp and SettCorp, normalised per 10,000 words

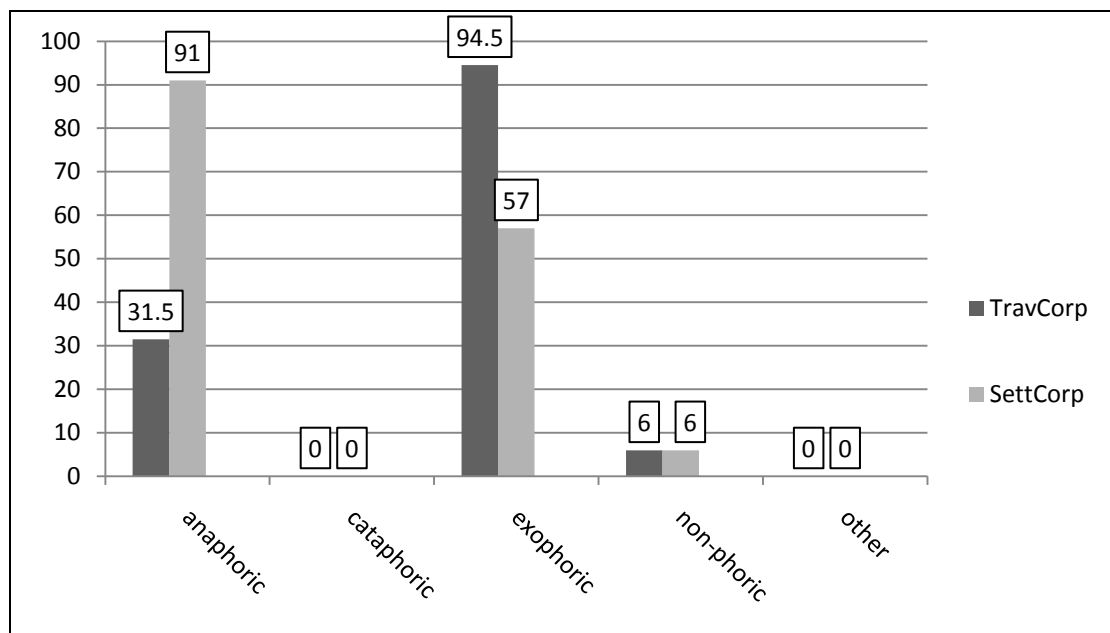


Figure 6.4 also shows that in TravCorp *that* is used with a primarily exophoric function, whereas in SettCorp *that* is primarily used anaphorically. The reasons for this pragmatic variation can again be attributed to the influence of the different macro-social features on the families. In TravCorp, the parents enact 14 out of the 30 instances of *that*, despite the fact that the two parents are often in conversation with at least four children. These occurrences can be seen in the concordance lines presented in Figure 6.5:

Figure 6.5: Concordance lines for *that* enacted by parents (TravCorp)

N	Concordance
1	Where d'you get those? Paddy no. Paddy. That's a jaysus gimme a hand will ye? you're
2	C'mon mairead get the up there. That's better isn't it? . Daddy where's the
3	you? Mam is there any veggies ? No. Take that daddy. Oh. Now. Wha? That
4	y. Look Paddy. Look. No. Take off that easy. No. No. I want . I want it. No.
5	Shut up shut up shut up. Where'll we go to? That's grand now. Leave em there. Leave it
6	can show what you have in a minute. Gimme that hand. Gimme your hand a second there. .
7	What do you make of that one? Change songs. FX. Look you're after
8	Corpus 1 Paddy ate the breakfast Stop that Paddy. I'm gonna throw you out. You're
9	Put two of them there won't you? See where that pony and land there and put it in the van
10	Nah. Stop= stop actin=. Take your hands off that. Put your hands behind you. No hold it
11	Take that daddy. Oh. Now. Wha? That stuffs for you. Is your mother over daddy?
12	Move it . Here we are. Keep that swimming that swimming and put it in the wash basket. .
13	on. Move it . Here we are. Keep that swimming that swimming and put it in the
14	can you see all of the television son? Yeah. That's the good boy yeah now don't go out in

In Figure 6.5, eight of the 14 occurrences of *that* are within an imperative structure with *that* pointing away from the parents and towards the children. As previously discussed, the age profile of the children in TravCorp is lower than that of the children in SettCorp. This can result in an increased number of parental control acts. Extract (6.8), illustrates the use of *that* (in bold) in a parental imperative:

(6.8 TC)

<Father> Get up with us here. Ah Paddy quick son c'mon. [Baby laughs] Here here there's food for you here. You can show what you have in a minute. [Daughter laughs] Gimme **that hand**. Gimme your hand a second there.

In this extract, the father is trying to feed his son and is trying to clean the son's hands before he eats anything. The father tells the son to *Gimme that hand*, *that* signalling medium focus on Strauss' (2002) model of demonstrative reference which marks something as relatively unimportant. Interestingly, the son does not appear to give the father his hand as can be seen when the father is forced to repeat the imperative *Gimme your hand a second there*. In the repetition of the imperative, *that* is replaced by *your hand* making the referent more specific, perhaps marking it as more important to the child in order to get him to obey. In addition to this, it can be seen in the concordance

lines 2, 5 and 14 that *that* is used to address the children's behaviour in some way; *That's better isn't it... That's grand now... That's the good boy.* This continued use of *that* by the parents to point towards the children, when viewed in tandem with the results from the examination of person deixis (see Chapter 5), may offer more evidence towards a deictic centre being created around the children.

In contrast, anaphoric *that* is more frequent than exophoric *that* in SettCorp. This may signal a differences at a micro-social level based on the pre-established speaker relationships between the settled parents and their children. According to Strauss (2002), in spoken discourse types where the speakers share common interests and common goals, anaphoric *that* is the predominant form and can 'function to index some kind of solidarity among interlocutors' (p. 143). In extract (6.9), there are three occurrences of *that* (marked in bold). The first, *that spiffing tracksuit*, has a non-phoric function and the subsequent occurrences are anaphoric in nature:

(6.9 SC)

- <Daughter 1> Dad you used to wear **that** spiffing tracksuit when he was training the teams.
[Mother laughs]
<Father> What spiffing tracksuit?
<Daughter 2> <\$O> The black one <\\$O>.
<Mother> <\$O> The black one <\\$O>.
<Daughter 1> The shiny one.
<Father> Oh the shiny one. Oh yeah I still have **that**.
<Son 1> Dada.
<Daughter 2> Can I've **that** Dad?
<Mother> You won't have it if I find it.
<Daughter 1> <\$H> You had to tug it over your stomach <\\$H>.

In this extract, the non-phoric *that* is used by daughter 1 to invoke a shared referent from the family's bank of collective knowledge. On this occasion, *that spiffing tracksuit* refers to one that the father wore in the past when coaching a rugby team. This invoking

of shared knowledge within the family allows them to engage in a bout of teasing (indicated by the presence of laughter), thereby increasing the solidarity between them. The choice of anaphoric *that* also heightens the sense of solidarity. Both the father and daughter 2 choose *that* in their utterances to refer to the tracksuit when equally they could have employed *it* (as the mother does in the final utterance in the extract). However, their choice of *that* is notable when it is considered in relation to Strauss' (2002) model of demonstrative reference. *That* signals a higher degree of 'sharedness' than *it* and an acknowledgement on the speaker's part of the importance of the referent to the hearer, indicating, through their choice of demonstrative, that both members are participating fully and acknowledging the importance of episodes such as these to 'oiling the wheels' of the family unit. This reflects Hindmarsh and Heath's (2000) notion of a socially situated and collaboratively organised referential system. Furthermore, it could be hypothesized that as the children grow older, the function of *that* changes from a 'pointing' or exophoric one to an anaphoric one echoing Tannen's (2001) belief that as children get older, the relationship with their parents changes from a hierarchical to an egalitarian one.

6.2 Time reference in family discourse: The case of *now*

According to Huang (2007: 144), time deixis 'is concerned with the encoding of temporal points and spans relative to the time at which the utterance is produced.' In other words, in order to interpret a time deictic item, it needs to be considered in relation to the time at which the communicative act takes place. To do this with any degree of accuracy, as previously mentioned (see Section 5.2), it is necessary to distinguish between coding time (CT), the moment of the utterance, and receiving time (RT), the moment of its reception. Coding time is usually located around the speaker, whereas receiving time is located around the addressee (see Levinson, 1983; Fillmore, 1997; Huang, 2007). Usually, because the majority of conversation is face-to-face in nature, CT and RT are considered to be identical. However, there are situations where the CT and RT are different and this can lead to a situation where the utterance becomes *unanchored* (cf. Rommetveit, 1968). For example, Fillmore (1997: 60) suggests a 'worst

case scenario' for an unanchored sentence: finding a message in a bottle which says *Meet me here at noon tomorrow with a stick about this big*. Time deixis is expressed using simple adverbs of time such as *now, then, today, tomorrow, yesterday*, complex adverbs of time such as *this month, next year* or *last week* and the tense system. Similarly to place deixis, time deixis also distinguishes between a *distal* time *then* (time 'not now') and, the focus of this section, a proximal time *now* (time 'at the present moment').

Biber *et al.* (1999: 795-801) identify *now* as one of the most common circumstance adverbs in both British and American conversational English, relative to other registers.⁵ They attribute the frequent use of *now* to its deictic function that 'reflects its concern with current matters' (*ibid*: 799). Schiffrin (1987: 245) maintains that *now* 'provides a temporal index in discourse time', where discourse time refers to 'the temporal relationship between utterances in a discourse, i.e. the order in which a speaker presents utterances in a discourse' (*ibid*: 229). In extract (6.10), the father is discussing the weather with his young son. *Now* (in bold) is used with temporal meaning by the father to indicate the state of the weather at the present moment:

(6.10 TC)

<Father> Yeah well I've to go up to the school after and take them cos mammy have to go way d'you want to come w'daddy?

<Son> Yeah I can go.

<Father> Yeah you go to school w= with <\$G?> thank God it's a lovely day outside it's a lovely day **now** thank God and the blessed Mary.

[Child making noise in the background]

<Father> Yeah spring is in the air son.

<Son> It's in the air.

<Father> Yip might get a few weeks of the good weather.

⁵ 'Circumstance adverbials add information about the action or state described in the clause, answering questions such as 'How, When, Where, How much, To what extent?' and 'Why?'' (Biber *et al.*, 1999: 763).

In extract (6.10), *now* can be seen to reflect the father's concern with current matters. Given the changeable nature of Irish weather, it may be that *now* is frequently used in Irish English to refer to the present state of the weather. In addition to this temporal deictic function, *now* also has a large range of textual and affective functions (see Schiffrin, 1987; Hirschberg and Litman, 1993; Biber *et al.*, 1999; Aijmer, 2002; Carter and McCarthy, 2006). Schiffrin (1987: 228) notes that the deictic meaning of *now* influences its use on these different 'discourse planes'.

In terms of its textual functions, *now* often functions as a discourse marker in conversation. According to Carter and McCarthy (2006: 111-112), '*now* is used to indicate that a new idea is being introduced, to mark a topic shift or to mark a boundary between stages of a conversation.' Biber *et al.* (1999: 1088) observe that '*now* as an utterance launcher seems to have the function of clearing 'a bit of conversational space' ahead. It often marks the return to a related subject, and at the same time a new departure.' An example of the use of *now* (in bold) to mark a return to a previous topic is evident in extract (6.11). The family are in the process of erecting the Christmas tree but the conversation has turned to a discussion concerning their dog:

(6.11 SC)

<Son 1> Want to go out the back?

<Daughter> Come on so.

[Son 1 screams]

<Daughter> Come on.

<Son 2> I tried I tried to let her out earlier on and she wouldn't.

<Mother> Oh did you?

<Son 1> Come on Goldie.

<Father> <\$H> She's getting all jealous now <\\$H>.

<Son 1> <\$H> She's feeling left out <\\$H> <\$G?>. **Now** I'd better <\$G2> that has a big enough string to go around it <\$G?>. Here Connor.

<Son 2> Hmm.

<Son 1> Put that on on in the bottom

In extract (6.11), *now* is used by son 1 in an utterance initial position to signal a return to the previous topic, putting the decorations on the Christmas tree. Interestingly, Aijmer (2002: 77) notes in relation to this discursual function that ‘the speaker who controls the conversation may want to steer it back to an earlier point in the conversation to have a new look at it.’ Son 1, the youngest of the siblings, appears to have control of the conversational situation indicated by, in this instance, his use of an imperative addressed to his older brother *Put that on on in the bottom*. The youngest sibling is frequently attributed with the lowest amounts of conversational power in family discourse (see, for example, Sections 2.2.2, 2.2.3.2 and 7.3.3). In extract (6.11), it may be that the youngest sibling has recognised that *now* is used by speakers with conversational power within this family’s pragmatic system and is using it in order to acquire a degree of control that would not be otherwise afforded to him.

The temporal deictic meaning of *now* also influences its affective and evaluative functions. Schiffrin (1987: 229) maintains that ‘ego-centred, proximal elements are used to convey a positive personal orientation toward a particular state of affairs.’ Aijmer (2002: 87) contends that ‘talk can, for instance, be interpreted as serious, playful, ironic thus transforming our experience of the world. Hearers interpret the switch from one type of talk to another with the help of discourse particles.’ She demonstrates how, for example, *now* can be used to facilitate an emphatic reaction or objection, as an affect intensifier or to introduce a subjective opinion or evaluation. In relation to marking emphasis, according to Carter and McCarthy (2006: 112), ‘it [*now*] frequently occurs at the beginning or end of an imperative clause.’ This use of *now* as an emphasiser (marked in bold) can be seen in extract (6.12), where the settled family are finishing the decoration of the Christmas tree:

(6.12 SC)

- <Son 1> What do you want Jimmy?
- <Son 2> Those silver present boxes.
- <Daughter> Stop **now** mam said.
- <Father> Give us a loan of a set of hooks Jimmy <\\$O> will you <\$O>?
- <Son 1> <\$O> Don't put them <\\$O> all in the same place **now**.
- <Son 2> No I'm not.

Extract (6.12) contains two examples of *now* as an emphasiser in conjunction with an imperative – *Stop now* and *Don't put them all in the same place now*. Interestingly, both of these 'imperative + emphasiser *now*' structures are used by older siblings towards one of their younger counterparts. The father also uses an imperative *Give us a loan of a set of hooks Jimmy*, however, in contrast to his children, does employ an emphasiser. This use of *now*, as evidenced here, may again be in recognition of conversational power in this family. The daughter and son 1, perhaps cognisant of their relative lack of status in the family power structure, especially in issuing imperatives, use *now* to add 'weight' to their directives. This use of *now* (marked in bold in extract 6.13) by a sibling in issuing a directive is also present in the TravCorp. In extract (6.13), the younger siblings have been pestering their older brother. The older brother (<Son> in the extract) is asking to be left in peace:

(6.13 TC)

- <Son> Go way **now** before I hit you. Go way and go out why don't ye go out lads you're <\$G>. I'll go as well. I'll go as well.

In this extract, the son tells his younger siblings to *Go way*. He emphasises the imperative with *now* and further reinforces it with *...before I hit you*.

Schiffirin (1987: 245) suggests that '*now* is used to highlight interpretive glosses for one's own talk which a speaker him/herself favours.' Aijmer (2002: 90) describes this use of *now* as 'a push marker accompanying a frame-shift to evaluation.' She maintains that *now* as a marker of affective or evaluative meaning co-occurs with other markers of

affective meaning in the immediate context (she cites *now* co-occurring with adjectives such as *dreadful*, *gorgeous* or *lazy*). Extract (6.14) highlights the use of *now* to take an ‘affective stance’ (Aijmer, 2002: 90). The mother and son 1 are in the process of cleaning the couch in the living room with a steam cleaner. *Now* (in bold) occurs on two occasions; once in the middle of the mother’s first utterance in her third turn and again at the end of her final turn:

(6.14 SC)

- <Mother> Don’t scare her with the steam.
- <Son 1> I’m not scaring her.
- <Mother> Cos she’s no <\$G?>.
- [Pause]
- <Son 2> Don’t be stupid now.
- <Mother> <\$=> It’s not <\\$=> it’s not easy **now** Jimmy. It’s hard work. It’s all right you can’t avoid that <\$G?>.
- <Son 1> Goldie you’re goin to hurt yourself. <\$O> Come on come on <\\$O> you’re going to hurt yourself.
- <Mother> <\$O> It’s hard work **now** <\\$O>.
- <Son 2> I wipe it off with this then do I mam?

Here the mother uses *...it’s not easy now Jimmy* to signal her switch to an evaluative stance. The mother has previously issued a directive in relation to son 1’s behaviour *Don’t scare her with the steam*, where *her* refers to the dog. *Now* is used to mark a shift in orientation to the mother’s perception of the job in hand. Son 1 is in the process of cleaning the couch and the mother, while observing his work, uses the evaluative *It’s hard work now*. This might be interpreted as a negative comment on the quality of the work being done signalled by an evaluative *now*.

Though it should be acknowledged that *now*, in common with other multi-functional markers, can, on occasion, be polysemous, in order to distinguish between the different temporal, discoursal and affective/evaluative functions of *now*, a number of criteria can

be applied. Schiffrin (1987: 230) notes that the use of *now* is influenced by the discourse context. Therefore, a number of features of this context can be examined when determining the function of *now*. Firstly, the position of *now* in the utterance is an indicator of function. Discourse particle *now*, what Hirschberg and Litman (1993) refer to as ‘D-use’, usually occurs in initial position in an utterance (see also Schiffrin, 1987; Aijmer, 2002). D-use also collocates freely with present and past tenses and other particles such as *well*, *then*, or *look* and often constitutes a prosodic phrase in its own right. In contrast, the use of *now* as a temporal adverb, what Hirschberg and Litman (1993) refer to as sentential *now* or ‘S-use’, occurs most often in non-initial position, usually collocates with present tense and rarely constitutes a prosodic phrase by itself. However, as will be examined in the analysis that follows, *now* in Irish English appears to flout some of these previous findings.

The fact that *now* is such a multi-functional particle means that it should come as no surprise that it features prominently on spoken word frequency lists. Table 6.4 demonstrates the position of *now* on six corpus frequency lists and its corresponding frequency per million words in those corpora:

Table 6.4: Position and frequency of *now* per million words across six corpora

Corpus	Position	Frequency per million words
CANCODE ⁶	86	2202
BNC ⁷	63	2864
ICE-Ireland ⁸	40	3907
LCIE	30	4860
SettCorp	19	12300
TravCorp	8	15100

⁶ Frequency count based on a one million word sample of CANCODE.

⁷ Frequency count based on the ten million word spoken component of the BNC. Frequency count taken from the companion website to Leech *et al.* (2001) at: http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/bncfreq/lists/2_2_spokenvwritten.txt [accessed 17-03-10].

⁸ Frequency count based on the spoken, Republic of Ireland component of ICE-Ireland (315,791 words).

Table 6.4 suggests a number of interesting features of *now*, especially in relation to informal, spoken Irish English. The first observation that can be made is from an inter-varietal pragmatic perspective. The frequency counts demonstrate that *now* is more frequent in spoken Irish English than in spoken British English. For example, it is 1.7 times more frequent in LCIE than in the spoken component of the BNC. On one level, this can be explained by the nature of the different corpus designs of LCIE and the BNC. As already discussed, LCIE is a one million word corpus of Southern Irish English recorded in predominantly informal settings. In contrast, the spoken component of the BNC consists of informal, unscripted conversation complemented by texts collected on context-governed criterion. These context-governed texts relate to more formal speech contexts such as those encountered in educational or business settings (see Aston and Burnard, 1998, for a full description of the design of the BNC). Aijmer (2002: 69) maintains that ‘the text types where we find the largest number of examples of [discourse particle] *now* are more formal than ordinary conversation and contain more structure.’ In the London Lund Corpus she found that *now* was frequent in debates, interviews, public lectures, demonstrations and commentaries. Similarly, Defour (2008: 63) contends that ‘*now* is more likely [than *well*] to occur in formal contexts.’ This research appears to suggest that *now* should be more frequent in the BNC than in LCIE due to the presence of more formal speech contexts in the spoken component of the BNC. In addition, ICE-Ireland, although it contains face-to-face conversation, is also comprised of the more formal broadcast discussions, legal examinations and parliamentary debates, yet Table 6.4 shows that *now* is more frequent in LCIE than in either the BNC or ICE-Ireland. Moreover, *now* is 2.2 times more frequent in LCIE than in CANCODE, a corpus that LCIE was designed to parallel. Therefore, there appears to be a quantifiable case for the classification of *now* as a particularly emblematic feature of spoken, informal Irish English.

The second observation that can be made is from an intra-varietal pragmatic perspective. Table 6.4 indicates that *now* seems to be frequent in the informal (in the extreme), intimate context-type in Irish English. *Now* is 2.5 times more frequent per

million words in SettCorp and 3 times more frequent in TravCorp than in LCIE in general. This observation is supported when the occurrences of *now* are divided into the context-types they occupy in LCIE (see Chapter 4 for a full description of these context-types) in Figure 6.6:

Figure 6.6: Breakdown of *now* by context-type in LCIE, normalised per million words (Vaughan and Clancy, 2010)

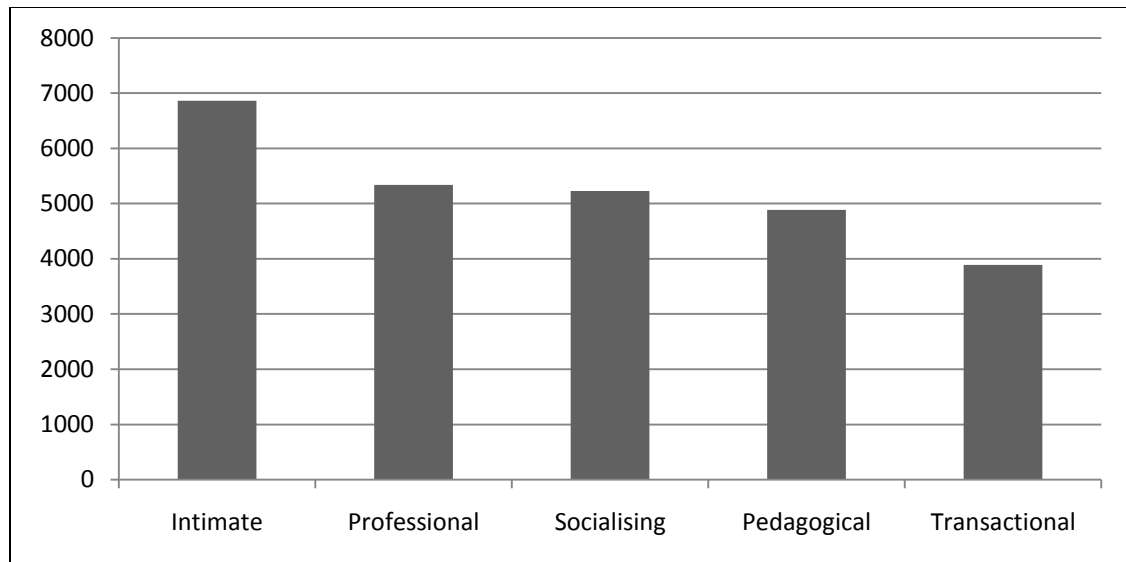


Figure 6.6 confirms that *now* is indeed most frequent in the intimate context-type in LCIE with 6860 occurrences per million words followed by professional (5339 occurrences), socialising (5229) and pedagogical (4885). This also illustrates that *now* is more frequent in informal than formal context-types in LCIE. This, it is hypothesised here, is due in part to the on-going pragmaticalisation of *now* in Irish English, where, in addition to its temporal, discourse and affective functions, *now* also has an additional pragmatic function in Irish English (Vaughan and Clancy, 2010).

The discussion of the functions of *now* in this section has highlighted a number of issues in relation to its pragmatic variation. Its primary function as a discourse marker is to introduce a new topic or sub-topic in conversation and Aijmer (2002) connects this use of *now* with speakers that control the conversation. Previous studies of family discourse have shown that the control of discourse topic reflects power structures within the

family with the parents to the fore (see Section 2.2.2). In addition, *now* can be used to signal the speaker’s evaluative or affective stance, a use which Schiffrin (1987: 245) has labelled ‘ego-centred’. It is argued here that expressing a subjective evaluation is an inherently face-threatening activity, especially if the opinion differs from that of the hearer(s). Interestingly, Aijmer (2002: 91-94) frequently links the affective use of *now* with impatience and disagreement. Moreover, notable in extract (6.14), and extracts (6.12) and (6.13), is that in both SettCorp and TravCorp *now* occurs in utterance medial or final position. This is in contrast to the majority of the examples in previous research such as Schiffrin (1987) and Aijmer (2002). Although they acknowledge that *now* can occupy a medial and final position, in their examples it occurs in a predominantly initial position. Table 6.5 illustrates the breakdown of *now* by utterance position in SettCorp and TravCorp:

Table 6.5: Utterance position of *now* in SettCorp and TravCorp

	Initial position	Medial position	Final position⁹
SettCorp	22 (22.5%)	23 (23.5%)	52 (54%)
TravCorp	8 (26%)	14 (30%)	26 (54%)

Table 6.5 demonstrates that *now* in SettCorp and TravCorp occurs in a predominantly final position. In both corpora, 54% of occurrences are final, followed by medial and initial position, in marked contrast to the published research. This positioning of *now* in SettCorp and TravCorp may reflect an additional, pragmatic use in the family CofP. It is hypothesised here that in the family CofP, and, perhaps by extension in Irish English more generally, *now* has moved from initial position because of the connection between this position and issues of power, control and threat to face (see also Section 7.4). Instead, *now* occupies a position within an utterance that minimises the impact it might

⁹ Includes counts for *now* in a clause final position, for example, when immediately followed by *and*, *but* or *because*. Also includes counts for *now* when followed by a vocative at the end of an utterance, for example, *now* in the utterance *Who’s funeral is on now mammy?* (TravCorp) is classified as final position *now*.

have on conversational participants. Therefore, through this positional shift, *now* has acquired an additional pragmatic layer. The pragmaticalisation process that it has undergone is evident in extract (6.15). In this extract, the family are sitting around the dinner table discussing Paul, a friend of son 1 (*now* is in bold in the extract):

(6.15 SC)

- <Mother> Any word from Paul?
- <Son 1> No no I tried to ring him the other day and he'd his mobile switched off.
- <Mother> [laughs]. And when is he starting work?
- <Son 1> He was starting last Wednesday or Thursday.
- <Mother> Oh so straight away.
- <Son 1> Yeah. I'd say **now** Paul was probably asleep cos he was wrecked.
- [Laughter]
- <Father> He's not used to working.
- <Son 2> What's he working as Connor?
- <Father> When is he making the film?
- <Mother> In [name of company].
- <Son 1> We're supposed to be makin the film this weekend shur. I wouldn't say that's goin to happen either **now**.

As can be seen, on the two occasions *now* occurs in extract (6.15), neither are in utterance initial position. In addition, *now* co-occurs with the hedges *I'd say* and *I wouldn't say*. As Chapter 8 demonstrates, hedges are used as a marker of politeness to mitigate the illocutionary force of an utterance. In this extract, Connor (<Son 1>) is speculating on why Paul did not answer his phone *I'd say now Paul was probably asleep cos he was wrecked* and whether or not they will be making a film at the weekend *I wouldn't say that's going to happen either now*. Son 1 cannot be certain that either of these statements is true and, therefore, he hedges to indicate his uncertainty. The presence of *now* serves to further soften his utterances. Similarly, it could be argued that because of the position of *now* in the two occurrences in extract (6.12) (p. 160), the imperatives, in addition to being emphasised, are simultaneously softened by *now*. This

pragmatic use of *now* in both families may also contribute towards the relative lack of hedging in this context (see Chapter 8).

By way of proposing another contributing factor to the higher frequency of *now* in Irish English, as opposed to British English, a return to the primary focus of this chapter, reference, is necessary. From the occurrences of *now* in both TravCorp and SettCorp, evidence of a deictic function that is additional to its temporal function becomes apparent – in the family *now* can be used as a *deictic presentative*. Deictic presentatives are, according to Grenoble and Riley (1996: 820), ‘canonical deictics in the sense that they are used to point to some object in the extralinguistic (real world) context and introduce it into the discourse.’ They cite the French *voici/voilà* and the Russian *vot/von* as examples of deictics which function only gesturally (cf. Fillmore, 1975: 41). They maintain that these presentatives mark changes in the topical structure of discourse and claim that there is a ‘metaphorical mapping of their primary indexical function to a secondary function in the metalinguistic organisation of a discourse’ (p. 837). Examples of this deictic presentative function of *now* are illustrated in extracts (6.16) and (6.17). In extract (6.16), the family are decorating the Christmas tree:

(6.16 SC)

- <Mother> **Now**. Now look at him he’s nice and nestled there and everything.
- <Daughter> [Laughs]. We had spawn of the seventies there a minute ago. Now we have spawn of the eighties. I mean like.
- <Son> He is spawn of the eighties.

The mother has just put a decoration on the tree, and her stand alone use of *now* (in bold) carries the characteristics of a deictic presentative in that it could reasonably be interpreted as a metacomment on the action just completed, and may well have been accompanied by a gesture. This use of *now* is also evident in TravCorp. In extract (6.17) below, the father uses *now* in order to indicate that he has achieved his aim of ‘settling’ the children:

(6.17 TC)

- <Father> Look at the television sit down Patrick Martin Gerard sit down there good boys can you see all of the television son?
- <Son 1> Yeah.
- <Father> That's the good boy yeah. **Now**. Don't go out in the rain sure ye won't.
- <Son> I can't.

Again, this distinctive use of *now* suggests a metacomment on what the father has just completed. The corpora employed in this study cannot provide reliable quantitative evidence of this function of *now* despite the fact that its appearance in the data, and the qualitative evidence of its function provided, suggest that it is ripe for further research using larger corpora of Irish English.

6.3 Conclusion

Similarly to Chapter 5, this chapter has again focussed on high frequency items characteristic of the reference systems of both families. The analysis of the demonstratives *this* and *that* found that *that* is more frequent than *this* in both TravCorp and SettCorp which appears to contradict the traditional notion of an egocentric deictic centre. This is, in part, attributed to contextual factors particular to the home/family environment that, in a sense, render most referents as known to the family members. The analysis of the referential functions of *this* and *that* yielded similarities and differences between the two families reference systems. *This* is used with a primarily exophoric reference in both TravCorp and SettCorp but is more frequent in TravCorp than in SettCorp. The Traveller family also demonstrated a preference for the exophoric function of *that* in contrast to the settled one who principally employ *that* anaphorically. Insights provided by both variational pragmatics and the community of practice offered and explanation for these variations. The macro-social factor *age* was again shown to exert a notable influence on the pragmatic systems of both families, as is the micro-social factor of *social roles*. The higher membership of the Traveller family CofP in contrast to the settled family CofP can also be seen to have an impact on reference usage.

The chapter also examined the function of *now* in TravCorp and SettCorp. An inter-varietal pragmatic analysis demonstrated that it is more frequent in spoken Irish English than British English. In addition, an intra-varietal analysis showed that *now* is more frequent in informal context-types such as family discourse. The possibility that *now* is more frequent in informal settings due to the influence of micro-social factors such as *power* was posited and the importance of the understanding of the hierarchical nature of participant relationships to the understanding of family discourse in general was again revisited. It was also proposed that *now* serves an additional pragmatic function in family discourse, that of a deictic presentative. Moreover, it was hypothesised that *now* performs a mitigating function in both SettCorp and TravCorp and the next stage of the analysis focuses on another pragmatic element, the use of vocatives, that family members can employ to downtone or soften their utterances.

Chapter 7

Facilitating community maintenance I:

The use of vocatives

7.0 Introduction

Chapters 5 and 6 explored items such as *I* and *you* that regularly appear at the top of spoken corpora frequency lists, regardless of the context-type. If the top 25 words of TravCorp and SettCorp are again scrutinised in Table 7.1, only one term of address with the potential to function as a vocative, *daddy* (shaded), appears on either list:

Table 7.1: Frequency list of top 25 words in TravCorp and SettCorp

	TravCorp	SettCorp
1	you	the
2	the	you
3	go	it
4	it	I
5	to	to
6	on	a
7	a	and
8	now	of
9	out	that
10	I	in
11	no	is
12	and	yeah
13	there	no
14	get	it's
15	me	on
16	in	what
17	that	do
18	here	we
19	I'm	now
20	daddy	was
21	goin	have
22	way	there
23	what	like
24	yeah	all
25	look	not

However, a manual examination of SettCorp and TravCorp reveals the presence of a notable number of vocatives in the discourse of these families. Indeed, if the vocatives examined in the present study, *endearments*, *kin titles*, *familiarisers* and *first names* (both familiarised and full) (see Section 7.1), are considered as a single item and included in the corpus frequency lists for SettCorp and TravCorp, as in Table 7.2, the results are striking:

Table 7.2: Top 10 most frequent words including vocatives grouped as a single item

Number	<u>SettCorp</u>		<u>TravCorp</u>	
	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
1	<i>the</i>	494	Vocative	149
2	<i>you</i>	346	<i>you</i>	121
3	<i>it</i>	339	<i>the</i>	120
4	<i>I</i>	252	<i>go</i>	79
5	<i>to</i>	233	<i>it</i>	66
6	<i>a</i>	227	<i>to</i>	64
7	<i>and</i>	194	<i>on</i>	52
8	<i>of</i>	168	<i>a</i>	50
9	<i>that</i>	162	<i>now</i>	48
10	Vocative	161	<i>out</i>	46

As Table 7.2 illustrates, vocatives grouped as a single item occupy a position in the top ten most frequent words in the frequency lists of both corpora. Although Biber *et al.* (1999: 1112-1113) acknowledge that vocatives are frequent in multi-party discourse, they claim that:

Vocatives are not used among close associates where neither their addressee-identifying role nor their relationship-maintenance role is felt to be necessary – often, presumably, because the participants in the conversation are totally sure of their mutual relationship.

However, Table 7.2 demonstrates that vocatives comprise the most frequent item in TravCorp and the 10th most frequent in SettCorp. Therefore, the frequency counts suggest that vocatives play a defining role in the families' pragmatic systems. It is obvious that it is the family where we are first given our name and where we first encounter other people's use of it. The previous research suggests that vocatives serve a much greater purpose than simply speaker identification and this is confirmed in the analysis that follows in this chapter.

The analysis of the pragmatic variation that occurs in vocative use between TravCorp and SettCorp will be approached from three perspectives; form, function and position. It will be shown, for example, that vocative form is influenced by the macro-social factors *ethnicity* and *social class* and the micro-social *social roles*. It will be argued that settled children may be better prepared than their Traveller counterparts for interaction in the world outside the family due to vocative forms favoured by settled parents. In addition, it will be demonstrated that there is a marked similarity in vocative function between the two families due to the

hierarchical, asymmetrical speaker relationships that characterise a family community of practice (CofP). As with personal pronouns, the fact that there are more members of the Traveller family CofP than the settled one will be shown to impact on vocative use. It is also posited that vocatives play a role in the overall maintenance of the family community of practice. For example, the most common functional vocative category is that of *mitigation*. This category serves to appeal to the positive face of members of the CofP by frequently softening the face threat inherent in imperatives. In terms of position, it will be illustrated that this mitigation primarily occurs in final position in an utterance.

7.1 Previous research

Hook (1984) acknowledges that the creation or avoidance of solidarity and the retention or loss of power is achieved in many Indo-European languages through the appropriate use of a second person pronoun. According to Brown and Gilman (1960), many European languages have a ‘T’ pronoun (after the French *tu*) and a ‘V’ pronoun (after *vous*) and the speaker chooses appropriately based on the power dimension between them and the addressee. However, Murphy (1988) argues that, in English, the use of the second person pronoun *you* is considered ‘rude’ as a vocative. Since *you* is apparently no longer an option in modern Standard English, Hook (1984: 183) suggests that ‘the semantics of solidarity and power now lie elsewhere than in the realm of pronoun usage’, which could reasonably be construed to be the vocative system. Leech’s (1999: 107) claim that vocatives are ‘a surprisingly neglected aspect of English grammar’ has been instrumental in bringing the study of vocatives to the forefront of linguistic debate. Nonetheless, Jaworski and Galasiński (2000: 35) argue that forms of address have been ‘at the centre of socially based language study’ since the early 1960s. One reason for this apparent contradiction may be the number of research contexts in which the study of vocatives has taken place. Examples of these include anthropology (Philipsen and Huspek, 1985), sociolinguistics (Zwicky, 1974; Zeitlyn, 1993), first language acquisition (Emihovich, 1981; Conti-Ramsden, 1989), pragmatics (Wood and Kroger, 1991), cross cultural pragmatics (Hwang, 1991; Bargiela *et al.*, 2002) and corpus linguistics (Leech, 1999; McCarthy and O’Keeffe, 2003).

Another reason for disagreement on whether vocatives have received adequate study in the field of linguistics may have arisen due to the variety of metalanguage used in relation to the vocative system: expressions such as *terms of address/address terms* (Ervin-Tripp, 1971; Jefferson, 1973; Hwang, 1991), *forms of address* (Brown and Gilman, 1960; Brown and Ford, 1961; Wood and Kroger, 1991), *person referring expressions* (Murphy, 1988; Wilson and Zeitlyn, 1995) and *social deictic terms* (Zeitlyn, 1993) have in the past been used as blanket terms to include the vocative system. Leech (1999: 107) maintains that *vocatives, terms of address* and *forms of address* are ‘closely related topics which are easily confused’. He argues that a term of address ‘is a device used to refer to the addressee(s) of an utterance’ whereas a vocative is a particular kind of address term: ‘a nominal constituent loosely integrated with the rest of the utterance.’ Carter and McCarthy (2006: 228) point out that ‘in English, the relative formality of terms of address is managed by means of vocatives’, while Biber *et al.* (1999: 1110) claim that vocatives ‘maintain and reinforce an existing relationship’. Leech (1999) subdivides vocatives into eight semantic categories: endearments (*honey, baby, love, etc.*), family terms (referred to in the present study as kin titles and containing terms such as *Mammy, Daddy, etc.*), familiarisers (*mate, man, folks, etc.*), first names familiarised (*Brad, Jen, etc.*), full first names (*Bradley, Jennifer, etc.*), title and surname (*Mr. Clancy, Dr. O’Keeffe, Professor McCarthy, etc.*), honorifics (*sir, ma’am, etc.*) and a group called ‘other’ which includes nicknames in addition to some complex noun phrases:

Those of you who want to bring your pets along, please sit in the back of the space ship...
(Leech 1999: 111)

The vocative items examined in the present study are, obviously, those that indicate a high degree of familiarity, namely endearments, kin titles, familiarisers and first names (both familiarised and full).

Vocatives are essential to the study to pragmatic variation in the present study because the type of vocative a speaker chooses to use usually includes some social information. According to Eggins and Slade (2001), vocatives are a resource that can be called upon to construct, maintain and negotiate degrees of affective involvement. They maintain that ‘vocatives are a particularly important resource to examine in

multiparty conversations, since they offer speakers a way of attempting to control, manipulate, divide or align the other speakers' (p. 144). Ervin-Tripp (1971) contends that terms of address have three functions: to indicate the formality or informality of the context, to establish any hierarchical relationships between participants and to express social identity. Wood and Kroger (1991) echo these claims stating that that forms of address have 'special' pragmatic functions. Researchers such as Zwicky (1974) and Murphy (1988) have maintained that vocatives are almost never neutral. According to Zwicky (1974: 796), 'they [vocatives] express attitude, politeness, formality, status, intimacy or a role relationship, and most of them mark the speaker...there is virtually no affectively neutral vocative.' Indeed Zwicky claims that the sociolinguistic markedness of vocatives is one of their defining features. Jaworski and Galasiński (2000: 35) suggest that:

Terms of address do not only reflect the relative positions of the interactants vis-à-vis one another and in society as a whole. The speaker's choice of a particular form of address locates the addressee in social space and defines, or constructs, the social actors' mutual relationship.

In addition, vocatives also have methodological advantages for any linguistic study. According to Wood and Kroger (1991) 'forms of address can be clearly and unambiguously identified, are easily recollected by respondents and avoid some of the other problems involved in obtaining other forms of discourse' (p. 145).

The social awareness shown by a speaker's choice of vocative is not limited to the adult, 'grown-up' world. Emihovich (1981), in a study of pre-school children's use of vocatives (called forms of address in the study), found that through their choice of form of address, children demonstrated an awareness of both social roles and the nuances of conversational power. Both Durkin *et al.* (1982) and Conti-Ramsden (1989) analysed motherese and discovered that although mothers frequently use a syntactically and pragmatically 'deviant' third person proper noun to refer to themselves, as in *Mummy's very cross with you* (cf. Chapter 5, p. 126), this deviance is not reproduced by the children. Functionally, Durkin *et al.* (1982) found that mothers used the child's name for attention orienting purposes and also to instruct the child to act. Conti-Ramsden (1989) also notes an instruction to act function but in play situations in relation to the mothers of language-impaired children. In

addition, these mothers used vocatives to request information. On the other hand, mothers of non-language-impaired children mainly used vocatives for approval. The role of the adult in influencing and informing a child's vocative choice will be more fully explored here in Section 7.5.

Wilson and Zeitlyn (1995) use a corpus of family discourse (four of the participants were members of the family, one, a visitor, was on familiar terms) to demonstrate that a range of socio-pragmatic features affect the choice of what they termed Person-Referring Expressions (PREs).¹ Of direct relevance to the present study is the finding that parents use first names to address their children and receive kin terms. They also illustrated how the more socially distant participant, in this case the visitor, is less often addressed by name or pronoun than family members and that the visitor does not address the parents (accorded a higher social status than the visitor in the study) by name at all. In examining vocative function, they noted how vocatives were present in 27.5% of utterances that initiated topic change, whereas 15.8% of utterances that did not initiate topic change contained vocatives.

Cross-cultural studies outline the critical importance of language and culture in determining choice of vocative. In an analysis of Korean and American address terms, Hwang (1991) illustrates how Korean is an Object-Verb language, therefore it uses the family name (*Clancy*) before our given name (*Brian*), whereas English, a Verb-Object language, uses the opposite order. However, Hwang demonstrates that choice is not just syntactically motivated, cultural values are also reflected in our use of address terms. It is claimed that in traditional Korean society, there is a tendency to put the group, family and country before the individual, resulting in the family name appearing before the individual's given name. However, in American society, where the individual is perhaps more important, the given name appears first. The prevalence of, and apparent preference for, the use of first names in American society was noted by Hook (1984) who observes that 'in America the solidarity semantic of first name calling seems to be growing' (p.186). Furthermore, Leech (1999) demonstrates that the use of vocatives is approximately 25% more frequent in American English than in British English. Bargiela *et al.* (2002: paragraph 9) label

¹ Wilson and Zeitlyn (1995) class as vocatives all PREs that refer to the addressee including names, pronouns, titles and kin terms.

first name vocatives as ‘involvement strategies’ (Scollon and Scollon, 1995), claiming that:

Most British and American people of a particular age range (i.e. under around 40-50 years of age) in initial encounters insist on first names being used as quickly as possible, whether the interaction is between relative equals or those in a hierarchical relation.

They claim that in cross-cultural encounters, this can signal a disregard for or misunderstanding of other cultures pragmatic interactional rules suggesting that intercultural communication requires considerable thoughtfulness from both addresser and addressee (see also Jaworski, 1992).

Zwicky (1974) suggests that vocatives have at least two functions; *calls* function to summon the addressee’s attention and *addresses* are used to maintain or emphasise the contact between speaker and addressee. In a comparison of British and American English, Leech (1999) assigns vocatives three pragmatic functions: summoning attention, addressee identification and the establishment or maintenance of a social relationship between speaker and addressee(s). Interestingly for this study, he suggests that vocatives do not occur among what he terms ‘close associates’ (p. 117), which include mother-daughter and wife-husband interactions. However, these conversations where no vocatives are used occur in exchanges with only two speakers and not multi-party dialogues. Subsequently, McCarthy and O’Keeffe (2003), also working within the field of corpus linguistics, compared casual conversation among family and friends (from the CANCODE corpus) to a 55,000 word corpus of radio phone-in calls and found that there was a higher overall vocative use in casual conversation. This, they claim, is indicative of symmetric speaker relations and a wider spoken genre range that are present in casual conversation. They developed and expanded Leech’s (1999) functional categories as Table 7.3 demonstrates:

Table 7.3: The functional categories of vocatives²

<u>Category</u>	<u>Definition</u>
<i>Relational</i>	Vocatives whose primary function is to establish and/or maintain social relations rather than transmit information or services. It includes compliments and other positive face boosters; general evaluations; phatic exchanges and ritualistic offers and thanks.
<i>Topic management</i>	Any utterance or set of utterances that launch, expand, shift, change or close a topic. Included here also is what McCarthy and O’Keeffe (p. 162) have termed <i>topic validation</i> , whereby a speaker calls on another conversational participant by name to validate or confirm an assertion.
<i>Badinage</i>	Refers to instances of humour, irony and general banter among participants.
<i>Mitigator</i>	The use of vocatives where there is a potential threat to positive or negative face (Brown and Levinson 1987).
<i>Turn management</i>	The use of a vocative to select the next speaker or to disambiguate possible recipients in multi-party talk.
<i>Summons</i>	This function refers to the use of a vocative to directly summon a conversational participant.

They also noted that the solidarity between family and friends results in a more even functional distribution of vocatives than in radio phone-in. They found that in the CANCODE data, vocatives used in a relational context dominated whereas in the radio-phone-in data, organisational functions such as call³, turn and topic management were to the fore.

In terms of vocative position, in an early corpus study Jefferson (1973) examines the occurrences of address terms in a corpus of closing sequences. Operating in the CA tradition, she highlights the fact that in these closing sequences, address terms can occupy ‘preface’ (initial) position or ‘tag’ (final) position. However, she adds that ‘in situations in which both positions turn out to be used, tag position is used first’ (*ibid.*). She suggests some possible explanations for the preference for final position,

² Taken from McCarthy and O’Keeffe (2003: 160-165).

³ See McCarthy and O’Keeffe (2003: 168-171) for a full definition of the call management vocative function.

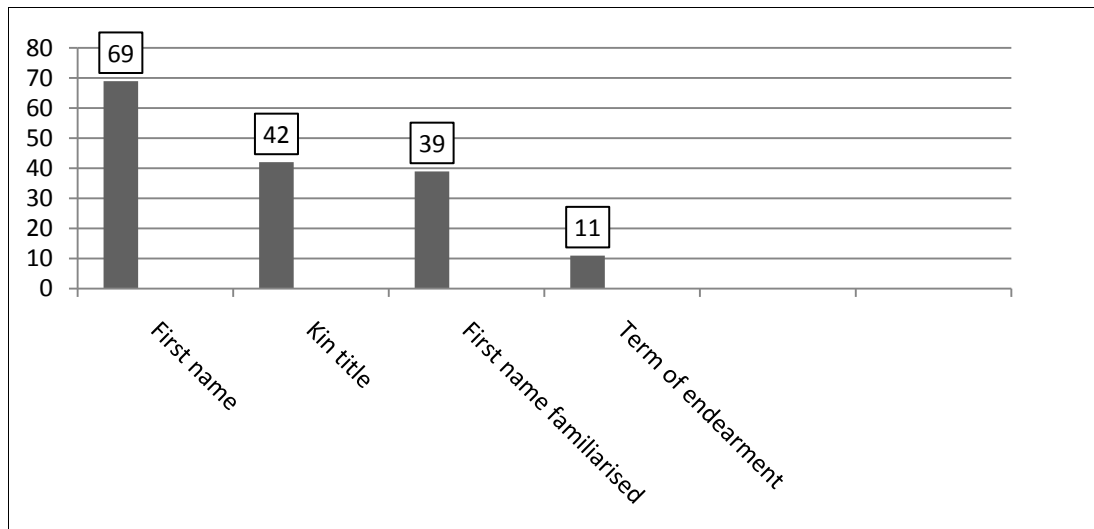
among them the use of address terms to clarify possible ambiguities in utterances and to indicate to the addressee that the speaker has not stopped talking. Leech (1999) identifies four vocative positions which will be echoed in the analysis section here: final, initial, stand-alone and medial positions. He identifies a link between C-unit (or utterance) length and vocative position. He found that final position vocatives were more frequent than initial position and that final position occurs with a shorter length unit than initial position. Exploring the relationship between function and position, he further found that initial position vocatives were associated with attention getting and final position associated with the maintenance and reinforcement of social relationships. McCarthy and O’Keeffe (2003) found that final position vocatives were the most common among family and friends and that these vocatives were primarily associated with relational, topical and face concerns. However, they also illustrated how initial position vocatives were most frequent in radio phone-in data, closely followed by final position. They maintain that this is due to ‘a particular reciprocity pattern in [radio phone-in] openings where the presenter addresses the caller with an initial position vocative and the caller reciprocates with a final position vocative’ (p. 179-180).

7.2 Vocative Form

7.2.1 Vocative form: SettCorp

A manual search of SettCorp yielded a total of 161 vocatives. Figure 7.1 illustrates the form that they take:

Figure 7.1: SettCorp vocatives classified according to form (not normalised)



The most common vocative found in SettCorp is the first name in its full form with 69 occurrences⁴. An example of the use of this vocative form, marked in bold, can be found in extract (7.1):

(7.1 SC)

First name <Father> <\$H> I think that side <\\$H> will hold up like that
Susan. What d'you think?

The first name, used in its full form, is commonly found across different, and often asymmetrical, speech situations such as workplace discourse or teacher-student interaction, and, therefore, does not necessarily convey closeness. Indeed, Palma Fahy (2005) has demonstrated, through an analysis of the Irish soap opera *Fair City*, that in Irish society, the use of first names does not always convey an accurate reflection of closeness or distance. However, the presence of 92 of what could be termed *intimate vocatives*, kin titles (42 occurrences), first name familiarised⁵ (39 occurrences) and terms of endearment (11 occurrences), shows that from a settled family's perspective closeness is most often conveyed through the use of one of these hypocoristic vocatives, as can be seen from the following extracts (7.2) – (7.4):

⁴ This is consistent with the findings of Biber *et al.* (1999: 1111).

⁵ Interestingly, all occurrences of the first name familiarised refer to the youngest sibling in both the SettCorp and TravCorp datasets.

(7.2 SC)

Kin title <Mother> <\$E> laughing <\\$E>. Here **dad** we'll string these out and see are they working.

(7.3 SC)

First name familiarised <Mother> You're scaring the dog **Jimmy**. Will you stop? **Jimmy** you're scaring the dog.

(7.4 SC)

Term of endearment <Mother> Chloe hold that there will you **love**?

7.2.2 Vocative form: TravCorp

In the corpus of Traveller family discourse (TravCorp), 149 vocatives were found and classified as shown in Figure 7.2:

Figure 7.2: TravCorp vocatives classified according to form (not normalised)

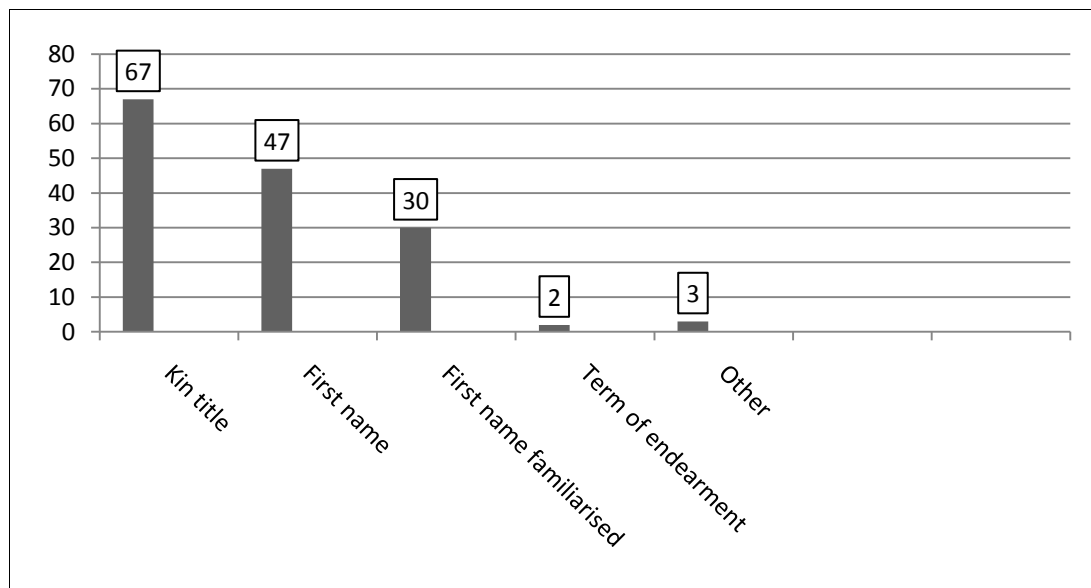


Figure 7.2 demonstrates that first names appear quite frequently in TravCorp, with 47 occurrences:

(7.5 TC)

First name <Father> Good luck **Simon** <\$H> down the carnival <\\$H>.

However, notably, first names are not the most frequent vocative form. Kin titles appear more often (67 occurrences) and, when coupled with first name familiarised and terms of endearment, these intimate vocatives account for two thirds of all vocatives used:

(7.6 TC)

<i>Kin title</i>	<Father>	Hurry up baby son all the boys is finished their breakfast.
------------------	----------	--

(7.7 TC)

<i>First name familiarised</i>	<Father>	Paddy ate the breakfast <\$G3>. Stop that Paddy . I'm gonna throw you out.
--------------------------------	----------	--

(7.8 TC)

<i>Term of endearment</i>	<Son>	See you bowsie .
---------------------------	-------	-------------------------

TravCorp also contains a grouping of vocatives not found in SettCorp and these have been classified under the heading *Other*. An example of this particular vocative form is found in extract (7.9), marked in bold. The father is talking to his sons who are inside the family home. However, *the lads* refers to a group passing outside.

(7.9 TC)

<i>Other</i>	<Father>	Yeah go on so boys go on down to the Ryan's. John's down there. Won't you go down to the Ryan's now? John is near. Run. Good afternoon to ye the lads . Looks like we got a shower of rain.
--------------	----------	--

Traveller family discourse is, at times, punctuated by reference to events occurring outside which reflects the fact that what represents the home social space for a Traveller family is not limited to a physical space defined by a house or apartment. The home extends beyond walls to what is visible on the outside and this space is an integral part of Traveller life.

7.2.3 Comparing vocative form: SettCorp and TravCorp

As already mentioned, SettCorp is approximately 3.5 times larger than TravCorp. Therefore, in order to compare the frequency of occurrence of vocative forms, the figures have been normalised per 10,000 words in Table 7.4:

Table 7.4: Comparison of frequency of occurrence of vocatives in SettCorp and TravCorp

	SettCorp	TravCorp
No. of words	12531	3172
No. of vocatives	161	149
No. of vocatives, normalised per 10,000 words	128	469

When normalised per 10,000 words, TravCorp contains approximately 3.5 times more vocatives than SettCorp – 469 vocatives per 10,000 words compared to almost 130 per 10,000 respectively. In order to more fully explore the distribution of the different vocatives found in SettCorp and TravCorp, the frequency of forms according to their semantic category have been normalised per 10,000 words in Figure 7.3:

Figure 7.3: Comparative distribution of vocatives according to form: SettCorp and TravCorp, normalised per 10,000 words

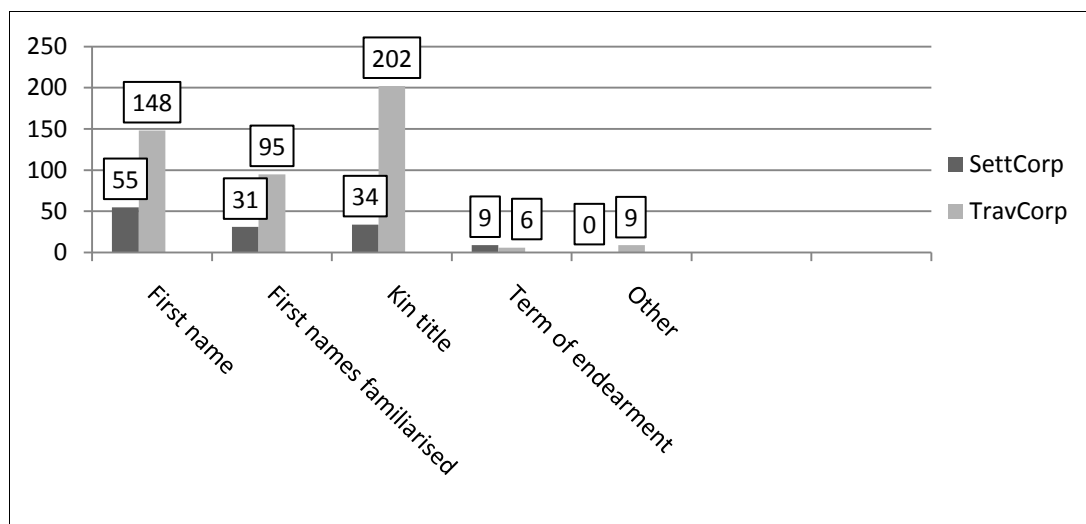


Figure 7.3 clearly demonstrates that, with the exception of terms of endearment, the Traveller family use vocatives considerably more frequently than their settled equivalents. This is most obvious in the use of kin titles – the Traveller family use this vocative form more than five times as frequently as the settled family and this can be seen from the frequency counts in Table 7.5:

Table 7.5: Word frequency counts for kin titles in SettCorp and TravCorp

	SettCorp	TravCorp
Father	18	19
Mother	24	24
Children	0	24 Includes the kin titles <i>son, fella, lad(s), children, baby, boy(s)</i>

In SettCorp the use of kin titles is confined to *mam* and *dad* and at no stage are they used to refer to the children (consistent with Wilson and Zeitlyn, 1995; Biber *et al.*, 1999). However, TravCorp yields a much wider selection including *dad, daddy, mam, mammy, mamma, son, baby son, boy(s)* and *children*. The presence of child-specific kin titles downplays the value of autonomy evident in a full first name and instead places the emphasis on belonging and interdependence. This pragmatic variation between the two families is evidence of the influence of the macro-social factor of *ethnicity*. The data appears to suggest a reciprocal system of kin titles in the Traveller family which clearly indicates the presence of the family at the core of the Traveller value system. This Traveller *kinship system* is constructed around a family and extended family CofP and in this *kinship culture* the importance of the family unit, and your position in it, is reinforced by the use of these kin titles. On the other hand, the full first name is the most common vocative in SettCorp where there are no kin titles used to refer to the children. This shows that the settled community possibly place more value on the child's individuality and, indeed, Blum-Kulka (1997a) has demonstrated a similar pattern in contrasting naming practices in Jewish-American and American-Israeli families.

The use of kin titles also provides an illustration of McDonagh's (2000) argument that, while settled people organise themselves in parishes and districts, Travellers organise themselves in terms of families. In Irish culture, part of the establishment of the identity of a member of the settled community depends heavily on *where* they come from geographically, for example, Limerick or Dublin. In contrast, it could be maintained that the Traveller family surname, for example Ward or Sherlock, plays a more significant part than geographical location in determining a Traveller's identity. However, at this point it should be noted that this study is based on a comparison of one family from each of the Traveller and settled communities and, therefore, more research is necessary in the area in order to fully test the validity of these claims.

This use of vocative forms also points towards differences in *socio-economic status* between the Traveller and settled families. As has already been discussed, the use of the first name in its full form is commonly found across different speech situations. Many of these are asymmetrical in nature, for example therapist-client, employer-employee or teacher-student. The settled parents, in using the first name in its full form when addressing their children are in essence 'preparing' their children for the outside world where they will frequently encounter such speech situations. Therefore, the gap for settled children between presenting themselves in private and in public is not as great as the one that exists for Traveller children. Schatzman and Strauss (1955 cited in Edwards, 1976: 104), in one of the first studies of its kind, examined the difference between middle and working class speakers when moving from private to public speech domains. They demonstrated that in narratives, working class speakers, because of their relatively closed social networks assumed a shared perspective too readily and made little allowance for their listener's ignorance of events, thereby resulting in often disjointed narratives. Coming from a background where most talk was between people that knew each other very well, working class speakers could not adjust to the absence of background knowledge as easily as their middle class equivalents could. Bernstein (1972) describes working class families as 'positional' type families which he claims have closed communication systems and operate in the restricted code. On the other hand, he ascribes more open communication systems to middle class, or 'person oriented' families which, he maintains, have more open communication systems, related to the

elaborated code. Similarly, Travellers, when moving from the relatively closed family CofP to more person-orientated, open CofPs, experience difficulties because, according to Bernstein (1972: 494), ‘changes in codes involve changes in role relationships and procedures of social control.’

7.3 Vocative function

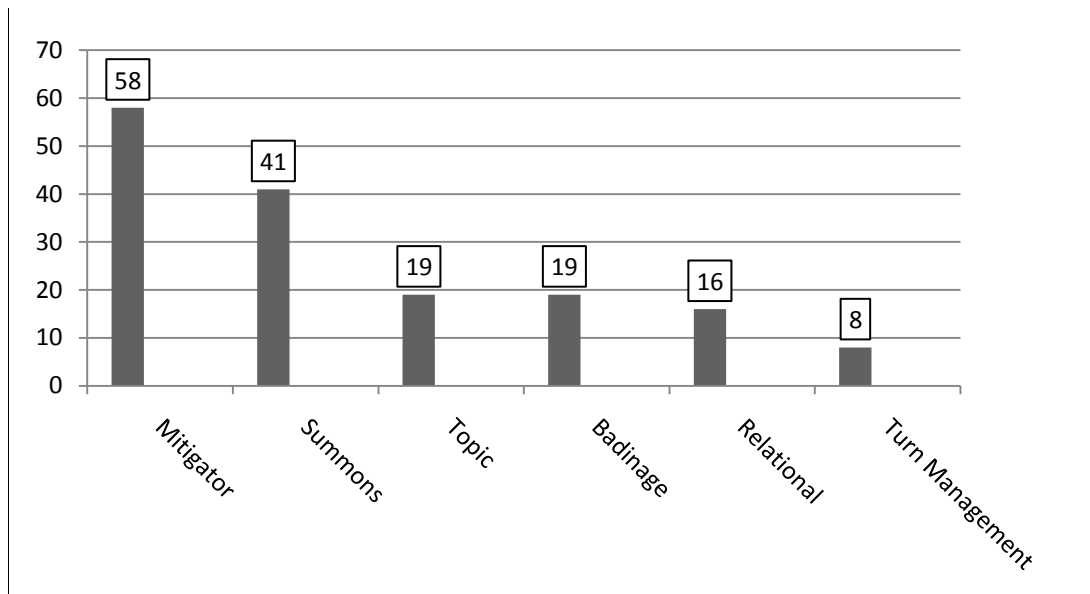
McCarthy and O’Keeffe (2003) examined the use of vocatives across two corpora: the 5-million word Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE) and a 55,000 word corpus based on radio phone-in calls. Significantly for this study, the vocatives sampled from the CANCODE data were drawn exclusively from informal, casual conversations between family, friends and close associates. Building on the work of Leech (1999), McCarthy and O’Keeffe divided vocatives into the following functional categories that will be considered in the present analysis: *relational*, *topic management*, *badinage*, *mitigator*, *turn management* and *summons*. These functional categories are further explained below, illustrated by extracts from SettCorp and TravCorp. All vocatives are shown in context due to the fact that a vocative itself may not perform the speech act in question but ‘may serve as a signal of that utterance’s intent’ (Wilson and Zeitlyn 1995: 85). Therefore, when assigning a vocative a function, it is not simply the vocative itself that determines the category, it is also what is happening in the utterances around it.

7.3.1 Vocative Function: SettCorp

The functions of the vocatives found in SettCorp are shown in Figure 7.4:⁶

⁶ The definitions of the functions of the vocatives in this analysis are taken from McCarthy and O’Keeffe (2003). See Table 7.3, Section 7.1 for an outline of these definitions.

Figure 7.4: Functions of vocatives in SettCorp



Mitigator

Mitigation is the most common vocative function in settled family discourse accounting for 36% of all vocatives used. This function includes the use of vocatives where there is a potential threat to positive or negative face (Brown and Levinson 1987). Extract (7.10) represents a typical context, the family decorating the Christmas tree, within which mitigating vocatives are commonly found (mitigator marked in bold):

(7.10 SC)

<i>Mitigator</i>	<Son>	Oh look the state of the one that mam hate mam hates that because they're+
	<Mother>	It's awful.
	<Daughter>	It's rotten.
	<Mother>	Don't put it up.
	<Daughter>	It's rotten Jimmy .
	<Mother>	It's all dirty and everything.

The son locates one particular decoration and it is reasonable to surmise, judging by speaker reactions, that the mother and daughter dislike it. He is then instructed, in

the form of an unmitigated parental directive, not to put the decoration on the tree. The daughter, in the consecutive utterance, mitigates the directive by giving a reason why and softening using a mitigating vocative in the form of a first name familiarised.

Summons

Interestingly, in settled family discourse, the summons function is the second most common vocative function. This function refers to the use of a vocative to directly summon a conversational participant and account for 25% of instances. In extract (7.11) the settled family are again at the Christmas tree. There are three summons vocatives, all marked in bold:

(7.11 SC)

<i>Summons</i>	<Son 1>	Here mam . Will you throw me up a couple of+
	<Son 2>	Tryin to get the lights up.
	<Daughter>	Look at the dirt of you.
	<Son 1>	+ mam. Connor will you <\$O> throw <\\$O> me up a couple of those boxes that are spare an I'll put them on.
	<Son 2>	<\$O> What <\\$O>?

Son 1 attempts on two occasions to summon the attention of the mother. He is apparently unsuccessful as he instead turns his attention to Connor (<Son 2>) who answers his summons.

Topic management

Topic management refers to any utterance or set of utterances that launch, expand, shift, change or close a topic. Included here also is what McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2003: 162) have termed *topic validation*, whereby a speaker calls on another conversational participant by name to validate or confirm an assertion. In this extract, the family are standing together discussing whether or not the vacuum cleaner still works:

(7.12 SC)

Topic management

<Son 1> Okay. Jean still uses the other one that works.

<Daughter> It <\$O> doesn't work <\\$O>.

<Father> <\$O> Close the door <\\$O>. Close the door there Connor will you?

<Son 2> I will yeah. That's what I was doing.

<Son 1> Jean thinks it does.

<Son 2> Mind your feet.

<Daughter> <talking to a dog> Hi Goldie.

<Mother> What time <\$X> d'you | did you <\\$X> come home at last night **Stephen**?

Father laughs

<Daughter> A godawful hour.

Here the vocative does not function simply to identify the addressee, simple eye contact would have been sufficient in such close quarters, but instead coincides with a shift in topic from the vacuum cleaner to Stephen's (the father) late arrival home the previous night.

Extract (7.13) illustrates the topic validation function of a vocative. Again, the family are in the process of erecting the Christmas tree:

(7.13 SC)

Topic validation

<Father> All right?

<Son> Yip. We might need another bit now but hang on a second and I'll press it down.

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

<Mother> We don't need those til tomorrow.

<Son> Are we not puttin it up til tomorrow **dad** no?

The topic is the lights on the Christmas tree and the mother tells the son that these are not needed until the next day. Curiously, the son then seeks validation of this

from the father. This may indicate a perceived power structure within the family – the father having the power to ‘veto’ other family members’ suggestions.

Badinage

Badinage refers to instances of humour, irony and general banter among participants (McCarthy and O’Keeffe, 2003: 163). However, it appears to be a relatively infrequent category in settled family discourse, accounting for only 12% of vocatives. Badinage vocatives almost always occur in conjunction with laughter and this can be seen in the following example where the family are seated at the dinner table:

(7.14 SC)

Badinage

<**Daughter 1**> **Dad** you used to wear that spiffing tracksuit when he was training the teams.

Mother laughs

<**Father**> What spiffing tracksuit?

<**Daughter 2**> <\$O> The black one <\\$O>.

<**Mother**> <\$O> The black one <\\$O>.

<**Daughter 1**> <\$O> The shiny one <\\$O>.

<**Father**> Oh the shiny one. Oh yeah I still have that.

<**Son 1**> Dada.

<**Daughter 1**> Can I’ve that **Dad**?

<**Mother**> You won’t have it if I find it.

The examples of the badinage function in extract (7.14) provide an example of where a vocative could, on the surface, be dispensed with. The family are, as always, engaged in face-to-face interaction, thereby making non-verbal communication unproblematic. Also, due to the family’s high level of shared knowledge, the tracksuit in question can be unambiguously attributed only to the father. However, the family choose to incorporate the badinage vocatives and by doing so further heighten the sense of intimacy among the participants. This softens the light teasing the father receives. The first vocative, marked in bold, coincides with an instance of laughter, the ironic and marked use of the word *spiffing* and the value based

judgement attached to the wearing of a shiny tracksuit. The second vocative occurs with a joking request for the much maligned item of clothing to which the mother replies that nobody will have the tracksuit once she finds it, the implication being that she will destroy it.

Relational

Identified as the largest functional category by McCarthy and O’Keeffe (2003: 160), the relational function refers to vocatives whose primary function is to establish and/or maintain social relations rather than transmit information or services. It includes compliments and other positive face boosters; general evaluations; phatic exchanges and ritualistic offers and thanks.

(7.15 SC)

Relational <Son 1> Yeah. That’s exactly what I did. Cards anyone?
 <Son 2> No thank you **Jimmy**.

Perhaps surprisingly, in this intimate context of family discourse, relational vocatives account for slightly less than 10% of all vocatives used. However, the fact that the discourse takes place in this intimate context, coupled with fixed and pre-established speaker relationships and the ‘politeness licence’ (Blum-Kulka, 1997a; Clancy, 2005) granted to families, serves to render the relational function almost redundant and this will be further explored in Section 7.3.3.

Turn management

In contrast to the functional category topic management, turn management refers to the use of a vocative to select the next speaker or to disambiguate possible recipients in multi-party talk. On the surface, this vocative function seems to serve a rather prosaic role in getting business done in the area of turn organisation, however, it can encode indices of power in that the speaker, in effect, decides who takes the next turn, and also in relation to the recipient in the choice of form of the term of address used (McCarthy and O’Keeffe, 2003) by the speaker. At the beginning of extract

(7.16), the father and daughter are engaged in a discussion about a recipe that they have seen on the television previously:

(7.16 SC)

Turn management <**Father**> You'll get it in there's the Italian cookbook.

<**Daughter**> +no it won't be the same. It was lovely what he made. It had cream it had wine it was beautiful.

<**Father**> It's the same. You'll get the same thing hun.

<**Daughter**> You won't dad.

<**Son 1**> Dad?

<**Son 2**> You could have a look like.

<**Father**> D'you know the book you got in the Times yesterday? <{\$=>
There was a crab coconut <{\\$=> there was a crab and
coconut milk soup. Did you know that **Connor**?

<**Son 2**> What?

<**Father**> There was a crab meat and coconut soup.

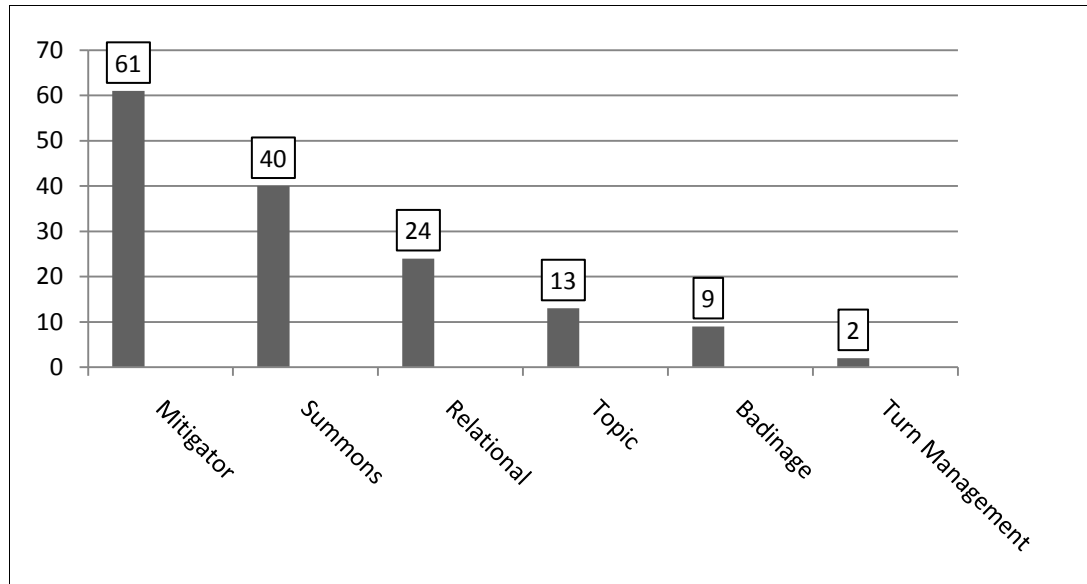
<**Son 2**> Oh.

Here, the turn management vocative, marked in bold, is used by the father mid-way through the conversation to select Connor (the son). The vocative then shifts the turn alignment towards Connor. The vocative has not been classed *topic management* because no new conversational topic develops afterwards.

7.3.2 Vocative function: TravCorp

The vocatives from TravCorp were classified functionally as shown in Figure 7.5:

Figure 7.5: Functions of vocatives in TravCorp



Mitigator

As in SettCorp, mitigation is the most common function of vocatives in TravCorp. These pragmatic downtoners account for 41% of all vocatives used in TravCorp. In extract (7.17), the father uses a mitigating vocative (in bold) while trying to get his young son to finish his breakfast:

(7.17 TC)

<i>Mitigator</i>	<Father>	Paddy ate the breakfast <\$G3> Stop that Paddy . I'm gonna throw you out.
	<Baby>	<\$H> You're not sendin me <\\$H> out alright daddy. You're not sendin me out.
	<Son>	I'll beat you and daddy off one another.

Here we see a parental directive *Stop that* mitigated by the use of the familiar version of the baby's fist name. There are many suggested reasons for mitigation being the most frequent vocative function, among them the unique speaker

relationships that exist in family discourse, and these will be more fully explored in section 7.3.3.

Summons

Similarly to SettCorp, summons is the second most common function in Traveller family discourse, accounting for 25.5% of vocatives used. The example given here in extract (7.18) demonstrates a summons from a child, directed at a parent:

(7.18 TC)

<i>Summons</i>	<Mother>	Your father's like Michael Hasselhoff i'nt he? He's like am the am ah Baywatch.
	<Son>	Here mam . Will you help us with the shorts you wrap around with?
	<Mother>	I will. Come here. Baywatch. The Charleville Baywatch.
	<Father>	Baywatch.

This particular extract is typical of both settled and Traveller use of the summons vocative. The mother is addressing the family as a whole when joking that the father, now wearing a swim suit, looks like David Hasselhoff. The child, eager to attract her attention in order to get some help summons her by using *Here mam*. This summons also takes the same form as the one used in SettCorp. Although SettCorp and TravCorp, due to the fact that the corpora are relatively small and only represent two families, cannot provide evidence on which to make unchallengeable claims, they can perhaps provide pointers for future research. This summons pattern may be typical of family discourse based in the home and it would be interesting to discover if the same pattern prevails in another family setting in the context of Irish English.

Relational

16% of the vocatives used in TravCorp are in a relational context. Two examples of the relational function of vocatives are shown in extract (7.19):

(7.19 TC)

<i>Relational</i>	<Father>	Good luck Stephen <\$H> down the carnival <\\$H>.
-------------------	----------	--

(7.20 TC) <Son> How you doin **Paddy**?

Both of these vocatives are unnecessary given the face-to-face nature of the majority of family talk. Relational vocatives, unlike mitigating or topic management vocatives, have no apparent transactional function. Therefore, given that they occur around speech acts such as apologies or compliments, they function to heighten the sense of intimacy between conversational participants.

Topic management

The extract below shows the presence of a vocative at a topic change:

(7.21 TC)

Topic management <Father> +they're all finished. Do not go outside the gate inside now boys. There's trouble down <=> play no <=> outside for ye. Play around there.

 <Son> You goin to the shop **Paddy**?

 <Baby> Yeah.

 <Father> No no shops the road is too dangerous d'you hear me?

 <Baby Talk>

 <Father> Gimme a look.

 <Baby> I'm goin.

 <Father> No you can come with me I'll bring you here throw something there hurry on and do it good girl.

The first topic of conversation relates to the children playing outside. However, the son then changes the topic to whether or not the son and the baby are going to the shops.

Badinage

In both corpora, the badinage function is an infrequent one but especially so in TravCorp, where it accounts for only 6% of all vocatives used:

(7.22 TC)

- Badinage*
- <Son 1> Ah **Paddy**. Look at my hands **baby**. Look **baby**. Look. Ah **baby**. <\$O> You done it. You done it. You done it <\\$O>.
- <Son 2> <\$O> He did it. He did it. He did it <\\$O>. Show me that <\$G>. Show me.
- <Son 1> Go way from it. Go way from it. C'mon get in the car will ye?
- <Son 3> What's happenin Paddy?

Laughter

Here the son is joking with the baby, Paddy. Once again, it can be seen that badinage vocatives appear in conjunction with laughter.

Turn management

Turn management is the most infrequent vocative function in both SettCorp and TravCorp. In the Traveller family discourse, it accounts for just over 1% of vocative usage. In extract (7.23), the use of a vocative to disambiguate recipients in multi-party conversation can be clearly seen:

(7.23 TC)

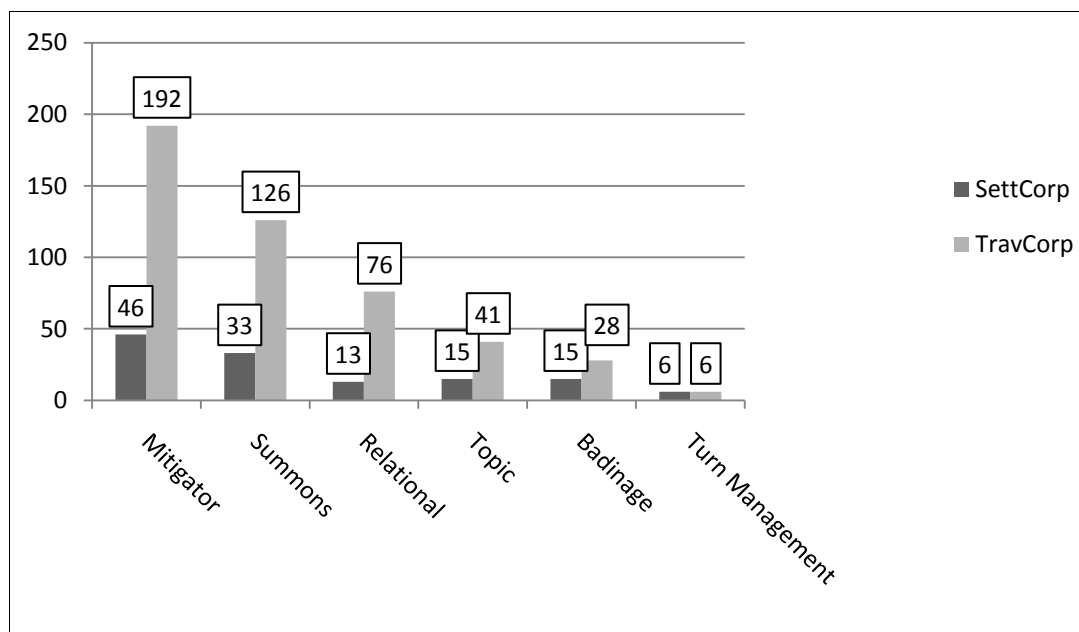
- Turn management*
- <Father> Look at the television sit down Paddy Michael Gerard. Sit down there good boys. Can you see all of the television **son**?
- <Baby> Yeah.
- <Father> That's the good boy. Yeah now don't go out in the rain sure ye won't.
- <Son> I can't.
- <Father> Ye'd get drownded wet out there in the rain ye would.

The father's first directive, to look at the television, is directed at three sons, paddy, Michael and Gerard. However, the question *Can you see all of the television son?* is directed at only one of them thereby selecting that speaker for the next turn.

7.3.3 Comparing vocative function: SettCorp and TravCorp

When studying two different cultures, it is reasonable to expect differences at a pragmatic level. Much of the literature on vocatives (Brown and Gilman, 1960; Levinson, 1977; Murphy, 1988; Wilson and Zeitlyn, 1995) claims that different patterns of vocative use characterise different social groupings. However, when two cultures co-exist in the social environment, largely use the same language and share similar biological origins, such as in the present study, it might be concluded that pragmatic similarities will also be discovered. As Figure 7.6 demonstrates, SettCorp and TravCorp show both similarities and differences in vocative function.

Figure 7.6: Functions of vocatives in SettCorp and TravCorp, normalised per 10,000 words



It can be seen from Figure 7.6 that mitigation is the most common function of the vocative in both the settled and Traveller families' pragmatic systems. Blum-Kulka (1997a) studied the phenomenon of politeness from a parent's perspective in relation to the language of parental control acts. She found that 71.5% of these control acts were phrased directly, because from a parent's point of view a balance needs to be found between recognising a child's need for independence with his/her need for parental involvement (see also Section 5.3.2). Directness is then the preferred option for parents as it simultaneously encodes indices of both power and solidarity (*ibid*).

However, Blum-Kulka also demonstrated how 45% of parental control acts were mitigated. This mitigated directness is evident in extract (7.24):

(7.24 TC)

- <Father> Look at the television. Sit down **Patrick Michael Gerard**. Sit down there good boys. Can you see all of the television son?
- <Baby> Yeah.
- <Father> That's the good boy. Yeah now don't go out in the rain sure ye won't.

In this extract, the family are in the home and the father wants the children to stay inside rather than go outside where it is raining. He issues two parental directives, the first unmitigated, the second heavily so with full first names. These vocatives are an appeal to the children's positive face. Solidarity and closeness are characteristics of positive politeness, therefore, one can reasonably expect that positive politeness will be particularly evident throughout a corpus of family discourse. Wood and Kroger (1991: 147), in a study of forms of address, claim that 'the maintenance of positive face requires the achievement of closeness and common identity.' The father, in using the first names, is attempting to lessen the social distance and power relationship between himself and his children. The hope is that they will obey the directive and do what they are told, thereby maintaining harmony in the family CofP. Interestingly, the mitigating vocatives are accompanied by relational vocatives such as *good boy(s)*. This demonstrates that, on occasion, relational vocatives can perform a 'reward' function in family discourse.

The presence of a high number of mitigating vocatives can also be explained by the influence of the micro-social factor of *social roles*. In the family, as already discussed, asymmetric speaker relationships exist on two levels: the first is a parent-child relationship which is hierarchic in nature. Parents hold more conversational power than the children, in that they enact more interruptions and overlaps (Clancy, 2000). This is also reflected in the turn management vocative function. Eggins and Slade (2001: 144) claim that 'vocatives constitute attempts to control the turn-taking system, by indicating who the current speaker would prefer to see (or hear) as the next speaker.' In both SettCorp and TravCorp, the parents dominate the turn management function – they enact 62.5% of these vocatives in SettCorp and 100%

in TravCorp. This points toward a ‘parental control’ on the turn taking system in family discourse as they dictate who speaks next and they also have the means to wrest control of the turn, through overlaps and interruptions, should this be required. Furthermore, there exists an asymmetrical relationship between the siblings based on age where the eldest, generally, holds the most power (Clancy, 2000; Nilep, 2009), and this may also play a part in the high number of mitigating vocatives used. On the other hand, it appears that the children have a prominent voice in managing the topic in family discourse. In SettCorp, the children perform 68% of the topic management vocatives, while in TravCorp, the figure is 69%.

In both corpora, summons is the second most common vocative function. In multi-party discourse – the settled family CofP has six members, the Traveller family CofP, eight – this is unsurprising given the nature of the summons function, to get attention. Of note is that in SettCorp, use of the summons function is almost equally divided between the parents (18 uses) and the children (23). However, in TravCorp, it is almost exclusively used by the children (31), rather than the parents (9). This could, in part, be explained by the younger age profile of the Traveller family. Generally speaking, younger children demand more attention from their parents than older children do and, as previously mentioned, have fewer conversational rights. This higher use of the summons function may also be attributed to the social space issue touched upon in Section 7.2.2. As has already been mentioned, Travellers operate in a wider social space due to the nature of their accommodation (almost always caravans or mobile homes) and may, therefore, find themselves in a position where they might have to call or talk from inside to outside or vice versa. This may necessitate a wider use of the summons, although it is difficult to surmise this from just one case. What both corpora do have in common is that when someone is summonsed, it is generally followed by a request or a directive as shown in extract (7.25):

(7.25 TC)

- | | |
|----------|---|
| <Son> | Dad do you have an oul tenner there for the phone? I might need to get an oul chip in it. |
| <Father> | I’ll try it in a minute where is it leave it there I’ll try it in a minute. |
| <Son> | No daddy I’m afraid I’m goin to have to use your <SH> cash <\SH>. |

<Father> You will not.

Here the son wants some money for his mobile phone and asks the father for it, justifying the request by claiming to need a *chip*. The father is unwilling to give the son the cash and wants to see if he can fix it himself.

Also worth noting, in both corpora, vocative use in a relational context is not as frequent as might be expected. In SettCorp and TravCorp they occur approximately half as frequently as mitigators. The relational function, according to McCarthy and O’Keeffe (2003), is the most common between family and close friends as it is used to establish and/or maintain social relationships. As has previously been underlined, the social roles that exist in family discourse are one of the defining features of this intimate context-type. Speaker relationships in the family are fixed and pre-established, for example, mother, father, eldest sibling or youngest sibling, therefore the maintenance function is not as essential as in other speech situations. As Chapter 2 outlined, some features of relational language, for example phatic communion (Malinowski, 1923), have only a small part to play in family discourse. Malinowski (1972: 151) claims that phatic communion serves to ‘establish bonds of personal union between people brought together by the mere need of companionship’, however, in the family these bonds are already present between each family member. Families can therefore start a conversation less ceremoniously and get straight to the point because they know each other’s background and personality due to a large body of shared knowledge between members (see also Ventola, 1979). Also, their relationship is one of kinship and bonding at this level is often superfluous.

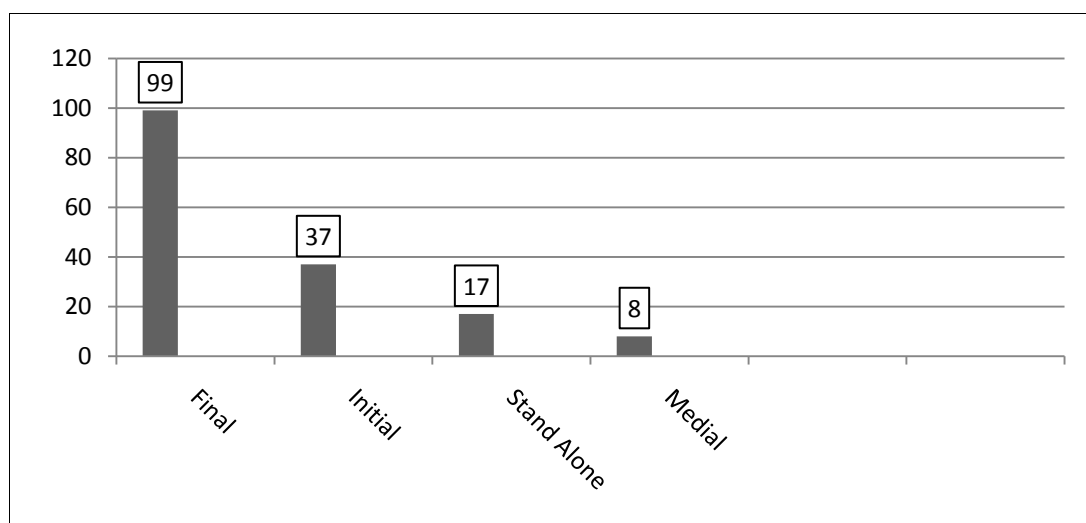
7.4 Vocative Position

7.4.1 Vocative position: SettCorp

Any exploration of vocative position should always be tempered by the limits of orthographic transcription, which ensures that some uncertainty always exists in the assignation of a position to a vocative (Leech, 1999). However, what is certain is

that a vocative can occur in a range of different positions within an utterance. It may occur turn-initially, in the course of a turn (medial) or at the end of a turn (final). It may also occupy a turn on its own without any other text (stand alone). Figure 7.7 demonstrates that in SettCorp final position vocatives are, by some distance, the most common (consistent with Leech, 1999). They account for 66% of all vocatives used, making them three times more frequent than initial position vocatives (consistent with McCarthy and O’Keeffe, 2003) and seven times more frequent than stand alone vocatives.

Figure 7.7: Position of vocatives in SettCorp



Notably, final position is twelve times more frequent than medial position and this is, in part, due to the problems surrounding medial placement. According to McCarthy and O’Keeffe (*ibid.*), so-called medial vocatives are sometimes preceded by a discourse item prefacing the main utterance, as illustrated in extract (7.26):

(7.26 SC)

<Son> **Ah** Jimmy. I gave Jimmy four boxes what did he do? He hung em all over here. All of them like.

Laughter

<Mother> In the same spot.

<Son> Yeah.

The use of *Ah* here seems to be more a turn preface than part of the turn proper and, therefore, the problem of assigning the vocative a position appears to be more

satisfactorily solved by tagging it as initial. This occurs on six occasions in SettCorp and on each occasion the vocatives have been tagged as initial position. On one occasion in SettCorp, a vocative occurs with a turn prefacing discourse item and no other text, see extract (7.27), and this has been labelled stand alone.

(7.27 SC)

- <Daughter> You're not meant to have watched that either.
- <Son> I haven't seen that. <\$O> Do we have that <\\$O>?
- <Daughter> <\$O> <\$H> We had it earlier <\\$H> <\\$O>.
- <Son> **Ah feckers.**

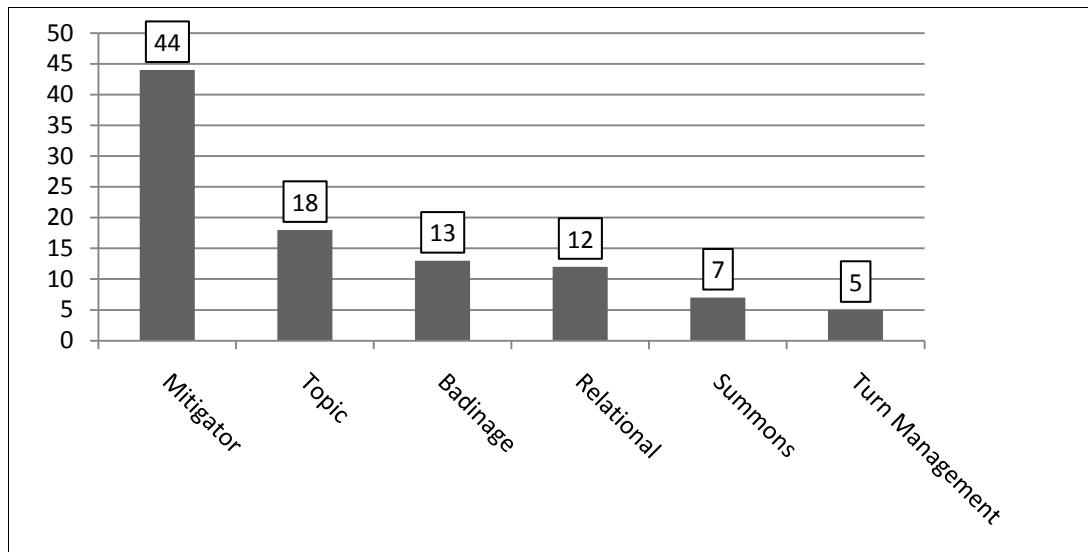
Medial vocatives are tagged thus when unambiguously occurring in the middle of a turn, as in extract (7.28):

(7.28 SC)

- <Son> It's not going to come back **Nora** so switch it off. The telly is gone. Westward Cables are on strike.
- <Daughter> Is it really the telly or is it just our telly like?
- <Son> That's what I was wondering as well I mean is everyone's gone or is it just ours?
- <Daughter> Ours.

When examining vocative position, it is necessary to incorporate an analysis of vocative function. This is because of the close relationship between the two; the position of a vocative is very much connected to the function it performs. This can be illustrated by examining, in Figure 7.8, the breakdown of the functional contexts of final position vocatives.

Figure 7.8: Distribution of final position vocatives in SettCorp

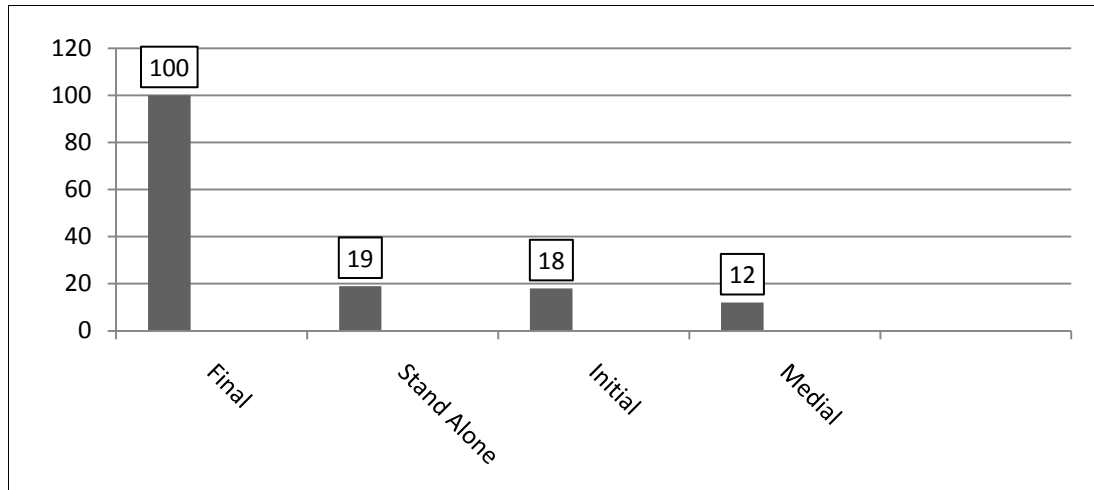


Mitigators account for the highest number of final position vocatives, 44 occurrences accounting for 76% of all vocatives related to face concerns. This percentage is similar for relational contexts and turn management situations. However, in topic management, 18 of 19 occurrences are in final position, strongly demonstrating the relationship between this function and its position. On the other hand, predictably, summons accounts for only seven final position vocatives. It instead spreads itself across both initial (accounting for 22 occurrences) and stand alone (12) position. Finally, medial vocatives are primarily associated with face concerns (5 occurrences) and turn management (3).

7.4.2 Vocative position: TravCorp

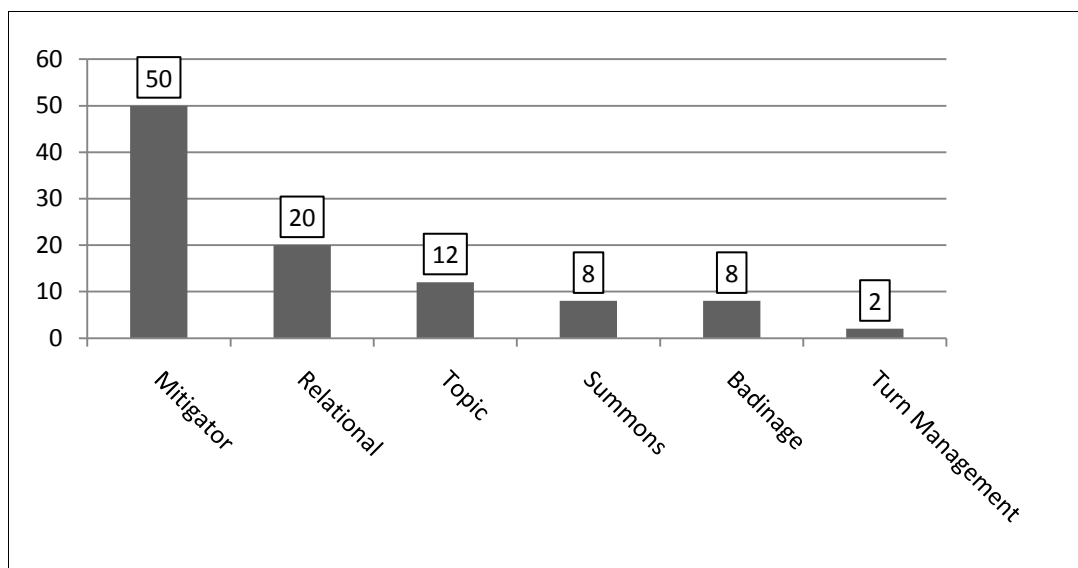
Figure 7.9 shows the distribution of vocative position found in TravCorp:

Figure 7.9: Position of vocatives in TravCorp



Similarly to SettCorp, final position vocatives are the most common (100 occurrences), accounting for 67% of all vocatives used. Stand alone vocatives (19) occupy position two followed by initial (18) and medial position (12). An examination of the breakdown of the distribution of functions in Figure 7.10 also shows similar patterns to SettCorp:

Figure 7.10: Distribution of final position vocatives in TravCorp



Mitigators are the most common final placed vocatives with 50 occurrences. This accounts for 82% of vocatives used in relation to face concerns in TravCorp and, when coupled with the results from SettCorp (76% of all mitigators are final position vocatives), demonstrates the strong connection between this position and attention to face. This finding echoes that of the relationship between the position and function of *now* explored in Section 6.2, again pointing towards the connection between final position and attention to issues of power, control and threat to face within the family CofP. The relational and badinage functions also score highly in final position (consistent with Leech, 1999 who found that final position vocatives were primarily associated with the maintenance and reinforcement of social relationships), as does turn management. Again, the topic management function is almost completely final position with 12 out of 13 occurrences. The summons function accounts for only 8 occurrences in the final position. Instead, as in SettCorp, it dominates stand alone vocatives, summons accounts for all 19 occurrences, and initial position where it accounts for 66% of all occurrences (again consistent with Leech's 1999 findings).

7.6 Conclusion

The analysis of vocative form, function and position in SettCorp and TravCorp predictably unearthed some parallels and divergences between the two pragmatic systems. In relation to vocative form, it was found that first name vocatives are most frequent in SettCorp, and kin titles are the most frequent vocative form in TravCorp. This difference in preference reflects the fundamental impact of the macro-social factors of *ethnicity* and *socio-economic status* on both families. On the one hand, the settled parents wish to instil a measure of independence in their children in order that they are fully prepared for social life outside the family, be it at school or at work. On the other hand, kin titles reinforce the family at the core of the Traveller cultural system where they are a key element used in the establishment of the CofP members' identities. Regarding vocative function, in both SettCorp and TravCorp, mitigation was found to be the most common function of vocatives in the datasets. The presence of a high number of mitigating vocatives can also be explained by a number of macro- and micro-social factors particular to family discourse, among them *age* and *social roles*. The summons function was discovered to be the second most common, unsurprisingly frequent in both CofPs which are comprised of six

members or more. Tellingly, the relational function was not very prevalent in either SettCorp or TravCorp. Although present, relational vocatives play a peripheral role in the discourse of both families and this was again attributed to the uniqueness of social roles in the family CofP. Finally, it was ascertained that vocatives occur primarily in final position in both SettCorp and TravCorp. The relationship between vocative position and function was reinforced through the analysis of both datasets. Similar to findings in Chapter 6, final position was shown to strongly correlate with attention to face in the family CofP. In Chapter 8, the analysis turns to another linguistic strategy, hedging, by which family members may mitigate their utterances. Similarly to vocatives, it will be shown that hedges facilitate community maintenance and provide information about the influence of both micro- and macro-social factors through their relative infrequency in the speech of both families.

Chapter 8

Facilitating community maintenance II:

The use of hedges

8.0 Introduction

According to Skelton (1988: 38):

Without hedging, the world is purely propositional, a rigid (and rather dull) place where things are either the case or are not. With a hedging system, language is rendered more flexible and the world more subtle...Language without hedging is language without life.

In contrast with other mitigating devices in family discourse, for example vocatives (see Chapter 7) and the multi-functional item *now* (see Section 6.2), a striking characteristic of this context is the relatively low level of hedging that occurs, especially in comparison with other speech context-types. While it is true to claim, as Skelton does, that hedging does add much colour to the language we use, it would be untrue to suggest that low levels of hedging in family discourse point towards a world that is ‘dull’ and ‘without life’. There is no doubt that families can at times be ‘challenging’, however, most people will agree that families are seldom boring. This makes the study of the absence of hedges, most notably in TravCorp, all the more intriguing. The present study will argue that the use of hedges is fundamentally connected to the influence of macro- and micro-social factors on the pragmatic systems of the Traveller and settled families. As Chapter 3 demonstrates, both families featured in this study are inextricably bound in a common community of practice (CofP): that of being a family. As with vocatives, the use of hedges facilitates the maintenance of the community. However, it is the relative *absence* rather than the presence of hedges that sustains relations between the stakeholders in the family CofP. It will be argued that hedges are, in a sense, unnecessary in this context due to the social roles that define this CofP. These social roles render as unimportant many of the functions hedges serve in conversation. Therefore, hypothetically, it could be said that in Irish English the more intimate the context, the more direct a speaker can be due to the increased protection to face afforded by an increasingly intimate context.

8.1 Hedging: Definition and origins

Traditionally, it was thought that the act of hedging required the modification of an utterance by an additional morpheme, word or phrase. However, attempts at providing a definitive taxonomy of hedging devices have determined that the reality is much more complex. As Figure 8.1, below, demonstrates, hedges come in many forms:

Figure 8.1: Different forms of hedging¹

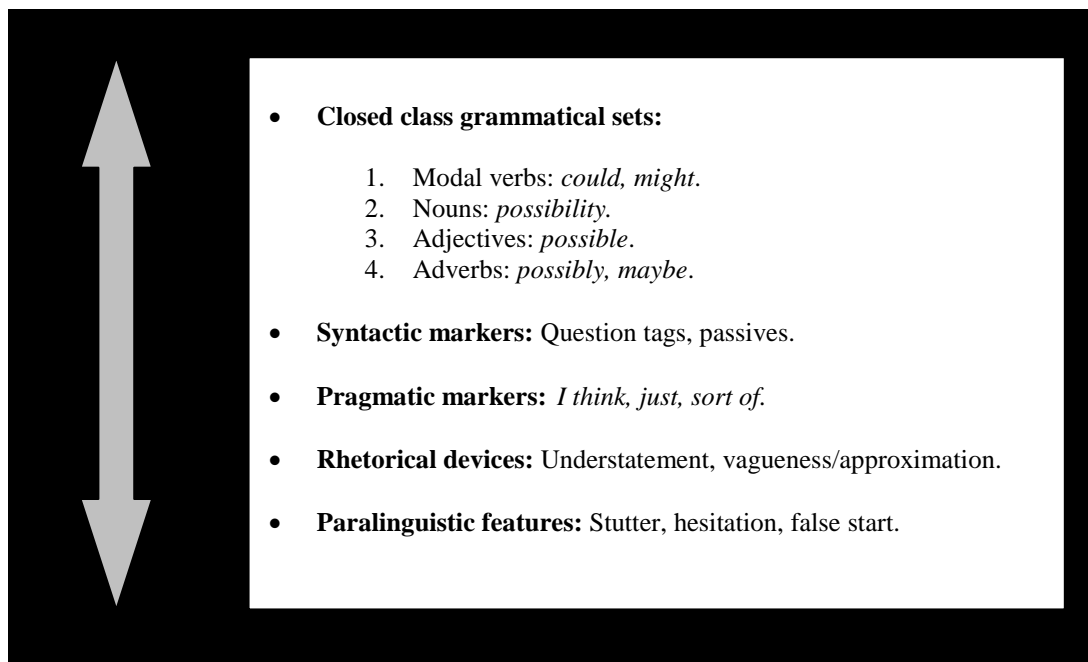


Figure 8.1 illustrates the grammatical, syntactic and pragmatic markers that are constants in most analyses of hedging across many different linguistic disciplines. However, it is also important to acknowledge rhetorical devices such as understatement and paralinguistic features such as hesitations as realisations of the hedging strategy. In addition, Carter and McCarthy (2006: 721-723) have added other tokens such as negation, reporting devices and prefaces to speech acts further widening the range of features with the potential to function as hedges. Studies in the field of academic writing have also identified a number of context-specific hedges (see for example, Hyland, 1996; Crompton, 1997, 1998; Lindemann and Mauranen,

¹ Figure 8.1 is adapted from McCarthy (personal communication, 2006).

2001; Mauranen, 2004) and these should also be taken into account when attempting any taxonomy of hedging.

The introduction of the word *hedge* to linguistic research is attributed to the seminal work of George Lakoff (1972) who coined the term in order to describe lexical expressions ‘whose job it is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy’ (1972: 195). Lakoff is primarily concerned with the semantic contribution that hedges make to the statement in which they occur, given, he maintains, that they affect assertions of category membership. Thus, when it is claimed that *A chicken is a sort of bird*, the chicken’s semantic connection to the category of *birds* is more true than the unhedged statement *A chicken is a bird*. This is in keeping with Rosch (1973, 1978), who developed prototype theory and views hedges as linguistic devices that modify prototypical category membership. Lakoff was also interested in other hedges such as *regular*:

(a) *Esther Williams is a fish.*

(b) *Esther Williams is a regular fish.*

According to Lakoff, (a) is false since clearly, Esther is a human being and not a fish. However, in (b) *regular* invokes characteristics attached to the word *fish* while simultaneously negating the literal meaning. In doing this, Lakoff drew attention to the relationship between meaning and connotation, thus beginning the process of establishing that any adequate treatment of hedges must consider the context within which they occur.

Building on the work of Lakoff, Prince *et al.* (1982), using data taken from Physician-Physician interaction, proposed a division of hedges into *approximators* and *shields*. According to them, *approximators* are hedges that affect the truth conditions of propositions, therefore *His feet were sort of blue* signals that the speaker is fully committed to the truth of the proposition s/he is conveying. On the other hand, *shields* do not affect the truth conditions but reflect the speaker’s commitment the truth value of the whole proposition, for example, in the proposition *I think his feet were blue*, *I think* marks a level of uncertainty on the part of the speaker in that s/he does not fully believe what they are saying. Hübler (1983) draws

a similar distinction between *understatements* and *hedges*, with understatements corresponding to approximators and hedges to shields (Markkanen and Schröder, 1997). Thus, a sentence like *It's a bit cold in here* contains an understatement, whereas *It's cold in Alaska I suppose* contains a hedge. However, in examining these categories, it is worth noting that Markkanen and Schröder (1997) question the usefulness of these divisions. Skelton (1988: 39) claims that the distinction between approximators and shields is 'only sustainable in the abstract' as shields appear to have an 'indefinitely large potential domain [which may encompass approximators] as shields can comfortably extend over more than one sentence'. In addition to this, Hyland (1994) completely omits shields from his taxonomy of hedges.

Since this early work on hedging, the concept has moved far beyond its origins to encompass work in the areas of discourse analysis and pragmatics. Markkanen and Schröder (1997: 10) note that 'the most frequently mentioned motivating factor for hedges is politeness.' Aijmer (1986: 14) claims that a hedge 'signals that a word is not treated in the usual sense (as a resource available to form messages with), but that it is inappropriate, insignificant, negatively evaluated or approximate.' Perhaps the most famous, and most remarked upon, study of hedging and politeness is Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1987) study which outlines the connection between the two concepts. Brown and Levinson maintain that hedges are used predominantly in the realm of negative politeness and are included in their negative politeness strategy *Question, hedge* (see Appendix B). According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 145 [original emphasis]) a hedge:

...is a particle, word, or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or noun phrase in a set; it says of that membership that it is *partial*, or true only in certain respects, or that it is *more* true and complete than perhaps might be expected.

For example, hedges such as *I think* (labelled a *quality hedge* by Brown and Levinson, 1987: 164) allow the speaker to avoid full responsibility for the truth of his/her utterance, distancing both her/himself and the hearer from the act, thereby satisfying or redressing the hearer's negative face. Therefore, hedges downtone the illocutionary force of an utterance allowing the speaker to weaken his/her commitment to its propositional content. Hedges have a lesser role to play in

positive politeness: linguistic actions aimed at building on indices of solidarity such as in-group membership (see Section 2.1.1), modifying extremes on the value scale such as *beautiful* or *revolting*. Therefore, Brown and Levinson claim that in the utterance *It's really beautiful, in a way*, the hedge *in a way* allows the speaker to avoid the precise communication of his/her attitude, 'leaving it up to the addressee to figure out how to interpret it' (*ibid*: 116-117). They maintain that by using one of these hedges, the speaker calls upon the hearer to use the common knowledge between them to interpret speaker attitude thereby appealing to the hearer's positive face.

Since the 1990s the focus of hedging research has shifted from casual, everyday spoken language to both spoken and written language in the academic sphere. As is evident from the depth of research in this domain, hedging is seen as an essential tool in the 'art' of academic/scientific discourse. Hedging in academic writing is dependent on the same variables that govern everyday spoken interaction – social distance, power difference and rank of imposition (Myers, 1989) – and this results in hedges functioning in a similar manner to spoken discourse. For example, the main function of hedging in academic writing is one of negative politeness, where the presentation of new knowledge and ideas is downtoned or mitigated. Myers (1989: 13) claims that academic knowledge constitutes a face threatening act to other researchers in the field because it 'infringes on their freedom to act'. Thus, hedging signals that new knowledge is being presented 'as being provisional, pending acceptance in the literature, acceptance by the community' (*ibid.*). Therefore, according to Hyland (2000: 179), 'writers seek to modify the assertions that they make, toning down uncertain or potentially risky claims, emphasising what they believe to be correct, and conveying appropriate collegial attitudes to readers.' Indeed, Myers (1989) argues that a sentence with the appearance of a claim but with no hedging is unlikely to be a statement of new knowledge. In other words, hedging and the use of hedges ensure that the writer simultaneously saves their own face while avoiding imposing on the reader's face. Furthermore, Clemen (1997: 244) claims that 'despite or perhaps, because of their mitigating effect, hedges can increase the credibility of a statement (e.g. in academic texts).' This, in turn, has raised questions regarding the motivation behind the writer's use of hedges and Markkanen and Schröder (1997: 9) argue that hedges can be manipulated by using

them to disguise writer attitude ‘in the sense that the reader is left in the dark as to who is responsible for the truth value for what is being expressed.’

Research in this area has also contributed to an increased understanding of the multi-functionality of hedges. Hyland (1996: 437) maintains that:

Hedges are polypragmatic, conveying a range of different meanings often at the same time. As a result, they do not fit into a neat scheme of discreet categories which allows one meaning to be clearly distinguished from others.

This assertion has been echoed by research in other contexts. Mauranen (2004), in a micro-level examination of the functions of epistemic and strategic hedges in spoken academic discourse, maintains that some hedges fulfil the criteria for one category but ‘the context induces the other interpretation as well’ (p. 174). Studies into individual hedges, many of which are detailed in the analysis section, also point towards the fact that hedges can perform different functions, often simultaneously. For example, Holmes (1985, 1986, 1990, 1993) has shown how commonly identified hedges such as *I think*, *you know* and *sort of* perform a number of different though closely related functions in casual conversation between men and women (a review of studies into individual hedges such as these accompanies the analysis Sections 8.2.1-8.2.5).

This literature review suggests that any investigation of hedging, especially an empirical, corpus-based one, should be guided by a caveat. Brown and Levinson (1987: 146) claim that ‘hedging can be achieved in indefinite numbers of surface forms’. This, coupled with Markkanen and Schroeder’s (1989; 1992) assertion that factors such as the writers’ own personality impact on the number of hedges used, indicate that the researcher should be extremely cautious when it comes to the analytic process of operationalising hedges. However, there are a number of features that can be used to assist in determining the function of pragmatic markers, and, by extension, hedges; these are *syntactic* (see Holmes, 1985; 1990; Lenk, 1998; Oh, 2000), *prosodic* (see Holmes, 1985; 1990), *lexical* (see Lindemann and Mauranen, 2001; Aijmer, 2002) and *stylistic* (see Miller and Weinert, 1995; Cheng and Warren, 2001). As the analysis section illustrates, there are also a number of socio-pragmatic indicators that may impact on the hedging function. These include participant

information such as ethnicity (see Cheng and Warren, 2001; Youmans, 2001; O'Sullivan, 2004; Fung and Carter, 2007), sex (see Maltz and Borker, 1982), socio-economic background (see Huspek, 1989), age (see Erman, 2001; Macaulay, 2002) or speaker relationship (see Östman, 1981; Lee, 1987; Markkanen and Schröder, 1997; Ruzaitė, 2007). All of the studies referred to here provide support for Fraser's (1999) belief that pragmatic markers (or hedges) have a core meaning which is procedural not conceptual and their more specific interpretation is 'negotiated' by the context, both linguistic and conceptual.

8.2 Hedging in family discourse

In terms of the use of hedges in family discourse, Locher (2004) examined a range of disagreement strategies (hedges, modal auxiliaries, question types) in an argument sequence during a dinner among family and friends. She found that hedges were the most frequent strategy used by the interactants to soften disagreement (followed by modal auxiliaries). These strategies to soften disagreement are necessary, she maintains, to ensure that the argument remains within a sociable frame. In terms of gender, she notes that hedges are used equally by male and female members. Previous research into hedging in family discourse has also shown how this politeness strategy is more frequent in other discourse contexts than in family discourse. Clancy (2005, 2007) has examined the role played by negative politeness in this context and Table 8.1 details a comparison of the occurrences of four randomly selected hedges in one hour of discourse across three different corpora; C-MELT², *Liveline*³ and SettCorp:

² C-MELT is a corpus of the meetings of English language teachers collected by Dr Elaine Vaughan, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland.

³ *Liveline* is an afternoon radio phone-in broadcast on national Irish radio by Radio Teilifís Éireann. This radio phone-in data is taken from O'Keeffe (2003).

Table 8.1: Comparison of the frequency of occurrence of four hedges across three different corpora⁴

Hedge	C-MELT	Liveline	SettCorp
<i>I think</i>	92	77	16
<i>kind of/sort of</i>	98	48	1
<i>you know</i>	49	41	12
<i>like</i>	56	29	19
Total	295	195	48

As can be seen from Table 8.1, as the level of formality decreases, the number of hedges used in the different context-types follows suit. For example, in C-MELT, a workplace corpus, the levels of hedging are more than six times higher than in family discourse. Clancy (2005) notes that the family are sure of their position in relation to other family members due to the fixed and stable speaker relationships, therefore, their need to protect their speech from face-threatening attacks is lessened. Holmes (1993) maintains that hedges function to reduce social distance between speakers and also to indicate the speaker's desire for a relaxed relationship with the addressee. This reduction of social distance is something that has to be worked at in contexts such as *Liveline* in order to create the pseudo-intimacy crucial to the success of the interaction, but is unnecessary in the family as the speakers perceive social distance as being negligible. This research is consistent with the work of Farr *et al.* (2004), who analysed the occurrence of hedging across various contexts such as family discourse, teaching training feedback, service encounters and female friends chatting in the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (LCIE). They found the lowest instance of hedging occurred in service encounters where 'there is an existing social schema for the interaction within exogenous roles' (p. 16-17) which simultaneously allows maximum transactional efficiency and minimum threat to face. The next least hedged context was the family where hedging was

⁴ Table taken from Clancy (2007).

approximately 33% less frequent than in radio phone-in and 50% less frequent than in teacher training feedback.

In order to find items with the *potential* to function as hedges in family discourse, a two-pronged approach was taken. Firstly, frequency lists were generated in both SettCorp and TravCorp based on the ten most frequent single-word and two-word hedges in LCIE (identified by Farr *et al.*, 2004), the results of which are presented in Table 8.2 here:

Table 8.2: Items with the *potential* to function as hedges in SettCorp and TravCorp

Item	Frequency SettCorp	Frequency TravCorp	Total
<i>like</i>	83	9	92
<i>just</i>	39	2	41
<i>you know</i>	24	4	28
<i>I think</i>	18	0	18
<i>actually</i>	16	0	16
<i>really</i>	16	0	16
<i>a bit</i>	10	2	12
<i>probably</i>	9	0	9
<i>kind of/sort of</i>	1	0	1
<i>I suppose</i>	1	0	1
Total	222	17	239

Table 8.2 demonstrates that in SettCorp, items with the potential to hedge appear to occur far more frequently in SettCorp than in TravCorp. When the difference in size

between the two corpora (see Section 4.1) is taken into account, these items occur with a frequency of 54 instances per 10,000 words in TravCorp and 177 instances per 10,000 words in SettCorp, therefore items with the potential to hedge are more than three times more frequent in SettCorp than in TravCorp. Surprisingly, given that both corpora are relatively small in size, the search yielded one 6-word cluster with the potential to hedge *d’you know what I mean*, which occurs once in both SettCorp and TravCorp (see Section 8.2.4). After the frequency lists were generated, all non-hedging instances of the top five markers listed in Table 8.2 were excluded, therefore, Table 8.3 illustrates the actual number of instances of a hedging function for the markers *like*, *I think*, *just*, *you know* and *actually*:

Table 8.3: Frequency of occurrence of five hedges across SettCorp and TravCorp

Hedge	SettCorp	TravCorp
<i>like</i>	19	0
<i>I think</i>	16	0
<i>just</i>	14	1
<i>you know</i>	13	2
<i>actually</i>	11	0
Total	73	3

Table 8.3 clearly shows that these five hedges have a far higher frequency in SettCorp than in TravCorp, however, as the individual analysis of the five hedges will illustrate, their frequency of occurrence in SettCorp is often well below other context types (see, for example, *just* in Section 8.2.3). Due to the fact that SettCorp is larger than TravCorp, the items have been individually normalised per 10,000 words in Figure 8.2:

Figure 8.2: Frequency of items functioning as hedges in SettCorp and TravCorp, normalised per 10,000 words

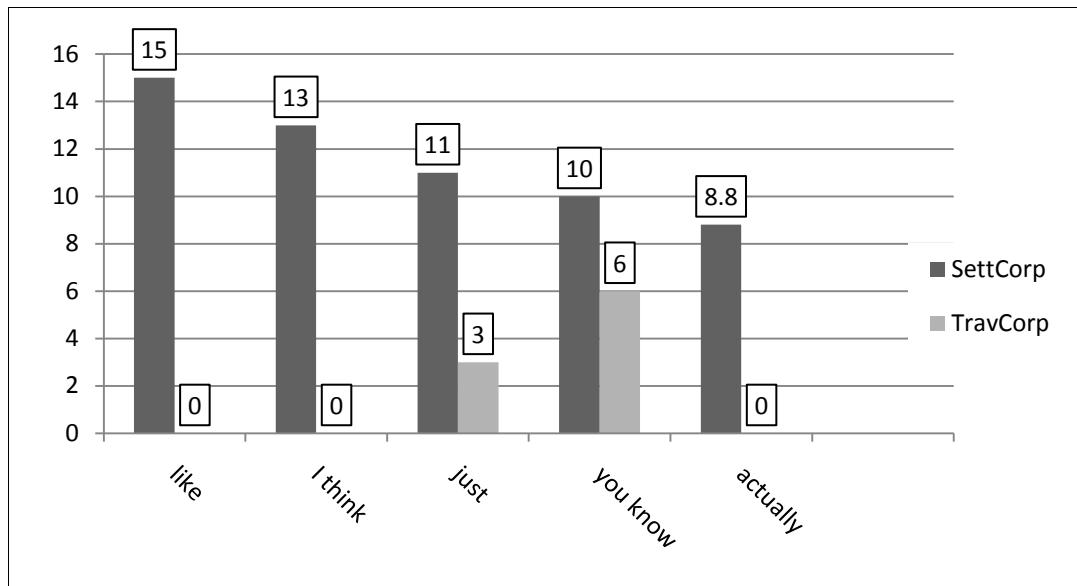


Table 8.3 and Figure 8.2 demonstrate that the negative politeness strategy of hedging appears to be relatively rarely used in the Traveller community in comparison to the settled community. The two most common hedges in SettCorp, *like* and *I think*, do not feature in TravCorp, despite the fact that both corpora were recorded in a similar fashion exclusively in the home/family environment. Similarly, *actually* does not occur in TravCorp, however, this marker has a frequency of almost ten occurrences per 10,000 words in SettCorp. The marker *just* occurs on three times per 10,000 words in TravCorp but is three times more frequent in SettCorp. The only marker with a comparable frequency is *you know*, six and ten occurrences per 10,000 words in TravCorp and SettCorp respectively. The analysis sections 8.2.1 – 8.2.5, will attempt to complement the quantitative data presented in Table 8.3 and Figure 8.2 through a detailed quantitative qualitative examination of each individual marker in an effort to account for the reasons behind the pragmatic variation between the two datasets.

8.2.1 *Like*

Previous studies into the pragmatic marker *like* highlight both its flexibility and its versatility. Indeed, *like* is such a multifunctional marker that it has undergone a process of grammaticalisation in the English language (see Romaine and Lange,

1991; Anderson, 2001). However, these characteristics have led to a series of contradictory reports into the function of *like* in discourse. In one of the most comprehensive studies of its kind, Schourup (1985) outlines five uses of *like*:

- (i) As an approximator
*I'm **like** six feet tall.*
- (ii) As a marker of reported speech and thought⁵
*... and she's **like** "Get outta here" you know.*
- (iii) After questions to indicate a discrepancy between a question asked by the speaker and the question s/he thinks is ideally more appropriate
*D'you know what I mean **like**?*
- (iv) Equivalent to *for example*⁶
*I know but it wouldn't be any point if someone wanted to be, **like** a doctor and they got into a nursery place.*
- (v) As a filler
*... but I found **like** that helped me a lot.*

Schourup groups these uses under the heading 'evincives' which, he maintains, 'allow the speaker to call attention to current thought in the private world...without placing details of the speaker's thoughts in the shared world' (p. 35-36). This notion of evincives has been criticised by Miller and Weinert (1995) who claim that this is too general a term, and that *aha* or *well* can also function as evincives though playing different roles to *like* (p. 369). They further question Schourup's individual functions of *like*, rejecting, for example, his hypothesis that it is a filler in favour of the hypothesis that it is a discourse organiser. In addition, Anderson (1998), writing from a relevance theory perspective, questions Schourup's decision to equate three of the uses of *like* to *approximately*, *say* and *for example*, which, she claims, is 'redundant' and 'inaccurate' (p. 149). It may be of use to note here that disagreements between these individual researchers may arise precisely because of the particular characteristics of pragmatic markers. For example, Schourup uses data taken from radio talk shows and informal conversations between friends. In contrast,

⁵ See also Romaine and Lange (1991).

⁶ Anderson (1998) labels this function *Suggesting an Alternative* and the example used here is taken from her paper.

Miller and Weinert use data taken from task-related dialogue and spontaneous conversation whereas Anderson's analysis is based on data taken from the Bergen Corpus of London Teenage English (COLT).⁷ Therefore, these three studies represent data taken from three different speech contexts. In addition, three different cultures are represented – American (Schourup), Scottish (Miller and Weinert) and English (Anderson). Furthermore, age difference also has a role to play – in Miller and Weinert, for example, the speakers in the task-related dialogues are younger than those in the spontaneous conversation. Given that such disparity exists between the data in these studies, perhaps it should come as no surprise that disparity exists between the researchers' determinations of the functions of *like* in discourse given that pragmatic markers appear to be heavily influenced by these macro- and micro-social factors.

Miller and Weinert (1995), examining *like* in spontaneous conversation, argue that the function of this marker and its syntactic positioning are interconnected. They claim that clause-initial *like* appears to function as a non-contrastive, non-introducing focuser, equivalent to Schourup's (1985) assertion that, in particular cases, *like* is used in the same way as *for example*. On the other hand, relevant to this study, clause-final *like* mitigates the process of clarifying misunderstandings by countering potential inferences, objections or doubts, thereby performing a hedging function. When the use of *like* as a verb, *I like that thing*, preposition, *a second hand car or anything like that*, and conjunction, *like I just did*, is excluded from items with the potential to function as hedges, there are 52 occurrences of *like* in SettCorp, 47 of which are clause final, 19 of which function as hedges. Extract (8.1) demonstrates the use of *like*, in bold, as a hedge:

(8.1 SC)

- | | |
|----------|---|
| <Son 1> | Very tashty. Jimmy see what's in Nottingham will you? |
| <Son 2> | I'm lookin for it. |
| <Mother> | Nottingham? |
| <Father> | Nothing. |

⁷ COLT consists of roughly 500,000 words of spontaneous conversations between 13-17 year-old boys and girls from socially different school districts (see Stenström, 1994).

<Mother> Ah there must be.

<Son 1> There's not <\$O> I don't think <\\$O>.

<Father> <\$O> There's a there's a <\\$O>+.

<Mother> I bet it's one of those lovely oldie townies.

<Father> Tis tis one of the old towns. There's a castle in the middle of it Connor.

<Son 1> Were you there **like**?

<Mother> Well I was never there anyway.

This extract demonstrates some of the characteristic features of family discourse already explored in the present study. The family CofP is characterised by a high degree of shared knowledge (see Section 6.1), therefore, the likelihood is that the son knows that the father has *not* been to Nottingham. In this extract, *like* functions as a hedge when mitigating the face threat that is posed by the underlying challenge to the father to qualify his unhedged assertions that, firstly there is nothing in Nottingham and secondly that there is a castle in the middle of it. This notion of challenge is supported by the mother's direction-shifter *Well I was never there anyway* which implies that because she was never there, she would never offer an unmitigated opinion about the city. This enables her in order to 'side' with the son against the father. This extract also illustrates some of the difficulties encountered when attempting to assign individual functions to *like* in that the marker can often perform different functions simultaneously, here performing the functions of both qualifier and hedge.

In extract (8.1) it can be seen that *like* occupies the final position in an interrogative and this occurs on 8 occasions in SettCorp. However, on 40 occasions the marker occurs in a declarative clause. The use of *like* as a hedge, this time in both interrogative and declarative clauses, can also be seen in extract (8.2). In this extract, the settled siblings are discussing a computer programme *Robohelp*:

(8.2 SC)

<Son 1> What's Robo=? What is it **like**?

<Daughter> It's for creating online help.

<Son 2> For creating it?

- <Daughter> Hm.
- <Son 2> As in what do you do **like**?
- <Son 1> For creating online help.
- <Daughter> Mm. It's just am.
- <Son 1> So it's like when you click on the help menu? No?
- <Daughter> Well it's actually a component of it goes with Word **like**. The access is through Word.
- <Son 1> And how d'you activate it through Word?
- <Daughter> It's separate but it comes up as Word document. It's just an extra <\$H> part <\\$H> that will exist as Word if you have it on your computer.
- <Son 1> And can you not log on the way I logged on before for you no? Remember you rang me up and I just logged <\$O> on <\\$O>.
- <Daughter> <\$O> On <\\$O>. No you wouldn't have it you see.
- <Son 1> But I could I log on from my terminal but using your password as <\$G2> **like**.
- <Daughter> No. It has to be on the hard drive somewhere **like**.

In this extract the clustering of pragmatic markers is again evident with five instances of *like*, in bold, occurring in the space of only fifteen speaker turns. In the final two turns in the extract, *like* occurs as a hedge as the daughter needs to correct misunderstandings on the part of her brother as to access the computer programme *RoboHelp*. He is under the impression that you can simply log on to the computer and access the programme. She is forced to correct him with the utterance *No. It has to be on the hard drive somewhere like* with *like* in both these turns hedging any threat to face that might be perceived. The marker allows the speakers to position themselves as 'non-techies', therefore, no speaker is orienting themselves as an 'expert' which encourages the other interlocutors to participate without fear of being contradicted thus protecting their face. The markers also point to a possible reciprocity in the use of hedges, thereby adding to the sense of intimacy. Again, *like* in the interrogative clauses raises difficulties in relation to the classification of its function. In the utterance *As in what do you do like?*, could be said to be a hedged qualifier as in extract (8.1) or equivalent to *for example*, as in Schourup's (1985) study. In addition to this, all instances of *like* in the extract feature a change in speaker turn immediately after the marker pointing towards its use as a discourse marker in Irish English family discourse. Indeed, out of the 48 instances of clause-

final *like*, 38 of them are followed by a change in speaker turn illustrating that *like* signals the end of a speaker turn in four out of every five occasions it is used.

In contrast, in TravCorp, when the nine occurrences of *like* are examined, none are found to function as hedges. There are a range of possible reasons for this. O'Sullivan (2004), in a study of the accommodative phenomena of teenage Traveller girls, illustrates that they use *like* as a hedge 2.5 times more frequently in interview settings than in informal conversation. As the interviews were performed by a member of the settled community, she claims that this indicates a desire on the part of Traveller girls to conform to the speech norms of their settled peers and, in doing so, gain social acceptance. In informal conversation with each other and with no member of the settled community present, the girls use *like* less. This may reflect Markkanen and Schröder's (1997: 8) view that 'the surer a speaker feels about his or her position vis-à-vis the interlocutor, the less need there is for hedging for the purposes of self-protection.' In relation to the family, this again points towards the importance of the micro-social feature *social roles*. The family are sure of their position in relation to other family members due to the fixed and stable speaker relationships, therefore the desire to protect their speech from face threatening attacks is lessened, as is their need for acceptance. Interestingly, an insight into the absence of *like* in family discourse is offered by Miller and Weinert (1995). In their study, Miller details a recording made when he and his wife were having dinner at home with five female undergraduate students. Two of the female students produced 12 and 9 instances of *like* respectively over the course of the dinner whereas Miller and his wife produced only one instance each; 'that is, most of the occurrences of *like* were produced by speakers who were not called upon to adjust their speech to make the participants feel at home' (p. 387). Therefore, if an absence of *like* is necessary to construct a feeling of 'home', then one can reasonably assume that this marker has a low occurrence in family discourse.

8.2.2 *I think*

As can be seen from Table 8.3, the hedge *I think* accounts for one of the most notable frequency variations between the two datasets and the reasons for this will be explored in this section. Maltz and Borker (1982) argue that in American society,

differences in male-female language use arise primarily from differences in the way in which boys and girls are socialised. Similarly, it could be said that members of the Traveller family CofP are socialised in a different way to their settled counterparts and this may give rise to the divergences encountered in both communities in the use of linguistic features such as hedges. Holmes (1985, 1990) identifies two broad semantic categories of *I think*; *deliberative* and *tentative*. Deliberative *I think* is illustrated in example (i):

(i) *Context*: Statusful interviewee on TV.

I think that's absolutely right.

Holmes (1985: 33) maintains that this function is used to 'express personal confidence in the proposition asserted' and, therefore, adds weight to the speech act. This function, she claims, always occupies an initial position in the utterance and is characterised by 'a falling nucleus, though either word may be stressed' (*ibid.*). On the other hand, examples (ii) and (iii) exemplify the *tentative* function:

(ii) *Context*: Teacher to pupil

You've got that wrong I think.

(iii) *Context*: Elderly man recounting past experience to friends

*It'd be about two o'clock I think.*⁸

In (ii), the teacher takes account of the student's face and softens the directive. In (iii), the old man, mindful of the fact that his memory may no longer be accurate, expresses genuine uncertainty by using the marker. Therefore, because both modal and affective meanings are a feature of hedging, it is this function that will be the focus of the analysis presented here. However, according to Holmes, tentative *I think* can be pronounced with the full range of intonation patterns, though she claims rising intonation occurs most frequently, and can occupy initial, medial and final positions. Therefore, she maintains that categorising an instance of the marker as tentative 'depends largely on contextual information' (p. 33) such as the status of the participants and the level of formality. There are 18 instances of *I think* in SettCorp

⁸ Examples taken from Holmes (1990: 187-188).

(the marker does not occur in TravCorp), 13 of which are sentence-initial, four sentence-final and one mid-position. Holmes' (1985, 1990) categorisations have been applied to these instances and the results are presented in Table 8.4:

Table 8.4: Functions of *I think* in SettCorp and TravCorp

SettCorp		TravCorp	
<i>Deliberative</i>	<i>Tentative</i>	<i>Deliberative</i>	<i>Tentative</i>
2	16	0	0
Total = 18		Total = 0	

Table 8.4 demonstrates that the instances of *I think* in SettCorp are overwhelmingly tentative in function. The deliberative function accounts for only 11% of all occurrences and extract (8.3) illustrates one example of this, highlighted in bold. In this extract, the son and the mother are discussing the differences between varieties of the grape Zinfandel:

(8.3 SC)

- <Son> <\$O> Yeah <\\$O>. <\$H> You like Zinfandel don't you <\\$H>?
- <Mother> Hm. You can't get the ones I used get in Kilrush though. It's not Blossom Hill it's am
- <Son> It's what?
- <Mother> The one they had in Kilrush is even nicer than that Blossom Hill it was Ernest and Julio Gallo.
- <Son> Oh right yeah <\$O> yeah yeah <\\$O>.
- <Mother> <\$O> I only once <\\$O> succeeded in finding a bottle of it. Very few places seem to sell it.
- <Son> I'd say it's hard enough even to find Zinfandel here. <\$O> I'd say it is <\\$O>.
- <Mother> <\$O> You can get <\\$O> the Blossom Hill am in Dunnes like and it's like Blossom Hill is the one you'll get but the other one is actually nicer. <\$H> God **I think** <\\$H> that one is very fruity.
- <Pause>

- <Son> The Ernest and Julio Gallo is very fruity? <\$O> Or is the <\\$O>.
- <Mother> <\$O> No the <\\$O> Blossom Hill is very fruity.

From the point of view of prosody, there is a slightly greater stress on the *I* than on the *think* and the unit as a whole has a falling intonation. Contextually, the marker is contained in an utterance by the participant with the most status in this particular conversation, the mother. Moreover, in contrast to *I think* in extract (8.4), it is not connected to an act of mitigation such as softening disagreement, instead the mother uses the marker to emphasise her preference for one wine over the other. Holmes (1985) posits the hypothesis that deliberative *I think* is a verbal filler unconsciously adopted by speakers in order to impress or add weight or authority to their opinions, however, as Table 8.1 shows, this appears unnecessary in family discourse and, therefore, deliberative *I think* may be a marker of the ‘public’ rather than the ‘private’ sphere. In extract (8.4), the children are gossiping about the physical appearance of a student enrolled on the same university course as daughter 1, a subject that could be considered sensitive. The tentative function of *I think* is marked in bold:

(8.4 SC)

- <Daughter 1> He wasn’t outside today. He’d actually give it to you.
- <Son 1> Fat boy.
- <Daughter 1> He’s fierce healthy now I’m not jokin you.
- <Son 1> He’s fierce fat too.
- <Daughter 1> He’s not actually that heavy.
- <Son 2> Are you callin people fat?
- <Daughter 1> **I think** he was <\$O> though the year before that I do <\\$O>.
- <Daughter 2> <\$O> Connor in relation to you <\\$O> everyone is fat.
- <Daughter 1> No but **I think** <\$O> he was heavy before <\\$O>.
- <Son 2> <\$O> God you’re awful mean <\\$O> you skin head knacker.
- <Son 1> I am getting fat though.
- <Daughter 1> **I think** he was heavier before.
- <Son 2> I heard <F> was sayin that and <\$O> all here look he’s <\\$O> getting fat.

<Daughter 2> <\$O> He's getting fat <|\\$O>.

<Son 1> I'm puttin on weight.

Prosodically, on these occasions there appears to be slightly more stress on *think* than *I*, with *think* having a falling intonation. However, the context provides clear indications that the function is in fact deliberative. In his first utterance, son 1 asserts that this student is fat and daughter 1 appears to contradict him claiming that *He's fierce healthy now I'm not jokin you*. Murphy (2010), in an analysis of casual conversation among females in their twenties, has demonstrated a high level of hedging in order to cover uncertainty or downtone assertiveness in case the speaker is wrong or his/her opinion differs from that of the other interlocutors in the group. It can clearly be seen that as the conversation progresses, daughter 1 appears to realise that her opinion is different to son 1 and she reformulates her position using *I think* on three occasions and this functions to soften her initial disagreeing act thus protecting her face and how she is perceived within the sibling group.

Similarly to the marker *like*, *I think* does not function as a hedge in TravCorp. However, in contrast to *like*, not only does *I think* not function as a hedge, it does not occur in TravCorp. Stubbe and Holmes (1995) observe that *I think* shows a clear differentiation in socio-economic status, with middle class speakers consistently using more of the marker than working class speakers (see also Woods, 1991; Huspek, 1989). Although the Traveller community could, in theory, be classified 'classless', O'Sullivan (2004) has demonstrated that Travellers display many features typical of working class speakers, such as subject-verb non-concord. Markkanen and Schröder (1997), although exploring the use of hedging in academic/scientific writing, make an important point that may also go some way towards explaining the absence of *I think*, and indeed other hedges, in TravCorp. They claim that hedges acquire their meaning 'through a process of author-reader interaction, on the basis of the text and the communicative situation' (p. 9). This interaction is somewhat controlled by *culture*, 'since people who belong to a particular language community normally shared socially determined aesthetic ideals through their shared educational background' (*ibid.*).

The speaker profiles for both SettCorp and TravCorp also reveal differences in educational attainment in the settled and Traveller family which may account for the variation between the two families' pragmatic systems. In SettCorp, three of the children are students at third level and one is a student at second level. Although there are no educational qualifications recorded for the children in TravCorp, in the Traveller community as a whole, two-thirds of all school leavers are educated to, at most, Primary level (Central Statistics Office, 2004). In addition to this, a study into the educational background of Travellers in Galway revealed that no Traveller had a third level degree, in contrast with a rate of 26% in the settled population (Irwin, 2006). Therefore, it is possible that hedges such as *I think* have been acquired by the members of the settled family in the educational sphere, and their usage has then been invoked in the family setting, something that may not occur in the Traveller family due to the differing levels of educational experience. In a cross-cultural comparison of the use of discourse markers in pedagogic settings, Fung and Carter (2007), using a pedagogic sub-corpus from CANCODE and a corpus of interactive classroom discourse of secondary pupils in Hong Kong, reveal extremely high instances of *I think* in the student corpus, in fact the marker is comparatively more frequent in the Hong Kong corpus than in the CANCODE sub-corpus. They claim that '*I think* is used very heavily to mark both speaker's thoughts and to express attitude, a process that has become automatic and highly routinised to the extent that pragmatic fossilisation is evidenced' (p. 431). This presence in a pedagogic context may suggest that the marker was acquired there and is viewed by students as an appropriate marker for use in this discourse sphere.

If, as hypothesised here, hedges such *I think* are acquired in the educational sphere, it could be claimed that the Traveller family have, perhaps, rejected these hedges due to a past Traveller education policy that viewed education as a matter of settlement, a way of taking the Traveller out of the child (Pavee Point, 2009). Huspek (1989), seeking to account for instances of linguistic variability and power, analyses occurrences of *you know/I think* in American industrial workers' speech, a group he delineates as socially disadvantaged due to their occupation and educational qualifications. He notes that among the workers, the ratio of occurrence of *you know* to *I think* is 8:1. He also observes 'strong sentiments against the use of the latter sequence [*I think*] unless its semantic force is diminished, if not entirely negated, or

at least altered in significant respects' (p. 670). Accordingly, all instances of *I think* (except one) are used in conjunction with modals and the markers *you know* and *I don't know* by the workers. This, he claims, allows the workers to express individual opinions while showing consideration for the group, necessary because in the workplace it is the group that wields the most power in the form of union activity and so on. Therefore, in order to oppose the dominant educational ideology, the Travellers as a group may have created what Huspek terms 'verbal resistance stratagems' (p. 681) that operate to challenge disadvantage.

Similarly, Youmans (2001), in a study the English speech of Chicano barrio residents and what she terms 'Anglo' visitors to this community, attempts to elucidate the connection between language use and values developed in conjunction with community marginality. She claims that Chicanos use *I think* primarily to signal evidentiality, whereas the dominant, white, middle classes use the marker to soften advice or suggestion, a function not evident in the Chicano data. Youmans claims that Chicanos 'may see Anglos' (probably unconscious) use of evidentials for non-evidential functions as 'hypocritical' (p. 62). This view of middle class language use originates, she maintains, in the beliefs and attitudes prevalent in Chicano culture such as close identification with family, community and ethnic grouping, beliefs also strongly established in the Traveller Community. Youmans equates the Anglo use of *I think* with the language required for success in wider society. She contends that the Chicano refusal to match the language norms of the dominant class perpetuates their position as a non-powerful, disadvantaged group in American society. Akin to the Chicanos, the Traveller Community's 'failure' to employ linguistic forms and functions such as the use of *I think* for hedging purposes may have a direct influence on their continuing marginalisation in modern-day Ireland.

8.2.3 *Just*

According to Aijmer (2002: 158), the pragmatic marker *just* has procedural meaning in that it functions as a signal to the hearer to interpret the speaker's utterance as an expression of an attitude. Therefore, *just*, like many other pragmatic markers, is rarely semantically neutral in that there is an element of evaluation attached to its use. Lee (1987) maintains that *just* belongs to Halliday's *interpersonal component*,

denoting that instead of being concerned with the structure or grammar of the propositional meaning, the marker orientates the expression of propositional meaning towards the roles and attitudes of the conversational participants. As Table 8.5 demonstrates, *just* is a frequent element in many spoken corpora:

Table 8.5: Position and frequency of *just* per million words across six corpora

Corpus	Position	Frequency per million words
CANCODE	31	6237
MICASE	34	5225
LCIE	42	4012
ICE-Ireland ⁹	46	3460
SettCorp	63	1100
TravCorp	236	300

Table 8.5 suggests a number of interesting features of *just*, especially in relation to informal, spoken Irish English. The first observation that can be made is from an inter-varietal pragmatic perspective. The marker ranks highest, in 31st position, in CANCODE (see O’Keeffe *et al.*, 2007: 35), which, similarly to LCIE, is a collection of naturally occurring spoken English recorded in everyday situations. *Just* also occurs quite frequently in MICASE, a corpus of spoken academic discourse collected at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in the United States. From an Irish English view point, it can be seen that *just* occupies 42nd place on the LCIE frequency list (see Appendix D). Interestingly, in contrast with *now*, *just* is more frequent in LCIE than in ICE-Ireland (see Table 6.4). In addition, *just* is ranked 54th in the London Lund Corpus (LLC) (see Aijmer, 2002: 153). *Just* is also less frequent in a written context; in Hyland’s corpus of 80 academic research articles, it ranks a lowly 142nd (Lindemann and Mauranen 2001: 463). Moreover, in the London Oslo Bergen (LOB) and Brown corpora it is not ranked in the top 100 most frequent words (Svartvik, 1990). From an intra-varietal perspective, in SettCorp, the marker

⁹ Frequency count based on the spoken, Republic of Ireland component of ICE-Ireland (315,791 words).

is 63rd and is ranked 236th in TravCorp with only 300 occurrences per million words and this variation will be accounted for in the analysis that follows.

The use of *just* in conversation has a number of functions (see Carter and McCarthy, 2006; Aijmer, 2002; Lindemann and Mauranen, 2001). It can be used for emphasis *It's just not right*, as a particulariser *That's just what I wanted*, with temporal meaning *I've just finished painting the bathroom*, as a limiter *...and I can't see that just one doctor is sufficient really* and as a softener or downtoner *Could I just ask you something?*.¹⁰ Akin to the occurrences of *just* on word frequency lists, these functions occur with different frequencies across a number of different context types. According to Lindemann and Mauranen (2001), in MICASE the downtoning function (which includes limiters) is the most frequent, followed by emphasis, particulariser and temporal. On the other hand, in the LLC, Aijmer (2002) ranks emphasis as the most common (she includes downtoning *just* in this grouping), followed by particulariser, temporal and planning.¹¹ Interestingly, Aijmer assigns *just* a planning function which, she claims, allows the speaker to fill a pause immediately before he corrects himself, a function that she also attributes to *like* and *you know* (p. 156).¹²

In order to examine the frequency of *just* as a hedge in SettCorp and TravCorp, the occurrences of the marker were assigned a function and the results are presented in Table 8.6:

¹⁰ The examples given here are taken from Carter and McCarthy (2006: 98-99).

¹¹ The London Lund Corpus (LLC) is a 500,000 word spoken corpus. It contains a range of both prepared and spontaneous speech from formal and informal situations (see Svartvik, 1990).

¹² Lindemann and Mauranen (2001) suggest that occurrences of *just* in instances of speaker repair be assigned to the *ambiguous* functional grouping rather than *filler* or *planner* since 'repairs make it difficult to determine what the speaker intent might have been' (p. 466). Also, Miller and Weinert (1995) have disproved the hypothesis that *like* performs a filling function (see Section 8.2.1).

Table 8.6: Functions of *just* in SettCorp and TravCorp

	<i>Hedge</i>	<i>Limit</i>	<i>Emph</i>	<i>Partic</i>	<i>Temp</i> ¹³	<i>Ambig</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>SettCorp</i>	14	10	8	4	2	1	39
<i>TravCorp</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
<i>Total</i>	15	10	8	4	2	2	41

Table 8.6 demonstrates that although *just* occurs relatively infrequently in comparison to other corpora of spoken English (see Table 8.5), the marker's functional distribution remains largely consistent with other studies (Lindemann and Mauranen, 2001; Aijmer, 2002). Relevant to this particular analysis chapter, hedging forms the largest functional grouping, with 15 occurrences over SettCorp and TravCorp, accounting for more than one in three instances of the marker. Two items were classified ambiguous with respect to function due to the fact that they were part of an incomplete and/or repaired utterance and thus were difficult to classify. Worthy of note here also is that *just* may be linked to discourse goal-type. For example, in SettCorp, 14 of the 39 occurrences feature in a conversation based around fixing the printer in the family home. Therefore, one episode of the goal-type collaborative task¹⁴ accounts for 36% of all instances of the marker in the corpus and this connection will be further developed in relation to extracts (8.5) and (8.6).

Aijmer (2002) maintains that *just* functions as a hedge in the realm of both positive and negative politeness. From a positive politeness viewpoint, *just* co-occurs with both extreme and informal adjectives and verbs in order to establish and maintain in-group membership. In SettCorp, there is one example of *just* co-occurring with an adjective, shown in extract (8.5). In this extract the mother and sons are attempting to wrap a present at Christmas time, therefore the goal-type is one of collaborative task.

¹³ It is possible that the low occurrence of temporal *just* is, in part, due to unique construction of the 'hot-news' perfect in Irish English. Instead of using *just* as in *He's just come down the stairs*, Irish English speakers use a *be* + *after* + *-ing* construction, for example *He was after coming down the stairs* (see also Harris, 1993).

¹⁴ See McCarthy (1998) for full definitions of conversation goal-types.

(8.5 SC)

- <Son 1> Stick the two sheets together out there and then put them both around that.
- <Mother> <=\$> And then stick <\\$> the paper will stick <=\$> to <\\$> to itself.
It won't stick to the silver.
- <Son 1> Yeah.
- <Mother> Don't over wrap so much you might be short.
- <Son 1> Give's the sellotape. I'll stay here.
- <Mother> Show me. I'll do this bit.
- <Son 2> You're **just great. Absolutely fantastic.**

Both the mother and son 1 use imperative structures such as *Stick*, *Give* and *Show* in order to communicate to one another what needs to be done. The mother's utterance *Show me. I'll do this bit* indicates that she wishes to finish the task. Son 2 replies with *You're just great. Absolutely fantastic*, which contains an occurrence of *just* collocating with an adjective *great* and an 'extreme' adjective *fantastic*, and, on the surface at least, fulfils Aijmer's (2002) criteria for *just* functioning as a hedge in the realm of positive politeness. However, what is notable about this occurrence is that the prosody of the utterance marks it as a sarcastic comment. Son 2, seemingly fully aware of the fact that *just* is used in relation to positive politeness, subverts its function through his use of a sarcastic tone. Aijmer suggests that *just* is associated with extreme and informal adjectives, and by extension positive politeness, as it 'creates common ground' (p. 164), 'intensifies in-group membership' (p. 165), 'underlines the speaker's emotional bond with the hearer' (p. 166) and 'contributes to a friendly atmosphere' (p. 167). However, normally, these features are already pre-established within the realm of family discourse, therefore the speaker has no real need to create them, thus allowing son 2 to parody positive politeness in extract (8.5).

From the perspective of negative politeness, *just* functions as a downtoning hedge, modifying the face threat carried by speech acts such as assertions, suggestions, criticisms or requests (Aijmer, 2002: 169). Extract (8.6), again an example of the goal-type collaborative task, demonstrates this use of the marker:

(8.6 SC)

- <Daughter> <S=> It shouldn't <S=> it shouldn't happen like. [Pause]. <SH> Careful of that thing <SH>.
- <Son> No shur if we've to change it again we may as well get a new printer like. Now.
- <Daughter> No the thing is still flashing.
- <Son> Fuck.
- <Daughter> Until the lights stop flashing the problem is not fixed.
- <Son> Ah well. Printer care tabs. Right we'll give it another am **let's just see** if we sh=.
- <Daughter> It's not that easy is it? It's not out of ink it's a new ink cartridge shur.

The daughter and son are trying to fix a computer printer and the presence of discourse features such as taboo language indicates that they may be getting frustrated. The son's utterance *Right we'll give it another am **let's just see** if we sh=* illustrates the use of *just* to mitigate *let's see* which has an imperative structure. Lindemann and Mauranen (2001) identify the structure *let* + (1st person pronoun) + *just* + (metadiscursive item) as the 'prototypical unit' that *just* participates in in MICASE maintaining that 'it carries the pragmatic value of a hedged metadiscursive expression, and it could indeed also be viewed as a combination (or even "collocation") of two pragmatic functions, hedging and metadiscourse' (p. 464). According to Carter and McCarthy (2006: 288), *let's* is used to direct a collective focus of attention on the part of the speaker and listener. On this occasion, the son softens that directive by inserting *just* into the middle of it thus protecting the daughter's face.

This use of the marker is also evident in extract (8.7). Here, again, the presence of a cluster of hedges is evident (marked in bold) with four hedges occurring in close proximity, including the reciprocal use of the hedged qualifier *like*:

(8.7 SC)

- <Mother> It's hard work like. I had to wash the sockette three times and dry it while I was cleaning the chairs.
- <Pause>
- <Son 1> Do you want to do it yourself **like**?

- <Son 2> Well what are you doin now at the moment **like**?
- <Mother> We're **just**+
- <Son 1> Steamin it up.
- <Mother> +lifting the dirt **I'd say**. Jimmy will you get the sockette and do it the way she said. Otherwise I'll do it <\$O> because <\\$O>+
- <Son 1> <\$O> She was <\\$O> doin that first <\$O> to </\$O>+
- <Mother> <\$O> But <\\$O> you don't do that. <\$O> But <=\$> you'll <\\$=> <\$O> you're only wastin steam then.

Just is used as part of an interrupted utterance, however, upon ignoring the actual interruption *Steamin it up*, it can be seen that the marker collocates with another hedge *I'd say*. Both of these function to indicate a level of uncertainty on the part of the mother and also, as has already been shown in the case of *like*, enable the mother to position herself as a 'non-expert', in this instance in the use of a steam cleaner. This allows her to lessen any perceived knowledge imbalance thereby heightening the sense of intimacy essential to smooth familial relationships.

TravCorp contains only one example of *just* used as a hedge, evident in bold in extract (8.8). In this extract, the son and daughter are engaged in a playful dispute regarding a seat in front of the television:

(8.8 TC)

- <Daughter> You'd be safer now to **just go way** and <\$O> leave me <\\$O> alone.
- <Son> Come up.
- <Laughter>
- <Daughter> No. No. No. Michael no.

The son wants the daughter to move signalled by the imperative *Come up*, however, the daughter does not want to move and warns the son to *just go way and leave me alone* using *just* to soften her directive. This structure, *just + imperative*, also accounts for seven instances of hedging *just* in SettCorp. Lee (1987), in an examination of doctor-patient directives, claims that by using *just* to soften these utterance types, 'the speaker suggests that the action involved is a relatively unimportant one...that it has no significant consequences...it is natural' (p. 383).

Therefore, in complying with the speaker's wishes, the hearer risks no significant threat to face and this is also illustrated by the presence of humour in the form of laughter in the extract.

The relatively low position of the marker *just* in both TravCorp and SettCorp in comparison to other spoken corpora, most particularly LCIE and ICE-Ireland, raises a number of issues in relation intra-varietal pragmatic variation. Firstly, central to Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of face and the negative politeness strategies that enable us to 'save face' is 'the want of every "competent adult member" that his actions be unimpeded by others' (p. 62). This notion of a *competent adult member* may suggest that children are unconcerned with strategies that revolve around the 'achievement of distance' (Wood and Kroger, 1991: 147). Therefore, the use of *just* appears to be heavily influenced by the macro-social factor of *age*. Furthermore, negative politeness has a lesser role to play in family discourse because the micro-social situational characteristics of the family CofP go a long way towards 'licensing' the preferred direct style (see also Blum-Kulka, 1997a). Most of the family's politeness work is done at the level of speaker relationship in that it is so fixed and stable there is no need for the respectful behaviour evidenced in negative politeness.

In addition to this, Table 8.2 illustrates that other markers such as *kind of/sort of* and *I suppose* appear to have a low frequency in family discourse. Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that the marker *sort of* is representative of the normal linguistic behaviour between intimates, therefore one would reasonably expect a relatively high occurrence in family discourse, one of the most intimate of speech context-types. However, as Table 8.2 shows there are no occurrences of *sort of* in either TravCorp or SettCorp and only one occurrence of *kind of* (in SettCorp), shown, in bold, in extract (8.9):

(8.9 SC)

- | | |
|----------|---|
| <Son 2> | Now. |
| <Son 1> | I wouldn't be able to drink a whole bottle of it like of Zinfandel. |
| <Mother> | I think it's kind of it's when+ |

- <Son 1> Very sweet like.
- <Mother> +when you're drinking without eating it's grand. You couldn't have it with a meal.
- <Son 1> No. No.

The sons and their mother are discussing the positives and negatives of Zinfandel and comparing one brand of wine *Ernest and Julio Gallo* to another *Blossom Hill*. Although part of an utterance repair, the occurrence of *kind of*, from SettCorp, collocates with *I think*, indicating a hedging function. Aijmer (1984, 2002) illustrates that *sort of* can be used to soften a strongly voiced opinion, request or suggestion, thereby functioning in both positive and negative politeness domains. According to Holmes (1993: 101), both *kind of* and *sort of* function to reduce the social distance between speakers and also to express the speaker's desire for a relaxed relationship with the addressee. Both minimising social distance and creating a relaxed speaker relationship are elements that have to be worked at in other speech contexts but which are a given for a family CofP. In other words this reduction of social distance may be unnecessary in these CofPs (as illustrated by the frequency counts from both SettCorp and TravCorp), where the social distance is already perceived as being negligible. However, more quantitative research using larger corpora is necessary in order to test the validity of this tentative finding.

8.2.4 *You know*

Previous studies of *you know* reflect many of the issues that have already been raised regarding pragmatic markers. It has been accorded a variety of labels among them 'verbal filler' (Brown, 1977) and 'hedge' (Lakoff, 1975; Brown and Levinson, 1987).¹⁵ Researchers such as Östman (1981) and Holmes (1986) claim that *you know* serves a variety of different, though closely related, functions in discourse. Holmes (1986) divides these functions into two categories; *Category I* involves instances of *you know* used to express speaker confidence or certainty and *Category II* reflects the usage of *you know* to express uncertainty of various kinds. Assigning instances of *you know* to Category I relies heavily on speaker and addressee sharing mutual background and experience (see also Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 208). Fox Tree

¹⁵ See Holmes (1986: 1) for a full list of labels.

and Schrock (2002: 737) claim that using *you know* in order to credit the speaker with relevant background knowledge and experience seems to be a ‘vacuously broad claim, because everything a person says should eventually become mutual background knowledge’ and instead claim that the marker simply invites speaker inferences. Macaulay (2002) also maintains that the use of *you know* does not appear to be primarily based on assumptions of shared knowledge. However, for the purposes of this study, Holmes’ (1986) framework will be used because of its suitability in clearly identifying the function of hedging, given that Category I features expressions of positive politeness and Category II, negative politeness, the domain usually associated with the presence of hedges.

In order to determine the function of *you know* in both SettCorp and TravCorp, the instances of the marker in both corpora were analysed, and results are presented in Table 8.7:

Table 8.7: Frequency for *you know* functioning as a hedge in SettCorp and TravCorp

SettCorp		TravCorp	
<i>Category I</i>	<i>Category II</i>	<i>Category I</i>	<i>Category II</i>
8	4	0	0
Total = 12		Total = 0	

As Table 8.7 demonstrates, the marker occurs on 12 occasions in SettCorp and, in marked contrast, *you know* does not appear in TravCorp, the reasons for which will be explored as the analysis progresses. In SettCorp, 8 instances of the marker unsurprisingly belong to *Category I*, given that within this category, the marker is strongly associated with acknowledging mutual background knowledge between conversational participants, a feature that should be prevalent in family discourse. On the other hand, the 4 instances of the marker in *Category II*, account for only 33% of its overall usage. In Category II, the use of *you know* signals a lack of certainty, confidence and precision (see Holmes, 1986), attributes normally

associated with the function of hedging. Extract (8.10) illustrates the use of *you know* (marked in bold) as a hedge in SettCorp:

(8.10 SC)

- <Son> I'd say it's hard enough even to find Zinfandel here. <SO> I'd say it is <\\$O>.
- <Mother> <SO> You can get <\\$O> the Blossom Hill am in Dunnes like and it's like Blossom Hill is the one you'll get but the other one is actually nicer. <\$H> God I think <\\$H> that one is very fruity.
- <Pause>
- <Son> The Ernest and Jullio Gallo is very fruity? <SO> Or is the <\\$O>+
- <Mother> <SO> No the <\\$O> Blossom Hill is very fruity.
- <Son> I think it's the Blossom Hill I had before.
- <Mother> The other one isn't quite as fruity **you know**.

In this extract, the mother and son are discussing both the availability and taste of the wine Zinfandel. Within the six speaker turns featured, there are two overlaps and one interruption, all perpetrated by the mother in order to secure the conversational 'floor'. However, the son remains unaffected by these due to the presence of a large number of hedges, such as *I think*, *I'd say* and *like*, which serve to mitigate both what the speakers are saying and their efforts to secure the floor in order to say it. In relation to conversational content, we again see the speakers go to great lengths in order to appear 'non-expert'. The son does not want to baldly claim that you cannot obtain Zinfandel in Ireland therefore he softens his opinion using *I'd say* and *hard enough even*. The mother, who obviously knows where the wine can be purchased, downtones her knowledge, and the fact that she overlapped, by stating *You can get the Blossom Hill am in Dunnes like*, with *like* simultaneously functioning as both exemplifier and hedge. Similarly, in the utterance *The other one isn't quite as fruity you know* the mother further mitigates her assertions when comparing the taste of two different wines, with *quite* collocating with *you know*. Extract (8.10) also features the echoing of the lexical item *fruity*, adding an extra dimension to the collaboration between the two speakers. Importantly, all these hedging devices frequently work in conjunction with one another.

According to Aijmer (2004), the clustering of pragmatic markers is an indication that they share a similar function. The clustering of different hedging devices is evident in extract (8.11):

(8.11 SC)

- <Son> <\$O> **I think** it's **near** Bath <\\$O>.
- <Father> It's **not far** from Bath <\$O> **is it** <\\$O>?
- <Son> <\$O> **I'm not sure** <\\$O> **actually** now.
- <Father> **I think** tis **near** to+
- <Mother> Bath. **I thought** Bath was by the sea.
- <Son> So did I yeah **I thought** Bath <\$O> was **close enough** <\\$O> to the sea.
- <Father> <\$O> No no <\\$O> Bath is inland.
- [...]
- <Mother> Tisint.
- [...]
- <Son> It is yeah it <\$O> is but it's <\\$O> **not far** inland.
- <Father> <\$O> It is inland. <\\$O>
- [...]
- <Father> **It is it's in beside near** Bristol Connor.
- <Son> Bristol **I don't know** my geography **at all**.

The conversation is concerned with establishing the location of the English city of Bath. Although the participants each have their own firm views on this, the language is heavily hedged by pragmatic markers such as *I think (I thought)*, vague expressions *near, not far, close enough*, a question tag *is it?*, the negation of the verbs *sure* and *know* and, finally, an on-line hedged reformulation on the father's part *It is it's in beside near Bristol Connor*. Aijmer (2004) claims that native speakers use clustering to reinforce the phatic function of pragmatic markers. However, Aijmer limits her exploration of clustering to that which occurs in the course of one speaker turn, whereas the example given here points to the clustering of markers over a series of turns involving multiple speakers, evident in many of the extracts in this analysis. This could indicate that markers, when used in the family CofP, have a

broader pragmatic purpose in that they reflect on-going collaboration between speakers, especially in this specific speech context.

The marker *you know* also appears in other forms in SettCorp and TravCorp. Erman (2001: 1356) states that *you know* is frequently used in pre-fabricated chunks by adolescent speakers ‘thus ensuring quick processing and fluency’. The six-word chunk *d’you know what I mean?* appears on one occasion in both corpora and in both instances appears to function as a hedge. In extract (8.12) from SettCorp, the son and daughter are in conversation about the daughter’s university course:

(8.12 SC)

- <Daughter> I was with <F> an all and she was trying to access it. She said she never was able to. <F> had to let her <H> use her password <H> <G?>.
- <Son> And d’you not have <F>’s password no?
- <Daughter> Well <F> I wouldn’t ask <F> to give me <F>’s password and <F> wasn’t there. So I mean that why I don’t have it done.
- <Son> Yeah but shur you’re not going to do anything like.
- <Daughter> I know but I still wouldn’t do it.
- <Son> Mhm.
- <Daughter> I really couldn’t **d’you know what I mean?** There was no one there today only <M> and <M> and I just wouldn’t+

The daughter is unable to access a computer in the university because she does not have the necessary password. Her brother wants to know why she did not ask another member of her course for their password in order that she could access the computer, perhaps implying that this is what he would do in a similar situation. The daughter makes the point that the people she would have asked were not present and that she would not ask those who were, two male members (indicated by the names <M> and <M>). Her utterance *I really couldn’t d’you know what I mean?* is an attempt to explain herself *d’you know what I mean* functioning as an appeal for reassurance or validation (see Holmes, 1986: 10) from the brother, indicating that the sister may feel a little embarrassed by the whole situation. TravCorp also features the presence of the chunk as a hedge albeit in a slightly different manner. In extract (8.13), the utterance featuring the chunk, in bold, is not enacted by an adolescent speaker but by the mother:

(8.13 TC)

- <Mother> May Mary Mary come in.
- <Daughter> What? Yeah yeah <\$O> yeah <\\$O>.
- <Son> <\$O> <\$G> <\\$O>.
- <Baby> Mary. Get it.
- <Mother> <Shouting> C'mon **d'you know what I mean?**
- <Baby> Oh mammy .
- <Mother> What time is it? What do you want Mary? What time is it?
- <Pause>
- <Baby> <Crying> Mammy it's all over me now mammy.
- <Father> Right you stay in <\$H> daddy's room <\\$H> will ya?
- <Mother> They're mad to get off to this <\$G>.

This extract clearly demonstrates a feature common to family discourse, that of the mitigated parental directive. The mother is telling her daughter to come inside and the daughter signals that she will saying *Yeah yeah yeah*. However, when the baby wants the daughter to get something for him, she does not appear to be in the caravan at which point the mother loses patience and shouts at the daughter in order to hurry her inside. The utterance *C'mon d'you know what I mean?* is marked prosodically by a raised voice and contains an imperative command. However, both are softened by the presence of the hedge.

The low occurrence of the marker *you know* as a hedge in TravCorp and SettCorp may demonstrate that this marker features infrequently in the family pragmatic system. This hypothesis is supported by research in both family discourse and other speech contexts. Östman (1981) found that conversations among family members at a dinner table have fewer *you knows* than conversations with guests. Erman (2001) compared the LLC and COLT and found that the hedging function of *you know* was not present in either the LLC or COLT. This, she claims, is despite the 'radical' difference between the discourse types in the two corpora. The relative absence of *you know* from both families' pragmatic systems can also be connected to the macro-social factor *age*. Macaulay (2002) found that adolescents at the age of fourteen, in conversation with their peers, have not yet developed *you know* as a characteristic of

their discourse style. The age profile of the siblings in TravCorp is lower than that of SettCorp and this could be one contributing factor to the absence of *you know* as a hedge in TravCorp. These studies demonstrate that an absence of the hedging function of *you know* may be particularly applicable to families with young children. Fox Tree and Schrock (2002) further suggest that certain families may develop a speech style that does not invite *you know* in order to avoid any misunderstandings between family members, again something that may be necessary when dealing with young children.

8.2.5 *Actually*

Tognini-Bonelli (1993: 203) maintains that the high frequency of occurrence of *actually* in spoken language can be attributed to it being:

...a very common way of implicitly acknowledging what has gone on before, that is paying lip-service to either another participant's contribution or to one's own stated position before going on to contradict it or correct it in some way.

Using the COBUILD corpus, she notes that *actually* occurs approximately once every two thousand words. It is also more frequent in spoken British English than spoken American English – the proportion is 2.4:1 according to Aijmer (1986) and 2.2:1 according to Oh (2000). Cheng and Warren (2001), working from the Hong Kong Corpus of Conversational English, also note that non-native speakers of English use *actually* more frequently than native speakers. Interestingly, in SettCorp, *actually* occurs 13 times per 10,000 words making it more than twice as frequent as in COBUILD, whereas the marker does not appear in TravCorp and reasons for this will be explored in this section. Generally speaking, however, the high frequency of occurrence of *actually* can be attributed to the accepted notion that is used to perform two principal functions in spoken language; *propositional* and *discoursal*.

The propositional usage of *actually* is centred around Quirk *et al.*'s (1995) inclusion of the marker among what they term 'content disjuncts', therefore, according to Cheng and Warren (2001: 258), 'the speaker uses the adverbial *actually* to comment on the truth value of what he/she is saying in a particular context.' The Collins-COBUILD (1995: 19) dictionary definition echoes this in asserting that 'you use

actually to indicate that a situation exists or happened, or to emphasise that it is true or correct, especially when its existence or truth is surprising.’ Lenk (1998: 157) claims that the phrase ‘when its existence or truth is surprising’ does not correlate with the actual use of the marker in spoken language. She maintains that that the best classification for the propositional use of *actually* seems to be as an intensifier¹⁶ that does not express a ‘degree of surprise’. A more worthwhile endeavour in considering the propositional function of *actually* might be to focus on its ‘contrastive’ element (see Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Oh, 2000; Carter and McCarthy, 2006), where there exists an implied ‘discrepancy between reality and what appears to be the case’ (Aijmer, 2002: 274). However, the majority of the research does appear to agree on one important point that propositional *actually* is associated in some way with ‘unexpectedness’ (Oh, 2000). Cheng and Warren (2001) propose two micro functions for propositional *actually*:

1. To indicate a situation exists or happens
2. To emphasise something unexpected is true or correct.

According to Lenk (1998) and Cheng and Warren (2001), propositional uses of *actually* can be paraphrased by *in fact* or *really*. Furthermore, Aijmer (2002) suggests that where the marker provides unexpected information, it can be compared to *what’s more* or *as a matter of fact*. From the point of view of position within an utterance, Lenk (1998) maintains that the marker is frequently used as a pre- or post-verbal intensifier thereby implying that it occurs medially. Although Oh (2000) found no one-to-one correlation between position and function, he does claim that there exists a restriction that the propositional use of *actually* can only occur medially (see also Cheng and Warren, 2001).

The second function of *actually* in spoken language is as a discourse marker. Tognini-Bonelli (1993), working with the COBUILD corpus, maintains that the marker is used to mitigate self-correction and challenge. Lenk (1998) examined the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English and The Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English and determined that, in its discourse marker role, *actually* has

¹⁶ Holmes (1990) also classifies *actually* as an intensifier or booster.

three micro-functions: as a personal opinion marker, as an expression of objection to what has been said before and as a topic (or turn) initiator. In another study, Cheng and Warren (2001), incorporating these studies and the work of Sinclair and Brazil (1982), Stenström (1986) and Sinclair *et al.* (1995), propose five micro functions for discourse marker *actually*:

1. To mitigate correction, rephrasing or contradiction (in the self and others)
2. To introduce a new topic or sub-topic
3. To act as a filler
4. To introduce or mitigate a point of view
5. To imply a sense of solidarity, intimacy and friendliness.

Where paraphrase is useful in determining propositional *actually*, collocation can play an important role in how the discourse marking function is understood. *Actually* frequently collocates with other hedges such as *I think*, *you know* or *well* in order to function as a mitigator or to be softened by other markers. From a positional perspective, in contrast to propositional *actually*, although Aijmer (1986, 2002) suggests that the marker appears to perform a different function according to its position, the discourse marker function appears to be relatively flexible in position within the utterance (see Watts, 1988; Lenk, 1998; Oh, 2000). This may have led to the discrepancies noted by Cheng and Warren (2001) who observed that the position of discourse marker *actually* differed between native and non-native speakers. This in turn, they claim, could lead to strain on the hearer and perhaps intercultural communication problems.

This study will be primarily concerned with the discourse marker function of *actually* given that the micro functions 1 and 4 listed here feature mitigation, a feature of hedging in the realm of negative politeness, and 5 is connected to displaying solidarity, intimacy and friendliness, a feature of positive politeness. Table 8.8 illustrates the functional breakdown of the occurrences of *actually* in SettCorp and TravCorp:

Table 8.8: Frequency of use of *actually* in SettCorp and TravCorp according to micro function¹⁷

FUNCTION	SettCorp	TravCorp
PROPOSITIONAL		
1. indicate a situation exists or happens	1	0
2. emphasise something unexpected is true or correct	3	0
Sub-total	4	0
DISCOURSE MARKER		
1a. mitigate self-correction, rephrasing or self-contradiction	3	0
	3	0
1b. mitigate correction, rephrasing or contradiction of others	1	0
2. introduce a new topic or sub-topic	0	0
3. act as a filler	1	0
4. introduce or mitigate a point of view	4	0
5. imply a sense of solidarity, intimacy and friendliness	12	0
Sub-total		
TOTAL	16	0

As Table 8.8 shows, *actually* is used to mitigate on seven occasions in SettCorp. The micro-function of mitigation in relation to the correction of self and others accounts for 50% of the occurrences of *actually* as a discourse marker. In extract (8.14), *actually* (marked in bold) is used twice by the father:

(8.14 SC)

- <Father> What spiffing tracksuit?
- <Daughter 1> <\$O> The black one <\\$O>.
- <Mother> <\$O> The black one <\\$O>.
- <Daughter 2> <\$O> The shiny one <\\$O>.
- <Father> Oh the shiny one. Oh yeah I still have that.
- <Son 1> Dada.
- <Daughter 2> Can I've that Dad?

¹⁷ Table adapted from Cheng and Warren (2001).

- <Mother> You won't have it if I find it.
- <Daughter 2> <\$H> You had to tug it over your stomach <\\$H>.
- <Mother> Connor I have a plate for you love.
- <Father> What you le= say?
- <Daughter 2> It wouldn't close over your stomach.
- <Father> It didn't close and twas elastic Susan. It was stretchable.
- <Mother> You won't have that tracksuit if I find it.
- <Son 2> Dada. Don't say that about your Dad.
- [Laughter]
- <Father> **Actually** the tracksuit is being worn by someone else cos it went out in a bag of clothes the last day.
- <Mother> <\$O> Good I'm <\\$O> delighted to hear it.
- <Daughter 2> <\$O> Stop Jimmy <\\$O>.
- <Father> **Actually** it didn't no now that I come to think of it. It's still upstairs.

The family are discussing a tracksuit that the father used to wear, however, comments such as *It wouldn't close over your stomach* serve to indicate the tracksuit's unpopularity, especially with the female members of the family. The father, who initially claims that *I still have that*, self-corrects on two occasions using the marker, firstly to indicate that he no longer possesses the tracksuit and secondly, to reveal that he in fact still does. Taglicht (2001: 2-3) refers to this use of *actually* as 'mild (or conciliatory)' in that if the speaker 'is correcting something said or implied by himself, an element of apology is involved.' Self-correction is inherently a face threatening act, however in using *actually* in lieu of an apology, the father is mitigating it by signalling that the correction is by and large, an insignificant and unimportant one (see also Hickey, 1991). *Actually* as a marker of positive politeness also features strongly in the functional distribution in Table 8.8, accounting for 33% of the discourse marker macro-function. Interestingly, all four of these occurrences are utterance final. Extract (8.15) is one of four examples of using the marker to signal a sense of solidarity, friendliness and intimacy. The family are admiring their Christmas tree (*actually* is marked in bold):

(8.15 SC)

- <Daughter 1> I like the tree.
- <Son 1> Yeah it's lovely.
- <Mother> <|= > Will you will you <|= >+
- <Son 1> It's really nice.
- <Mother> +will you take that over to you til we un=+
- <Son 1> It's much nicer than the ones we had.
- <Son 2> +Unr= unravel it.
- <Mother> It's the right size for once.
- <Son 1> But it's really green and there's loads of branches on it.
- <Daughter 1> Yeah it is <O> **actually** <O>.
- <Mother> <O> It's great <O> isn't it?
- <Son 1> Yeah yeah.

Extract (8.15) again exhibits features of the apparently paradoxical nature of family discourse that is evident from much of the discourse in both TravCorp and SettCorp. Although the mother is interrupted on two occasions by her son, a speaker of lower conversational power than she, the conversation continues with no discord evident, indeed, upon examination, it is very collaborative in nature. The daughter's use of *actually* (in bold) at the end of her turn functions to agree with what was said by the previous speaker indicating intimacy. This particular use of the marker appears to evoke attributes of its fundamental semantic meaning, described by Watts (1988). He examined three lexemes, *actually*, *really* and *basically*, and claimed that their meaning denotes something like 'genuineness, honesty, fundamentality or even truth' (p. 254). Further evidence of these traits is provided by *actually* being overlapped by the mother in order that she might take the turn to continue the agreement sequence. Sinclair and Brazil (1982: 111) maintain that this use of markers like *actually* 'perform the social function of insinuating an element of generalised togetherness...emphasising the *us* aspect of the relationship.' These discursal features are further strengthened by the extract context, that of putting up the Christmas tree.

Table 8.8 demonstrates that in SettCorp, discourse marker *actually* is three times more frequent than the propositional use of the marker. This is in contrast to other studies such as Lenk (1998) who reported that 53.13% of all examples of *actually* were discourse markers, whereas in Aijmer (2002) the figure was 55.6%. There are a number of possible explanations for this. Both Lenk and Aijmer use the LLC, where, as previously mentioned, although it is noted that the speakers are generally close friends (Aijmer, 2002: 4), the corpus also contains conversation between academic associates and speakers on an unequal professional power gradient (for example, professors-secretaries). In addition to this, not all conversations are spontaneous and face-to-face, some of them are telephone based and others public and prepared. In addition, Lenk uses the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English which was designed as a comparable corpus to the LLC. In contrast, both TravCorp and SettCorp are exclusively face-to-face conversations recorded in the home/family environment, one of the most intimate of speech contexts. The non-occurrence of *actually* in TravCorp makes it impossible to ascertain whether or not the functional distribution of the marker in SettCorp in Table 8.8 is representative and, undoubtedly, further research is needed to verify this. However, arguably of greater importance within the scope of this study are the reasons underlying the differences in frequency of the marker across the two families.

Although the size of TravCorp does not allow for any strong conclusions to be made, it could be proposed that the characteristics unique to the Traveller family CofP once again exert a controlling influence on the conversational manoeuvres made by the participants. For example, the existence of the ethnic trait of a strong Traveller kinship culture may negate the need to use *actually* in an interpersonal way. These traits are instead embodied within the CofP itself. Furthermore, Fung and Carter (2007) note that discourse markers like *actually*, while frequent in British English, have only limited occurrences in Hong Kong English. They maintain that *actually* functions primarily in an interpersonal category to mark the attitudes or stance of a speaker. However, Cheng and Warren (2001) have observed that non-native speakers of English use the marker more frequently than native speakers and attribute it to the differences between Eastern and Western cultures' attention to face. Western face is primarily concerned with attention to positive and negative face, both of which refer to the needs of the individual to be approved of,

appreciated and unimpeded by others (see Brown and Levinson, 1987). Mao (1995: 212-219) maintains that Chinese speakers demonstrate the need to be respected and positively evaluated by others, but not necessarily liked by them. Scollon and Scollon (1995: 131), in their analysis of East Asian ‘collectivist’ discourse styles, maintain that ‘individual members of a culture are not seen as independently acting individuals, but rather they are seen as acting within hierarchies of kinship and other relationships.’ They claim that in Eastern cultures, a son or daughter’s actions are motivated by the credit that their parents and ancestors will receive. The Traveller community in general exhibits some of the characteristics of these collectivist cultures such as the primacy of the (extended) family unit and therefore any analysis of this community’s politeness strategies may have to be undertaken by adapting the traditional model of face.

8.3 Conclusion

In terms of variational pragmatics, it can be seen that the macro-social factors *ethnicity, age, socio-economic status* and *educational background* all have a role to play in the occurrence (or not) of hedges in the families’ pragmatic systems. In terms of ethnicity, the Traveller community is characterised by the strength of their family ties. On the other hand, the Irish middle class, although bereft of ‘ethnic’ status, could be said to be distinct from other socio-economic groupings in Irish society due to, for example, high levels of educational achievement and high social mobility. It is these distinguishing characteristics coupled with factors such as the unique age profile of the Traveller family CofP that account for the fact that the hedges *like, I think, just, you know* and *actually* are more frequent in SettCorp than in TravCorp. Indeed, it might be claimed that these hedges represent those that are critical to politeness in ‘mainstream’ Irish culture. They are the absolute minimum needed for polite interaction among participants in Irish society and ensure a smooth transition from the family CofP to the wider social world. They are in a sense ‘redundant’ in the Traveller community given that they rarely move into the realm of mainstream society.

Admittedly, due to the specificity of the data gathered and analysed in this chapter, it is difficult to draw any general conclusions. However, what is apparent is that the

amount of hedging employed in family discourse is lower than in other contexts. By re-examining the micro-social situational characteristics of family discourse, it can be seen that, within the family CofP, there exists a pre-established speaker relationship and that the parents and children are bound in an asymmetrical power relationship. The family are sure of their position in relation to other family members due to the fixed and stable speaker relationships, therefore the desire to protect their speech from face threatening attacks is lessened. Therefore, it appears that all utterances in the family may be 'meta-hedged' by the context itself, thereby eliminating the need for lexical realisations of the strategy. This meta-hedging both maintains the intimacy of the speaker relationships and characterises a family-specific way of talking that has evolved within these family CofPs. Therefore, it could be hypothesised that in Irish English, the more intimate the context-type, the more direct a speaker can be and the less chance there is of participants perceiving an attack to their face. Therefore, by extension, the more intimate the data the less need there is to hedge or soften utterances. In the next chapter, the threads of this and other findings featured in the analysis chapters will be drawn together and suggestions for how this research might be extended will be proffered.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

9.0 Introduction

Language is, according to Wittgenstein (1969), a ‘form of life’ and, as such, becomes one of the forms through which our social relations are made manifest. Our first experiences of language take place in the family, through the natural, unconscious processes by which we are inducted into this micro-society. The family has particular linguistic and pragmatic requirements and social roles which echo those of the broader social world and equip us with the linguistic and pragmatic tools to find our place in it. Indeed, Nichols (1984: 23) maintains that ‘language is one of the primary vehicles through which our relative social status is shown, often in ways that remain below the conscious level of participants in the speech act.’ For speakers engaged in everyday interaction, linguistic constructions at all levels, including the pragmatic level, are crucial indicators of social identity (Ochs, 1993). Lippi-Green (1997: 30) claims that:

...[language] variation isn’t without consequences...We exploit linguistic variation available to us in order to send a complex series of messages about ourselves and the way we position ourselves in the world we live in. We perceive variation in the speech of others and we use it to structure our knowledge about that person.

Equally, pragmatic variation signals how people identify themselves in relation to others. Although writing about the acquisition of pragmatic competence by non-native speakers of English, Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor’s (2003: 38) observation that ‘the consequences of pragmatic differences...are often interpreted on a social or personal level’ has direct relevance to the present study. They maintain that people are sensitive to ‘pragmatic failure’ (Thomas, 1983) and because of this their reactions are often personal and non-objective. This points towards the importance of understanding the nature of different pragmatic systems in order that these ‘failures’, many of which result in misunderstandings, may be avoided.

9.1 Revisiting the research questions

The first research question which guided the initial forays into examining the linguistic practices of the two families was:

1. What are the high frequency items that characterise the pragmatic systems of the family discourse represented in the study?

A retrospective examination of the 25 most frequent words in TravCorp and SettCorp (Table 9.1) underlines the frequency with which many of the items explored in the present study appear in both corpora.

Table 9.1: Frequency list of top 25 words in TravCorp and SettCorp

	TravCorp	SettCorp
1	you	the
2	the	you
3	go	it
4	it	I
5	to	to
6	on	a
7	a	and
8	now	of
9	out	that
10	I	in
11	no	is
12	and	yeah
13	there	no
14	get	it's
15	me	on
16	in	what
17	that	do
18	here	we
19	I'm	now
20	daddy	was
21	goin	have
22	way	there
23	what	like
24	yeah	all
25	look	not

Although, as conceded in Chapter 4, frequency counts are a rather 'raw' method of identifying items that may be characteristic of a pragmatic system, it is not coincidental that many of the items shaded in Figure 9.1 form an integral part of both families' pragmatic practices.

- The personal pronouns *you* and *I* are integral to any reference system, regardless of the context. What is unique to both TravCorp and SettCorp is that *you* (1st position in TravCorp and 2nd in SettCorp) appears before *I* on the frequency lists;
- On the surface, there seems to be a discrepancy between *I* in 4th position in SettCorp and only 10th in TravCorp, however, as Chapter 5 demonstrates, the *I* lemma also includes *me* and *I'm* (positions 15 and 19 in TravCorp respectively), thereby allowing a more comparable examination of the pronoun;
- The personal pronoun *we* appears on the SettCorp list (position 18) but not in the 25 most frequent words in TravCorp, and this was shown to reveal fundamental differences between the Traveller and settled families;
- Although they were shown to be multi-functional items, it was also illustrated that *that*, *now* and *like* play integral parts in the pragmatics of ‘being a family’;
- The vocative *daddy* surfaces in position 20 in TravCorp which provided the first clue in determining the role of vocatives in facilitating community maintenance in the family CofP.

Due to the fact that the frequency lists unearthed a number of items that showed a degree of variation between the two corpora, the second research question logically followed:

2. What are the similarities and differences in frequency between these pragmatic items in settled and Traveller family discourse?

Although the two families are from distinctly different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, they live in the same region, largely use the same language and have similar biological origins. In addition to this, although the age profile is different, the gender profile for the two families is identical (see Section 4.1). Therefore, the hypothesis based on the second research question was that the pragmatic systems of the families would demonstrate both similarities and differences in terms of the high

frequency items under investigation in the present study. These similarities and differences in the families' pragmatic systems are summarised in Table 9.2:

Table 9.2: Similarities and differences between the pragmatic items analysed in the present study

	Similarities	Differences
Personal pronouns	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>You</i> occurs more frequently than <i>I</i> 2. <i>We</i> and <i>they</i> primarily employed to refer to the family 'in-group' 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>You</i> is more frequent in TravCorp than SettCorp. <i>You</i> is 1.5 times more frequent than <i>I</i> in TravCorp, a disparity that does not exist in SettCorp 2. 'Exclusive <i>we</i>' employed in SettCorp but not in TravCorp
Demonstratives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>That</i> is more frequent than <i>this</i> 2. Both families show a preference for the use of exophoric <i>this</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anaphoric <i>that</i> more frequent in SettCorp. TravCorp shows preference for exophoric <i>that</i>
Now	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emblematic of the family CofP in spoken Irish English 2. Marked similarities in the utterance positioning of <i>now</i> 	
Vocatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vocatives very frequent in both SettCorp and TravCorp 2. Marked similarities in vocative function 3. Marked similarities in relationship between vocative position and function 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vocatives more frequent in TravCorp 2. Marked differences in vocative form
Hedges	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hedges relatively infrequent in both SettCorp and TravCorp 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marked differences in frequency between hedges in SettCorp and those in TravCorp

Sociolinguists have long accepted that careful study is needed so as to distinguish between the actual language use of a group and the stereotypes held about it. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of sociolinguistic research is its commitment to the examination of language that is actually produced by speakers as opposed to their potential linguistic competence (Milroy and Gordon, 2003). Holmes (1991: 39) likens the role of a sociolinguist to that of a skilled optometrist aspiring ‘to clean the sooty sediment of negative stereotypes and prejudice.’ This is particularly relevant when studying the language of an ethnic grouping such as Irish Travellers. As Table 9.2 demonstrates, the findings from the analysis suggest that there are more similarities than differences between the families’ pragmatic systems, perhaps indicating the possibility of the existence of a shared pragmatic repertoire in the family CofP in general. The table shows that over four analysis chapters, ten marked similarities between the families’ pragmatic systems were unearthed in contrast to six marked differences. This finding may have ramifications outside of the immediate discipline. For example, in Irish teacher education, it might be possible to employ the findings to help develop an anti-bias and inter-cultural dimension to the pre-service, induction and continuing professional development of teachers.

In order to investigate what the pragmatic variation between the two families conveys about the world they live in, a third research question was posed:

3. What do these similarities and differences in the pragmatic systems reveal about the influence of micro- and macro-social factors such as *power*, *socio-economic status* or *ethnicity* on the families?

The analysis chapters reveal that, broadly speaking, the similarities between the two families’ pragmatic practices, summarised in column two of Table 9.2, are due to the influence of micro-social factors on the families’ pragmatic systems (see Section 2.2.1). Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate how the families primarily orientate themselves to their *audience*, which is both private and immediate, and their *shared immediate situation* of the family home. It was shown that, for example, in a family’s shared space, very few

referents are ‘new’ due to each member’s familiarity with the context of the interaction. However, it is the micro-social characteristic of *social roles* that was often proven to have the over-riding influence on the families’ pragmatic practices. It is worth reiterating here that these social roles exist on two levels. The first is hierarchical in nature with the parents frequently displaying the most conversational power in the family unit. In addition, the older siblings appear to have more conversational power than their younger counterparts. The second level relates to identity and is both stable and pre-established – family members are accorded roles such as *father, mother, older brother* or *youngest daughter* and these remain in place indefinitely. These social roles were shown to contribute to, for example, the marked similarities in vocative function, the connection between attention to face and final position in an utterance and the construction of a family deictic centre around the children. Overall, these unique micro-social factors result in a family-specific ‘bank’ of shared knowledge. Finally, Chapter 8 argued that these factors also serve to ‘meta-hedge’ the context itself, thereby lessening the need for lexical realisations of negative politeness strategies such as hedges.

In contrast, the differences between the pragmatic systems of the settled and Traveller family can be attributed to the impact of macro-social factors such as *age, socio-economic status, ethnicity* and *educational background*. In sum, the differing age profiles of the two families was shown to have an effect on discrepancies in relation to the use of *you* and *I* and anaphoric *that*. Similarly, the influence of ethnicity impacted on, for example, both families’ choice of vocative form, which was also connected to their differing socio-economic status, and the use of ‘exclusive *we*’ which is present in the settled family but does not occur in the Traveller one. Furthermore, all of these macro-social variables were demonstrated to act in concert to contribute to the differences noted in the hedging strategies of both families. Taking these answers to the first three research questions into consideration prompted the final question, namely:

4. What can this study of family discourse bring to our understanding of the frameworks through which spoken discourse may be analysed, specifically variational pragmatics and community of practice?

As already mentioned in Chapter 4, corpus linguistics and variational pragmatics have been successfully blended by in a number of studies due to the methodological advantages corpus linguistics offers. This blend facilitates the study of pragmatic variation between different varieties of a language and between different groups of speakers. For example, the present study demonstrates how applying corpus tools to specific, situated speech contexts – in this case family discourse – can result in an intra-variational appraisal of pragmatic norms between two different cultures. In doing so, the importance of small corpora in variational pragmatic research is highlighted. Small corpora, similar to TravCorp and SettCorp, are relatively easily assembled and analysed which results in ‘current’ linguistic knowledge. Small, register-specific corpora also afford the opportunity to examine nuances in pragmatic use rather than simply seeking to formulate generalisations based on homogenous language ‘wholes’. While there are undoubtedly some difficulties to be overcome when using corpora to study variational pragmatics, the benefits far outweigh any drawbacks – as Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006: 101) maintain ‘some of the major areas of social dissonance and conflict among different social and ethnic groups in American society are directly tied to people’s failure to understand that different groups have different language-use conventions.’

From a community of practice viewpoint, small-scale corpus linguistic studies such as the present one offer an element of quantitative, empirical support to what is a quintessentially qualitative framework. As Chapter 3 outlines, the community of practice is defined by three criteria, *mutual engagement*, *joint enterprise* and *shared repertoire*, which must be met in order that a group may be called a community of practice. The present study employed corpus linguistics to allow the researcher to identify linguistic manifestations of these criteria and, in doing so, further the understanding of a family as a community of practice. First and foremost is the identification of a shared pragmatic repertoire between two families. However, corpus linguistics also provided evidence of linguistic characteristics such as the referential system that contribute towards the strengthening of the family CofP. Moreover, it was argued that both vocatives and hedges facilitate community maintenance within the

family CofP. Therefore, in conclusion, it is argued that small-scale corpus linguistic studies such as the present study offer a variety of thought-provoking insights into variational pragmatics and the community of practice.

9.2 Reviewing the limitations

As mentioned in Chapter 1, there are a number of limitations to the present study which merit reconsideration here. In essence, the present study is an attempt to begin a conversation in relation to the linguistic characteristics of two distinct ethnic and social groups within modern-day Ireland that share a history of mistrust and suspicion. While it is acknowledged that there have been notable efforts to begin this conversation in the past, to the researcher's knowledge, this is the first occasion in which Traveller family language has been collected without an accompanying 'intrusion' by the settled community. Specifically, the present study is limited to two relatively small datasets and, therefore, a relatively restricted number of spoken language extracts. In general, family discourse has proven to be difficult to access and this, coupled with the fact that the Traveller community can be suspicious of the motives of outsiders entering their community, means that viewing TravCorp and SettCorp as unrepresentative may be to underestimate the potential of this study to inform and generate debate. In addition to this, every effort has been made to offset criticisms regarding representativeness and generalisability brought about by the size of the corpora by incorporating a number of larger spoken corpora – LCIE, CANCODE, ICE-Ireland, BNC, MICASE to name but a few – into the analysis. Moreover, a theoretical framework, *community of practice*, which has the ability to reflect larger social patterns has been utilised.

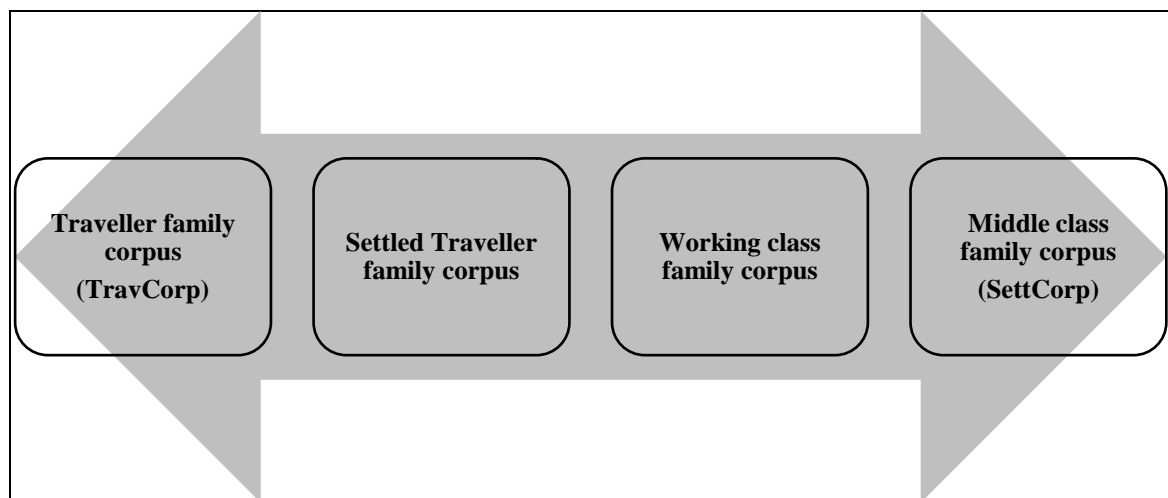
As the discussion around the third research question above has demonstrated, the differences in the pragmatic systems of the two families are due, in the main, to the influence of macro-social factors. These macro-social factors in themselves pose a methodological problem to the researcher. Barron and Schneider (2009: 431) maintain that 'while we generally assume that region, gender, ethnicity etc. are social factors underlying the construction of identities, it is rather a challenging task to investigate

them as such.’ For example, gender and socio-economic class especially have proven to be problematic, even at the level of definition (see Rickford, 1986; Christie, 2000; Mills, 2003). However, Section 4.1 and, indeed, the study itself, makes every effort to categorise both families as rigorously as possible in terms of these macro-social factors in order to ensure future replicability and comparison. In addition, the impact of each of these factors was not examined in isolation, rather the present study assumed an integrative approach where identity is constructed according to the interplay of different macro-social influences. Therefore, it is argued that the findings of this study provide a good starting point for future extensions and that family discourse is an area ripe for further research.

9.3 Directions for further research

As stated in the limitations section above, the present study does not make any claims that the two families featured are representative of their respective communities. This, coupled with the assertion that differences in the two families’ pragmatic systems are due to macro-social variables such as *ethnicity* and *socio-economic status*, points towards the primary avenue for extension of the present study. In order to bridge the social and ethnic divide between TravCorp and SettCorp, a logical first step would be to build corpora that would connect them, as illustrated in Figure 9.1:

Figure 9.1: Bridging the social and ethnic divide between TravCorp and SettCorp



Therefore, as Figure 9.1 demonstrates, it is proposed that future research construct both a settled Traveller family and working class family corpus that are broadly comparable to TravCorp and SettCorp. This could potentially allow for the consolidation of the findings from the present study.

In addition, it appears that for some time now the traditional family unit has been in a state of flux. Copeland and White (1991: 3-4) maintain that:

...with recent social change has become a new empowerment of groups of people, such as women, homosexuals and minorities, who are questioning some of the assumptions and theoretical frameworks...and who are in a position to define *family* in new ways.

This is particularly evident in the Irish context. According to data from the Central Statistics Office (2007b), the average number of children per family has declined from 2.2 in 1986 to 1.4 in 2006. Furthermore, the number of co-habiting couples has increased by 50% since 2002 and the number of same sex couples has increased by 60% in the same time period (two-thirds of these are male couples). Lone parent families also increased by 23% and the number of people divorced by 70% in the years 2002-2006. Therefore, it appears that the family unit in Ireland is currently undergoing a significant and accelerated change and it would seem churlish in the extreme to omit these contemporary family units from any future research.

Dörnyei (2007: 17) claims that there are four fundamental features of a good researcher; primary among these is that they have a 'genuine and strong curiosity' about their topic. The universal resonance of the context-type of family discourse provokes this sort of authentic curiosity, and invites opinion and debate, which is critical to any worthwhile research conversation. Analysing family discourse is not without its challenges, however, not least of which is the problem of access. Once access has been negotiated, the researcher is faced with a plethora of different theoretical, organisational, methodological and analytical frameworks with which to explore a sometimes overwhelming range of linguistic phenomena, small data samples notwithstanding. As Stubbs (1983: 123-124) succinctly states, 'one reason that has certainly kept many

linguists away from studying real discourse is the fear that once the door is opened, there is no way of preventing the whole world from rushing in.’ However, personally, I am delighted to have opened that door and navigated a course through the data. I have had an enduring fascination with the way my own family get along, regardless of what we say to one another, and this interest was accelerated by being exposed to new and exciting ways of analysing language. At various stages of my life, I have also had fleeting encounters with members of the Traveller community, both positive and negative, and each one served to heighten my curiosity about a culture that I think remains misunderstood within Irish society. Many Travellers live behind walls that have been built by both themselves and the settled community, and this endeavour has allowed me a peek over those walls. I sincerely hope that I have done justice to the uniqueness of both families and, in doing so, offered some insight into language that we can often take for granted.

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