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Rapport management in online spoken interaction:

A cross-cultural linguistic analysis of communicative strategies

Selina Schmidt

Supervised by
Dr Andrew Kehoe, Birmingham City University
Professor Michaela Mahlberg, PhD, University of Birmingham

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School of English
Faculty of Arts, Design and Media
Birmingham City University
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Abstract

This thesis studies rapport: a harmonious relationship between people. More specifically, it focuses on the creation and maintenance of such a relationship through a process known as rapport management. My analysis looks at specific ways in which people use language to manage their relationships in ViMELF, the corpus of Video-Mediated English as a Lingua Franca Conversations. My research addresses various gaps in rapport research by analysing rapport management in a corpus as an applied example. There is a disconnect between the study of a macro-linguistic concept like rapport (social and interactional strategies) and the micro-linguistic features that help manage rapport. There is also a disconnect between qualitative and quantitative research on rapport. This thesis bridges these gaps by combining qualitative and quantitative approaches and focussing on three linguistic features that affect a specific rapport strategy, that of stance or conversational positioning. Rather than trying to capture rapport in its entirety, this thesis constitutes a new approach to the analysis of rapport strategies and features and their extraction from larger datasets. To achieve that, I ask three research questions: (1) Which linguistic strategies and features are used when managing rapport, (2) How is the rapport management strategy influenced by the medium, the speakers' backgrounds and idiosyncrasies, and (3) How can corpus linguistic methods be appropriated to analyse a rapport strategy and its realisations in the form of linguistic features?

The knowledge generated with this research is theoretical as well as practical in nature. My thesis contributes to academic knowledge about how the three linguistic features—pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter—influence how unacquainted speakers positions themselves in conversation and thereby effectively manage rapport. I explore the features' ambiguity, the different meanings that they take on depending on the context. Speakers either commit to a stance or, because of the ambiguity of the features, avoid doing so—depending on which function is necessary in a particular situation. This makes the features the perfect toolkit for navigating the fragile relationship speakers build with their conversation partner. My research also contributes practical knowledge about how corpus linguistic methods can be appropriated to advance rapport research, which results in a practical output in form of a software tool developed for this purpose. As an essential step in combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the thesis adopts the concept of co-occurrences and applies these to the linguistic features in the spoken corpus data, which has great potential for further research with other features, as it reveals their patterns of use in new ways.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Rapport is a French borrowing and in its present-day definition denotes a "mutual understanding between persons; sympathy, empathy", or "a relationship characterized by these" (OED). Linguistic research on rapport has conventionally focused on social and interactional strategies that are relatively disconnected from the actual linguistic features that affect rapport. Computational sciences have taken the focus on rapport features almost to the other extreme, away from the larger interactional strategies and qualitative analyses towards feature and fact-based quantitative research that a machine can process. In linguistics, more detailed, specific research on these rapport-managing features usually comes from other areas than those that traditionally study rapport (i.e. not from e.g. politeness or rapport studies). This research usually concentrates on a specific feature and its effect on rapport is only tangentially mentioned.

Since there is focused and tangential research on rapport from many different disciplines, the research topic is very complex and there are no publications that offer a comprehensive overview of all the different approaches to rapport. This makes it more difficult for the different disciplines to learn from one another's findings. Particularly in linguistics, there is a disconnect between the study of a macro-linguistic concept like rapport and the micro-linguistic features that help manage rapport; it is essentially a disconnect between qualitative and quantitative research on rapport.

This thesis bridges that gap by studying some of these individual features, combining qualitative elements from the field of pragmatics with quantitative ones from corpus linguistics. It is a study into how micro-linguistic features that affect how a person positions themselves in conversation are used to effectively manage rapport. I understand this as a basis for possible future research into rapport that creates an intersection between qualitative and quantitative methods from pragmatics and corpus linguistics, capturing both theoretical and practical knowledge.

1.1. Motivation for the study

A motivating factor behind this research is an interest in three topics. The first two are how we can more effectively communicate with one another and how language is used to influence people. Knowing when to speak in which way in a plurilingual context is something many people learn from their childhood on, and they have developed strategies for more effectively communicating with each other, even if they might struggle to understand each other. It is not just the words we use that are important, but also how we say something and in which context we do so. Out of this general interest in language and communication, I developed an interest in whether it is really possible to influence other people through language, be it in motivational speeches, political speeches or marketing. Throughout my scientific interest in the topic[1], stance or conversational positioning has been a recurrent theme. This brought me to investigate rapport management, which brings together elements from all these interests.

The interest in combining qualitative and quantitative research stems from studying pragmatics, conversation analysis and discourse analysis on the one hand and corpus linguistics on the other. While I have seen many advances in rapport research through corpus pragmatics, for example, qualitative and quantitative research seemed relatively unconnected when beginning this doctoral study. The disciplines have much to offer each other, though, and combining them to achieve a more complete picture of rapport research seemed a logical step.

1.2. Research setting

Rapport is an essential element in relating with people. While strangers first have to build rapport, long-lasting close relationships could not exist without it. During a relationship, rapport between two people might change. It can increase, but it can also be challenged and decrease. All communication will influence rapport, whether it is strangers meeting for the first time or old friends. Relationships differ depending on setting (e.g. work versus private interaction), power (inferior, superior, equal or more complex power relations), depth (on a scale from unacquainted or loosely acquainted to most intimate relationship), and type (e.g.

[1] There is also a fair amount of non-academic, pseudo-scientific information about this in the form of books, and narratives on TV shows and in movies.

professional, platonic, sexual), among others. A very common, broadly defined type of relationship is that of friendship, which can exist in many different forms (cf. Ginsberg et al.'s (1986) list of characteristic features and Svennevig's (1999) criteria of a friendship). In initial interactions, there will be more a feeling of friendliness rather than actual friendship. Apart from contextual factors like where, when, and under which circumstances an interaction occurs, specific behaviour by the conversation partners can influence their perception of mutual rapport. This behaviour is called rapport management. It refers to linguistic verbal and non-verbal strategies involved in building, maintaining, and challenging harmony and a polite, respectful interaction, in which speakers "position themselves as amiable and agreeable" (Warner-Garcia, 2014: 177) or simply "the management (or mismanagement) of relations between people" (Spencer-Oatey, 2005: 96).

Rapport is investigated in many different academic disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, linguistics, and computational sciences. There is a considerable amount of research on how our behaviour influences our relationships. The studies often refer back to key literature such as Spencer-Oatey (2000, among others), but from there on, they mostly diverge into their own specialised area of study and there is little overarching research. The research both discusses larger linguistic, sociological, or psychological strategies as well as specific linguistic features or behaviours. There is a divide between the disciplines in the focus of the research. In linguistics and sociology, rapport is often firmly based on politeness theory and the notion of appropriate behaviour, especially in the context of following sociopragmatic rules, whereas psychology and computational sciences have also investigated more specific features involved in the creation of rapport. There are also many individual studies from linguistic sub-disciplines that focus on linguistic features and only tangentially mention how these features contribute to managing rapport. These studies are not discussed in the context of rapport but rather in that of the research on these features.

In linguistics, research on rapport management (even the tangential studies) mostly emerges from the fields of interactional linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, conversation analysis, and discourse analysis. These are quite closely related and often overlap in practice, as research by scholars in those fields often addresses similar issues in different ways. Pragmatics studies language use in its social context, drawing meaning from contextual or background knowledge we have of a given situation and topic rather than assuming that a text (spoken or written language) can be understood without any pre-existing knowledge.

Pragmatics is crucial for the study of rapport, which depends heavily on context, transforming from one situation to another. It is necessary to have a detailed look at the transcripts and analyse them qualitatively, as conversational strategies are established by various linguistic features. These conversational features make up the building blocks of more elaborate linguistic strategies and are therefore essential for the investigation of linguistic rapport. For example, disclosing personal information, a strategy that can build rapport between speakers, is realised by using vocabulary relating to a personal context such as the topics of family, likes and dislikes. Disclosing personal information also increases the number of personal pronouns used (cf. Zhao et al., 2016). Due to the level of detail of the analysis, usually only few conversations or conversation excerpts are analysed and it is not typical to quantify the data.

At the intersection of computing and the humanities, there is a considerable effort in human-machine interaction to enable machines to understand rapport management. They therefore investigate concrete linguistic features that are measurable (and can therefore be analysed by a machine) and that are known to have an influence on rapport. Research in this field is progressing fast, resulting in projects such as SARA[2], the Socially Aware Robot Assistant from ArticuLab at Carnegie Mellon University that detects social behaviour, interprets it and reacts "appropriately". These developments are taking place while more traditional strands of rapport research are still ongoing in the other disciplines.

The different approaches to rapport management from many different disciplines have contributed to a rich field of investigation, but they have also made the research topic more complex and more difficult to study. There are no publications that offer a comprehensive overview of all the different approaches to rapport, which makes it very difficult for the different disciplines to learn from one another's findings. In linguistics, there is a gap between the study of a macro-linguistic concept like rapport and the micro-linguistic features that help manage rapport. Traditional rapport studies do not consider individual features or strategies enough and research is mostly qualitative and therefore necessarily tied to the specific context in which it is carried out. The individual features that are analysed in studies that only tangentially mention rapport often do not consider it essential to link their findings

[2] http://articulab.hcii.cs.cmu.edu/projects/sara/

to rapport theory. These latter studies are not limited to qualitative research, but also do quantitative research. This drifting apart of perspectives is only enhanced by the computational sciences making progress in the study of individual strategies and features in a highly technological and quantitative-based way, but leaving the qualitative, context-based side out of focus. There is essentially a gap between qualitative and quantitative research that needs to be bridged, a challenge that many linguists find nowadays in their own areas of research. There is of course already a considerable amount of research on intersections of qualitative and quantitative research in linguistics in general. For pragmatics, the field of corpus linguistics has offered new opportunities in getting access to large numbers of real-language datasets and the tools and techniques to analyse them accordingly. This has developed into the field of corpus pragmatics (cf. e.g. Aijmer and Rühlemann, 2015), which combines qualitative and quantitative methods from the two linguistic fields. This is, however, not yet an established practice in rapport management research.

This means that it is necessary to investigate the specific linguistic strategies and features more closely (gaining theoretical knowledge), but also that it would be advantageous to adopt methods from quantitative research in order to assist the analysis and get a more complete picture of the research topic and the dataset (gaining practical knowledge).

1.3. Research questions

These challenges translate into several research questions that are based on one overarching question: "How is rapport managed in conversations?". In the following section, I discuss the individual research questions that address the challenges and explain how the chapters in this thesis answer the research questions. My linguistic analysis looks at specific ways in which people use language to manage their relationship, in particular how distinct pragmatic features influence rapport and how adopting approaches from quantitative research can aid this analysis. I discuss three distinct research questions in this thesis. The questions are interrelated and are informed by one another like the challenges they address. The first of the three research questions is the following:

1. Which linguistic strategies and features are used when managing rapport?

This serves to get an overview of extant research on rapport management. I explained above that rapport is investigated in many different academic disciplines and there is a considerable

amount of research on how our behaviour influences our relationships. Chapter 2 discusses how rapport management is conceived of and investigated across academic disciplines. The goal of that chapter is to take an account of relevant literate and narrow down the analysis of rapport management to very specific linguistic features, which are known to affect rapport management. It therefore discusses both larger linguistic and socio-psychological strategies as well as specific linguistic features or behaviours that have been tangentially linked to rapport management.

In researching how the larger strategies and the individual features affect rapport, it is necessary to understand whether the context they occur in affects the function of the features or their interpretation. This is particularly important for pragmatic features. The nature of the corpus data which serves as a basis for the analysis then prompts the second research question:

2. How is the rapport management strategy influenced by the medium, the speaker background and idiosyncrasies?

This, like the first research question, mainly aims at capturing theoretical data. It focuses on the particularities of the data and their effect on rapport management. In this thesis, the corpus is a corpus of Skype conversations between unacquainted English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) speakers who are students at European universities. The medium—Skype, or video conferencing in general—and the speaker background—unacquainted non-native speakers—have rarely been investigated with regards to rapport. This is relevant, since nowadays there are more non-native than native speakers of English (cf. e.g. Trudgill and Hannah, 2013: 7) and it is important to explore how they build relationships in English. Most datasets in studies on particular features of extant research focus on face-to-face native speaker interactions with various relational backgrounds. Idiosyncratic choices can play an important role in how we interact with each another, which is why I put a particular focus not only on what speakers might have in common in their use of rapport strategies, but also what distinguishes them from one another. This question underpins the analysis of each of the features in the later chapters and its themes are discussed throughout the thesis.

The practical data captured by this thesis is contained mostly within the third research question which addresses the second challenge above:

3. How can corpus linguistic methods be appropriated to analyse a rapport strategy and its realisations in the form of linguistic features?

As I discuss in more detail in the following section, I approach the study of rapport management by analysing one particular strategy and three forms in which it is realised, i.e. three linguistic features and their effect on rapport. The features I choose are tangible, meaning that they can be identified and analysed to a certain degree with the help of corpus linguistic methods. Throughout the analysis, I apply different corpus linguistic tools and techniques to the data in order to achieve a more comprehensive analysis of the features within their context and to discuss the efficacy of quantitative and qualitative methods regarding the individual features.

1.4. Aim

This thesis is an answer to the two challenges established in section 1.2. It provides both theoretical as well as practical knowledge by studying individual features based on the foundation of rapport research and combining qualitative elements from the field of pragmatics with quantitative elements from corpus linguistics. The study approaches rapport management by analysing how individual linguistic forms contribute to a larger interactional phenomenon and how characteristics of the speakers and the context influences their language choices. It therefore combines theoretical approaches from several linguistic sub-disciplines, drawing from multiple perspectives to ensure a more thorough analysis. My first aim is to give an overview of rapport research to date, focussing in particular on the linguistic strategies involved in managing rapport and the concrete features that realise these strategies. In order to be able to answer both of the challenges established above, it is helpful to build my analysis around pre-existing knowledge of the pragmatic features. This ensures that the selected features are suitable to the analysis of rapport management in a corpus. I choose to investigate a single strategy that has already been analysed to a certain extent with regards to rapport: stance or positioning. I select three features that have not been studied to a great extent with rapport in mind, but where there is sufficient extant research available on them to understand how they generally contribute to rapport management. The three features I investigate in this analysis are first-person plural pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter.

The three exist on different linguistic levels but they all have in common that they encode different meanings depending on the context and serve to test the application of various qualitative and quantitative methods on those different levels. I use the research on these linguistic features to then see how positioning is realised by the features in the data and how they affect rapport in the concrete context. This thesis is therefore a study into how micro-linguistic features that affect how a person positions themselves in conversation are used to effectively manage the macro-linguistic concept of rapport. With this, I then attempt to address the second challenge.

As I mentioned above, rapport-managing strategies and their features cannot only be found by manually going through a conversation; they can also be identified with approaches taken from the field of corpus linguistics. Corpus linguistics uses computers to detect linguistic features in large collections of text and these features can then be displayed in their immediate context. There are many different, helpful techniques and tools for linguists that allow a comprehensive analysis of the data. I explore these on the basis of the linguistic features in order to find ways in which the quantitative tools and techniques best aid the qualitative analysis. For the study of rapport management, this means that features which are context-dependent can be analysed by making use of this mixed-methods approach. Linguistic strategies and individual features can be analysed within the context they occur, and in which they take on meaning, with the study firmly based on traditional rapport research, but adopting new methods of quantifying the data. In addition, corpus linguistic tools allow for an easier identification of the strategies and features, which is helpful in larger datasets. This also makes this mixed-method study of rapport management more methodical and replicable, which has been lacking to date. This is what this thesis aims to explore.

1.5. Contributions to the field

This thesis uses an integrated perspective on linguistic rapport strategies in first contact conversations, combining research from different fields and sub-disciplines. This means that I leave much of the research aside that measures the impact rapport has on relationships and that measures rapport in general, as is often done in teaching and medical settings, for example. The reasons for this are elaborated in more detail in chapters 2 and 3. As I explained above, I understand this research as a basis for possible future studies into rapport that create an intersection between qualitative and quantitative methods, particularly adding

to the fields of pragmatics and corpus linguistics, but of course specifically to that of rapport management. To answer the first challenge, my thesis shows in detail how the three features are used by speakers to affect rapport on different levels by positioning themselves in similar ways. The features allow the speakers to commit to a stance and avoid doing so, depending on which function is necessary in a particular situation. They do this by making use of the very ambiguity that the features entail, meaning that their pragmatic quality (having different meanings depending on the context) makes them the perfect tool for navigating the fragile relationship they build with their conversation partner. As this very ambiguity is also what makes the features very difficult to identify automatically within the context they occur, I adopt techniques from corpus linguistics and corpus pragmatics, such as the annotation of these features for a quantitative analysis in order to understand the patterns of their distribution within the data according to form, meaning and function. As corpus software is not necessarily adapted to pragmatic data, I designed a piece of software that can be used in order to assist the analysis of these features. What this integrated approach highlights very well is how versatile the individual features are. Each of them has many different sub-functions. While the general strategy remains the same, the speakers apply and realise it in a surprisingly creative number of ways. In addition, the analysis of co-occurrences of the pragmatic features has a great potential for further research with other features, as it reveals their patterns of use depending on the situation in which the speakers find themselves.

1.6. Thesis outline

This thesis first reviews extant literature and then details the methodology used in the four analysis chapters, the results and implications of which are discussed collectively at the end of the thesis. Chapter 2 addresses the first research question as it gives an overview of rapport research to date. It is split into four major parts. The first and second part focus on traditional rapport as well as rapport management research, out of which the third and fourth parts develop. The third part explores studies concerning rapport strategies and the individual features that realise these strategies. The fourth part reviews co-occurrences and collocations, central concepts in corpus linguistics that this thesis builds on. This section looks at the opportunities and challenges of studying co-occurrences between these features. As I explained above, I focus my attention in the third section on research on stance and the three pragmatic features that affect positioning in a conversation and ultimately how a speaker manages rapport. The section highlights gaps in research concerning the rapport strategies

themselves and how they are applied by speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, as well as the methodology and frameworks used for analysing the strategies. This again stresses the need for my second research question, which seems to be overlooked in many studies. My methodology for analysing the pragmatic features in order to answer the research questions is detailed in chapter 3. Chapter 3 also introduces the dataset at the base of this study, ViMELF, A Corpus of Video-Mediated English as a Lingua Franca Conversations (2018[3]).

Chapters 4-7 contain the analysis at the heart of this thesis. Each chapter looks at rapport on a different level, which increases with every chapter. Chapter 4 looks at individual words (pronouns) and their effect on rapport. Chapter 5 looks at one form of pronoun + verb sequence (pragmatic markers), chapter 6 at a paralinguistic feature (laughter) and chapter 7 at the co-occurrence of all three of these linguistic features. All chapters follow the general format of a quantitative overview of the feature in the data, followed by a qualitative analysis, which I use to answer the individual research questions and compare my findings to extant research on the different topics and themes. Chapter 4 investigates first-person plural pronouns, i.e. *we*, *ours*, *our* and *us*.[4] In a first step, I compare the different pronouns to each other to determine whether they have similar functions with regard to rapport or whether they differ from the extant findings on *we*. In order to do that, I adapt and apply an existing annotation framework to the data that has been tangentially linked to rapport. The annotations allow me to do a more in-depth quantitative analysis of the features in their context that reveals certain patterns in the usage of these features and aims at answering the second research question in part. The annotations also aid the qualitative analysis in that the discovered patterns point to specific functions of the pronouns in how they do different kinds of stance work. Through the qualitative analysis, I discover another pattern of pronouns affecting stance: a shift from exclusive *we* to generic *you.* This leads to a detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis of the phenomenon, which is used to the same extent as the other pragmatic features under investigation and has previously not been discussed in context with rapport. In order to perform this analysis, I have designed a piece of software which has a similar functionality to that of a concordancer but is more suitable in a pragmatic studies

[3] I had access to the corpus before it was released publicly.
[4] The reason why *us* is included is explained in chapter 3 in the respective section on pronouns.

context. The findings from this chapter, both theoretical as well as practical (relating to the analysis techniques) in nature, inform the analyses of the following chapters.

Chapter 5 studies pragmatic markers and their functions that relate to stance and ultimately rapport. Here again, I adapt and apply an extant annotation framework from previous studies that exist in the context of rapport. The annotation enables a quantitative analysis of the markers in order to describe them in the context of the dataset and again answer research question 2 in part. The annotation also simplifies the qualitative analysis of the features and their distinct functions in the data, with the main result that *I think, I mean* and *I guess* are functionally similar to one another, but differ from *I don't know*. In the qualitative analysis, it becomes apparent that those places in the transcript where the pragmatic markers co-occur are of particular interest and seem to point at rapport-relevant situations. I therefore add to the design of the piece of software created for and used in chapter 4 in order to facilitate the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the co-occurrences.

The analysis of laughter in chapter 6 is informed by decades of research into laughter and its importance in relationships, which study laughter within a narrow framework of reference that is able to categorise the functions of each instance of laughter. My attempt to annotate this dataset according to the framework is discussed in detail. I quantitatively analyse all instances of laughter regarding their context and qualitatively highlight the different functions that laughter performs when used by speakers. Laughter is a feature that very often occurs in the context of more laughter. For this purpose, I use the design of the piece of software in chapter 5 (pragmatic markers) in order to identify and analyse co-occurrences of laughter quantitatively and qualitatively. Instead of analysing many short excerpts, in this section of the chapter I study much longer excerpts from the data. This is necessary as the source for laughter co-occurrences can stretch over longer parts of discourse and it illustrates very well how each single laugh and chuckle contributes to rapport management.

Chapter 7 then brings together the theoretical and practical findings of the three previous analysis chapters in an analysis of the co-occurrences of all three pragmatic features. This is prompted by the qualitative analyses of these chapters, which show that there are instances of the three features in the immediate context of one another. I again add to the analysis software that has been developed over the course of chapters 4, 5 and 6 and add a different visualisation of the results to its functionality, which enables an in-depth quantitative and

qualitative analysis of the co-occurrences and reveals certain trends and patterns with respect to the distribution of the features, but also regarding the functionality of the individual co-occurring features.

Chapter 8 discusses the findings of each of the chapters in the context of the research questions and themes that emerge in the thesis. I provide answers to the research questions and conclude that the features all have very intricate, distinct functions, but generally follow a similar functionality when it comes to the general strategy of stance: the speakers take advantage of the ambiguity that is essential to the features' pragmatic quality in order for the speakers to position themselves depending on how they think will contribute to rapport in that very situation. I find that the context affects certain functions of the features, but that the most influential factor seems to be idiosyncratic choice of the individual speaker. In relation to the third research question, I find that annotations are a very useful tool for starting to bridge the gap between qualitative and quantitative research in pragmatics, but that more than anything it is necessary to amend the tools and software available to researchers to include functionalities that will aid their specific research. The chapter also offers recommendations where future research can build upon the findings of this thesis.

In short, this thesis addresses two current challenges in rapport research: a lack of information about specific strategies and features involved in rapport research and a lack of mixed methods approaches between qualitative research on one side and quantitative research on the other side of the field. The thesis provides both theoretical as well as practical knowledge to the field as it translates the challenges into research questions which are informed by one another throughout the analysis.

Chapter 2: Rapport management: theories and strategies

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the academic discourse on rapport and rapport management. It in part answers the first of this thesis' three research questions: which linguistic strategies and features are used when managing rapport? The chapter gives an overview of rapport research to date and sets the scene for approaching the three research questions in great detail. This is done by surveying extant research on the relevant subjects and creating connections between them. The chapter is split into four major parts, with section 2.2 focussing on the basis of traditional rapport research and section 2.3 on models of rapport management. Section 2.4 explores concrete linguistic rapport strategies and the individual features that realise these strategies. This section focuses mainly on research on stance and the features that affect positioning in a conversation. Finally, section 2.5 briefly argues for the corpus linguistic and pragmatic investigation of co-occurrences of the features analysed. The chapter highlights gaps in research concerning the rapport strategies themselves and how they are applied by speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, as well as the methodology and frameworks used for analysing the strategies.

Throughout the chapter, I describe how research on rapport has evolved, which academic fields investigate rapport and to what extent they do so. The language data I analyse in the following chapters addresses several areas in traditional rapport research that have not been fully investigated: these are non-native speakers who are unacquainted, having a synchronous online conversation (video conferencing). I discuss research in these areas that show intersections with rapport (sections 2.2.2 and 2.4.3). This sheds light on how complex rapport is and in how far the results from analysing the corpus data are applicable to other types of conversational settings. Section 2.3 discusses rapport management and the related concept *relational work* (Locher and Watts, 2005) in relation to politeness theory. Both concepts draw heavily upon politeness theory, as politeness forms a firm foundation for understanding how relationships are built and maintained and why they sometimes fail to be established or upheld. As I will demonstrate, politeness theory alone does not, however, suffice to explain how rapport can be influenced. It serves as a foundation to understanding how we judge the

state of our relationship with another person and how language use affects these judgements. The third part of this chapter therefore considers the linguistic strategies that have an effect on rapport and details the relationship between stance and rapport. It reviews different types of taxonomies of linguistic rapport strategies and the individual strategies at hand. Of special interest is thereby how researchers extracted these strategies from their data and how this process can be improved, which is discussed briefly in section 2.5.

2.2. Establishing the concept of rapport

2.2.1. Conceptualisations of rapport

Early notions of rapport understand it as a part of an individual's state of mind. This stems from the belief that conversation participants are unconnected and exist as "separate entities" (Altman, 1990: 294). Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal's research in 1990 constitutes a shift in the conceptualisation of rapport away from that individualistic view towards a dyadic notion of rapport. They conceive of rapport as a product of the interaction between the conversation participants. Since then, it is understood that rapport is discursively constructed and maintained (cf. also DePaulo and Bell, 1990; Drolet and Morris, 2000).

Rapport is considered "one of the central constructs that explains development of personal relationships" (Sinha and Cassell, 2015: 13, and cf. Cappella, 1990). It is a key element in establishing "collaborative trusting interpersonal relationships" (Cassell and Bickmore, 2003: 89). Linguists conceive of rapport as "the relative harmony and smoothness of relations between people" (Spencer-Oatey, 2005: 96), or even a kind of "chemistry" between people (Svennevig, 1999: 1). While this offers a general idea what rapport is, this kind of "smooth, positive interpersonal interaction" (Abbe and Brandon, 2014: 207-208) is not defined consistently when details of what constitutes rapport are considered. Even though it is described "as a feeling state experienced in interaction with another as interest, positivity, and coordination (or balance)" (Cappella, 1990: 303), it is a subjective impression and can only loosely be based on objective measurements (see Chapter 3), which in turn depend on specific linguistic features that are attributed to rapport.

Rapport research has generally been criticised for a "lack of clear conceptualization or operationalization" (Drolet and Morris, 2000: 28, cf. also DePaulo and Bell, 1990). The criticism for both conceptualisation and operationalisation revolves around which individual

elements constitute rapport. The critique on operationalisation specifically considers how these individual elements are defined in order for rapport, a non-measurable concept in itself that can only be observed via other phenomena, to be measured, qualified and quantified. Rapport can only be described by referring to the perception of its qualities, i.e. the elements that need to be present for a relationship state to be described as rapport. There is still a considerable amount of disagreement on which characteristics are essential to rapport and even more so on how rapport could be measured on the basis of these characteristics. Most research considers attention to the conversation partner and what is often called "positivity" to be elements of rapport. This is based on the three key features Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990) associate with rapport behaviour: mutual attentiveness, positivity, and coordination. Cappella's (1990) and Duncan's (1990) conceptualisations of what constitutes rapport are fairly analogous to that definition: rapport requires mutuality, that is to say conversation partners contribute to an engaged interaction by acting and reacting appropriately to each other and the discourse. Cappella also lists involvement and "patterns of responsiveness in interaction" (Cappella, 1990: 303) as attributes of rapport. Each of these attributes are realised in language with a number of linguistic features. The specific features are often not discussed explicitly.

Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990: 286) conceptualise coordination as a feeling of being "in sync" with one another, based on a "skilled enactment of social conventions" (Park and Burgess' (1924) "mutual responsiveness", see Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal, 1990: 288). Cappella (1990: 304) correctly criticises Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990) by arguing that their concept of coordination itself is too vague and not sufficiently defined, as it could be interpreted as a sign of general responsiveness, or various forms of accommodation. Accommodation and convergence imply that there is a process "of adapting, adjusting, or assimilating one linguistic feature to another" ("accommodation", OED Online, 2017). This could happen on different linguistic levels, for example non-verbally (gestures, facial expressions, and physical stance), discursively (topic choice), prosodically (speech rate), or phonetically (pronunciation) (cf. also Cappella, 1990: 303). Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990) argue that communication styles become more predictable as people start getting to know each other, which causes an accommodation to the linguistic style of the other person. This is in part true. The more someone is exposed to a certain communication style, the more they can predict it. This does not, however, automatically mean that a speaker will

consciously or unconsciously accommodate styles either because they have the intention of enhancing rapport or because there is rapport between the speakers.

There is a considerable amount of criticism surrounding linguistic accommodation, speech accommodation, or communication accommodation and its effect on relationships, which has been investigated in linguistics and psychology in much detail (cf. e.g. Giles, 2016 and Muir et al., 2017 for recent accounts of the concept). While researchers like Abbe and Brandon (2014), LaFrance (1979), Lakens and Stel (2011), and Lakin and Chartrand (2003) seem to have found that linguistic accommodation builds rapport, this suggestion has been challenged by Sinha and Cassell (2015). They find that while rapport causes accommodation, conversational convergence does not conclusively cause rapport. This means that when the interaction is reportedly showing signs of rapport, it prompts the speakers to adapt their speech rates. Similarities in language style are therefore an indication of the fact that rapport already exists between the speakers (Cade et al., 2014). This again leads back to Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990), for who coordination is a defining characteristic of rapport, even though (vice-versa) the effect of coordination on rapport remains uncertain (Hove and Risen, 2009). Sinha and Cassell's (2015) study is a good example for how interdisciplinary research based on linguistics, psychology and computational sciences can challenge assumptions and redirect research.

Even though the definitions of what exactly constitutes rapport diverge in detail, in essence, I conceive of rapport as a subjective feeling state characterised by a positive relationship with another person. It is susceptible to change (the perception of whether there is rapport or not changes) and it is established by showing mutual attentiveness and a positive attitude in conversation, as well as a varying degree of coordination of linguistic behaviour.

2.2.2. Rapport conceptualisations across academic disciplines

Research on rapport and rapport management can be found across several disciplines. Research that includes certain aspects of linguistic methodology is very prominent across the fields of psychology, computational linguistics, interpersonal pragmatics, and communication studies. Studies in these fields differ significantly as to the object or the methods of investigation. Rapport is often discussed in relation to politeness theory in linguistics and seems to include more of a sociological perspective than an explicitly linguistic one. Spencer-

Oatey (2002), for example, establishes a framework to analyse relationship management and focuses particularly on linguistic politeness and how certain established concepts of politeness theory synthesise in the context of the framework (see section 2.3.2). Specific linguistic means for the creation of rapport are mostly not explicitly discussed. This is quite unfortunate, since Spencer-Oatey's work has been very influential in linguistics. Sub-fields of linguistics and other academic disciplines offer a more detailed account of the linguistic strategies involved in the creation of rapport. It is therefore essential to look beyond the disciplinary boundaries and appropriate those findings to my research. There are a number of linguistic studies that can be taken into account when researching rapport between individuals (see section 2.4). The language strategies under investigation are often analysed with a different research focus and not directly in relation to rapport itself. In these studies, rapport is not the primary focus of investigation. Rather, it is either listed as a consequence of applying a linguistic strategy in conversation, or it can only be concluded that rapport is a consequence based on descriptions such as "display of affection and solidarity" (Stapleton, 2010: 300), which are defining characteristics for rapport.

Interpersonal pragmatics examines the details of specific interactional strategies in the context of relations. As a sub-field of pragmatics, it is a linguistic discipline, but it markedly differs from Spencer-Oatey in its approach to studying rapport. Studies in this discipline investigate "in what ways social actors use language to shape and form relationships in situ" (Locher and Graham, 2010: 1) and are therefore by definition concerned with rapport, even though it might not be explicitly defined as such. These investigations are based on the theoretical premise that human interaction is shaped by people's identities; they relate with others according to "their understanding of culture, society", or in Spencer-Oatey's terms cultural expectations, "and their own and others' interpretations" of these expectations and the communicative behaviour (Locher and Graham, 2010: 2). Interpersonal pragmatics focuses on how "relationships are reflected in the language choices" people make (Locher and Graham, 2010: 2). One of the central concepts is that a feature can thereby be "less a property of that individual than property of the interaction at that moment" (Duncan, 1990:

311).[5] There are studies of many individual strategies that influence rapport similar to mitigation. These are explored in more detail in section 2.4.

Similarly, psychological research in this area focuses on behavioural (verbal and non-verbal) strategies that influence rapport. Cassell et al. (2007), for example, investigate differences in verbal and non-verbal behaviour depending on emotional closeness in a relationship and find linguistic patterns that differ in talk between friends and strangers. The features Cassell et al. (2007) analyse have been investigated and developed further in studies by Sinha et al. (2015) and Zhao et al. (2016) in the field of computational linguistics. Computational linguistic research on rapport and artificial intelligence aims to give computers the ability to mimic rapport behaviour and engage humans in conversation (e.g. Huang et al., 2011). Seo et al. (2017) investigate rapport behaviour between humans and a robot to improve the collaboration between robots and humans on complex tasks and qualitatively investigate human behaviour towards the robot and a human's reactions and receptiveness to certain linguistic strategies employed by the robot.

Rapport in teaching and learning (in the classroom and online) involves interdisciplinary linguistic, sociological, and psychological research. The investigators focus on achieving pedagogical advantages like how a student's ability to think logically can be improved through the use of rapport (cf. e.g. Ädel, 2011 and Olsen and Finkelstein, 2017). Specific findings on rapport features also come from research on medical discourse and therapeutic settings, predominantly in Conversation Analysis, for example on practitioner/physician-patient and practitioner-practitioner (i.e. inter-professional) interaction (cf. e.g. Yates et al., 2016).

Another applied form of rapport research investigates its positive impact on transactional speech (i.e. for business) and intercultural communication, like Planken's (2005) examination of linguistic features involved in rapport management of English as a Lingua Franca business negotiations (see section 2.4.3). An intersection of communication studies and psychology is rapport in the context of interviews, both for journalistic and criminological research. Here,

[5] Smile duration can, for example, vary depending on the responsiveness of the conversation partner (cf. Duncan, 1990).

studies are most interested in creating and maintaining rapport between interviewer and interviewee to obtain larger amounts of accurate, substantial information (e.g. Abbe and Brandon, 2014). Rapport has also received attention in the commercial context; especially in marketing and management, where customer satisfaction and increased teamwork are just two of the areas interested in rapport (cf. Gremler and Gwinner, 2008).

The spoken language data on which I base my analysis are first contact conversations on Skype between non-native English-speaking students from Europe (see chapter 3). There is relatively little linguistic and sociological research on Skype and other video conferencing technologies, let alone rapport management via Skype. Notable exceptions are Harper et al. (2017a; 2017b) and Veinott el al. (1999). Veinott el al. (1999) find that video conferencing substantially improves the possibility of creating a common ground in interaction and thereby facilitates understanding between colleagues collaborating online. This also reflects the difference between face-to-face and telephone conversations: adding modes like the visual one contributes to communicating a message more accurately, because meaning is communicated across multiple modes at the same time (Scollon and LeVine, 2004). Veinott el al. (1999) investigate the improvements that came with the technical development from audio to video communication, rather than the restrictions video conferencing imposes on synchronous communication[6].

Rapport is often studied between acquaintances, friends, or family members rather than in first encounters. In situations of first contacts or initial interactions, where strangers meet, the necessity for building rapport varies. Short, inconsequential interactions, like asking for directions in the street, do not necessarily require building a relationship over the extent of the conversation. Other conversational goals (e.g. information retrieval) seem to be fore-fronted. Strangers would, however, still be likely to manage rapport through that interaction. Most of the research on building a relationship with a stranger originates from social psychology (Haugh and Carbaugh, 2015). These initial interactions work in different ways than interactions with acquaintances or friends and family (Duck et al., 1991). There are different procedural aspects to them and there are also linguistic differences, for example in

[6] Video, for example, adds a visual mode, but only offers a fixed perspective through the camera of each speaker's computer (Brunner et al., 2017).

self-disclosure: how much personal information a speaker chooses to reveal, how this revelation is introduced by the speaker and how the conversation partner reacts to it are considerably different between acquainted and unacquainted people (cf. Haugh and Carbaugh, 2015; and also Dindia et al., 1997; Svennevig, 1999). In pragmatics, O'Keeffe (2006) investigates how presenters create and sustain a pseudo-relationship with their listeners in a media setting. She finds that this pseudo-intimacy is "based on some sense of common identity and nationality or some other familiarity built up through frequent 'contact' on daily radio" (O'Keeffe, 2006: 92). This applies to monologues by the presenters as well as conversations during phone-ins, which makes the data somewhat similar to this thesis' Skype conversations.

First encounters also vary in the ways pragmatic principles are executed. This does not only depend on the particular situational circumstances, but also on the pragmatic rules specific to groups of people. A socio-cultural feature like nationality, for example, can contribute to different expectations towards and interpretations of the interaction (Haugh and Carbaugh, 2015). This seems to be corroborated by Mortensen (2017), who's research on *transient multilingual communities* finds that when people from different linguistic and social backgrounds come together for a brief period of time to jointly work on a task, pragmatic principles such as the above cannot always be presumed. This is what the second research question of this thesis aims to investigate.

2.3. Rapport management

Rapport management is a topic that is influenced and studied by many research areas within the field of linguistics. In the following sections, I define the concept of rapport management as it is understood in this thesis. I discuss this definition in relation to similar concepts such as relational work, the seemingly central topic of politeness as well as the general importance of the theoretical foundations of rapport management for this thesis.

2.3.1. Defining rapport management

Rapport can be enhanced, maintained, or challenged throughout a conversation. The behaviour that causes this has a respectively positive, neutral, or negative effect and is called *rapport management* (Spencer-Oatey, 2005: 96). While this definition of rapport management includes positive as well as negative notions, other definitions only focus on the

behaviour that contributes to establishing rapport: “communicative acts promoting social concord” (Ädel, 2011: 2932) and contributing to the establishment of harmony, and achieving a polite, respectful interaction. In my opinion, however, a definition of rapport management needs to take into account all the possible effects on rapport as described by Spencer-Oatey (see above). A notion of rapport management that relates to both harmonious as well as conflictive behaviour covers the full spectrum of interpersonal linguistic behaviour that influences and thereby manages rapport. This view is also found in Svennevig (1999: 37), where *relational communication* regulates the “establishment, maintenance, and alteration of relationships”.

Spencer-Oatey (e.g. 2005 and 2002) has been most influential on the discourse around rapport management in linguistics. She lays the theoretical groundwork for a linguistic analysis by exploring the social psychological factors and motivational forces behind how relationships are built and maintained (2002: 530). Her approach leans on concepts from politeness theory and reconciles different theoretical strands from it, which are usually only considered separately. But she also markedly stresses the difference between politeness theory and her research on rapport: politeness theory according to her starts out with a focus on language use and broadens the scope of research to larger concepts, such as the mechanics of interpersonal relationships. Spencer-Oatey does the opposite, starting her rapport management research from the top down (2002: 540) and only narrowing in to language use at the last level. To her, linguistic politeness is only a resource (among others) for rapport management, which “should be studied within the situated social psychological context in which it occurs” (Spencer-Oatey, 2002: 530). I agree with Spencer-Oatey in that politeness plays an important part in rapport management, but that it alone does not suffice to explain rapport management. Additionally, as I have argued above, while Spencer-Oatey’s research is very helpful to understand how rapport works on a larger, socio-psychological scale, it does not reveal anything about the actual language use, the specific strategies that manage rapport and it limits the analysis to a qualitative investigation of few conversations. In order to examine a larger dataset, however, using Spencer-Oatey’s approach would be time-consuming and impractical, because it does not consider individual linguistic strategies that influence rapport management. This is why I think that a bottom-up approach to analysing rapport and language reveals more about the linguistic aspect of rapport than Spencer-Oatey’s research approach.

2.3.2. Theoretical foundations of rapport management

It is important to consider the socio-psychological foundation of rapport (on a larger scale) to understand how specific linguistic features (in detail) affect this complex concept. There are four different types of rapport orientation according to Spencer-Oatey (2005: 96): (1) rapport enhancement to strengthen harmonious relations, (2) rapport maintenance to protect them, (3) rapport neglect that expresses a lack of concern for or interest in the quality of the relationship, and (4) rapport challenge or impairment. In a relationship, speakers attend to these four choices and thereby make use of different rapport strategies. The different rapport orientations "change dynamically during the course of an interaction or series of interactions" (Spencer-Oatey, 2000: 29-30, cf. also Haugh and Carbaugh, 2015). Conversation participants experience rapport in various ways. Rapport building behaviour does not necessarily evoke a feeling of rapport (Cappella, 1990). This is based on the conversational needs speakers have and how they are balanced (Spencer-Oatey, 2005: 116).

According to Spencer-Oatey (2005: 96), speakers judge rapport management in interaction based on three factors: (1) how the actions of the conversation participants match their behavioural expectations, (2) what every individual's face sensitivities (self-attributes) are in an interaction, and (3) the respective interactional wants or goals in an interaction (task-focused transactional and interpersonally-focused interactional ones). A person perceives rapport based on how their conversational goals are affected. If they achieve their interactional wants, usually their perception of rapport with the other person is heightened. But this is of course influenced by many other factors, for instance whether his or her face needs are upheld. *Face* refers to a person's public self-image (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61) that can be gained, maintained, or lost. It is a term connected to politeness that I use in this thesis only to express the theoretical background of rapport management, since it is prominently used there, but I do not consider the concept of face in my analysis or discussion. This is because face is a controversial, much discussed topic that should be considered separately and its inclusion in this thesis would neither fundamentally benefit nor change the analysis. The emotional reactions that speakers perceive during the exchange as well as whether the speakers' expectations towards the interaction and specifically the behaviour have been met are equally as important. Other factors that influence the perception of rapport include the speakers' personality, their own personal perceptions, any preoccupations they might have at the time, as well as their awareness of cultural differences.

It is important to find the appropriate balance between the needs of all conversation participants in order to build or strengthen a relationship.

For Spencer-Oatey (2002), both our perception of who we are as a person for ourselves and in society (face), as well as our expectations towards our treatment within society (rights) serve as motivational forces for managing relationships. A speaker positions themselves with regard to another person, to a group of people, or as part of a group towards another group. This means speakers have variable interactional orientations (cf. Gudykunst and Kim, 1997): an interpersonal, intragroup, or intergroup orientation, for example. Depending on the context, speakers change what they expect of the interaction and the resulting behaviour. The interactants constantly evaluate each other's actions with regard to whether they are matched with appropriate actions and reactions.

While the "social psychological" account of rapport management by Spencer-Oatey details the context-specific aspects of rapport management[7], it does not really account for specific linguistic features involved in rapport management. Spencer-Oatey (2002: 543) proposes that a model of *linguistic* rapport management detailed above should investigate three main issues. The first one concerns the strategies available in a given language for conveying rapport-relevant information, such as honorifics (respectful terms of address like titles). This is what I focus my attention on in the remaining part of this chapter. Those strategies are not always as straight-forward as honorifics but are expressed by various linguistic features that realise them and which Spencer-Oatey does not investigate. Secondly, a model of linguistic rapport management should address different domains across which rapport-relevant information can be conveyed, for example through the illocutionary domain (performance/interpretation of speech acts), the discourse domain (content and structure), the participation domain (procedural aspects like overlap and pauses), the stylistic domain (like choice of tone, in Spencer-Oatey, 2005: 99, serious or joking), and the non-verbal domain

[7] This is to say (1) the rapport orientations of all interlocutors, which means their rapport management goals (enhance, maintain, or challenge social relations) and their interactional orientations (interpersonal, intergroup, both combined (with a specific person but markedly from a different group), or intragroup), (2) specific contextual variables of an interaction, like the participants' relations, the content of what is said, social or interactional roles the speakers hold, and any communicative activity and (3) pragmatic conventions, which are sociopragmatic conventions like politeness maxims (Leech, 1983), and pragmalinguistic conventions (cf. Thomas, 1983), i.e. are norms that are culture and context-dependent that should be adhered to in interaction.

(such as embodiment). In this thesis, I am researching a rapport strategy across multiple domains, as rapport is complex and the linguistic means for managing it do not only occur in one domain alone. The third investigational focus should be on considering cultural differences. Examples for this include the level of sensitivity of a speaker, their conceptions of rights and obligations, as well as mitigation strategies they might employ for threats to rapport. This third point can be criticised two-fold. First, mitigation behaviour is itself a form of rapport management and should therefore be considered under point one. Differences based on the speaker background should be considered under the third point though. Second, I would argue that these differences are not necessarily only based on culture, but also on idiosyncratic tendencies of the speakers (partially covered by mentioning speaker sensitivities), as individuals belonging to a culture are not homogenous[8]. This third point is considered in the qualitative and quantitative analyses in chapters 4-7.

2.3.3. Relational work

Locher and Watts (2005) coin a similar term to rapport management, *relational work*, referring "to the 'work' individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others" (Locher and Watts, 2005: 10). Their concept of relational work is often compared to rapport management (cf. Bambaren, 2011). Similar to the notion of rapport management, relational work considers a scale of negatively and positively marked interpretations of behaviour as it comprises the full span of interactions. The relational work done in a conversation is according to them formed and thereby influenced by people's knowledge of and expectations towards conversational norms relating to the ongoing interaction. *Frame* (e.g. Bateson, 1972; Goffman, 1974; Tannen, 1993) and *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990) are the two concepts that influence these social and conversational norms (Locher and Watts, 2005). A frame covers "participants' expectations about the kind of activity they are involved in and what sorts of behaviours and interactions are appropriate in that context" (Warner-Garcia, 2014: 160). A *habitus* is a "set of predispositions to act in certain ways, which generates cognitive and bodily practices in the individual" (Watts, 2003: 149). Relational work therefore refers to any kind of verbal behaviour that interlocutors feel is appropriate in the given context. What is deemed appropriate is constantly negotiated and re-negotiated in conversation, depending on

[8] Cf. Brezina (2018: 183) as a reference for idiosyncratic behaviour vs sociolinguistic variables.

the social, contextual, and linguistic norms and expectations the interlocutors often unconsciously follow. This idea echoes Spencer-Oatey's conception of how rapport is managed. Locher and Watts (2005) limit this statement to native speakers. I would question whether non-native speakers always follow intercultural/linguistic/pragmatic norms and expectations *unconsciously*, as the special context of an intercultural lingua franca conversation might heighten their awareness of and attention to these. Native speakers on the other hand will often subconsciously rely on their *habitus*.

2.3.4. Politeness and rapport management

Politeness is one of the central components of rapport management. Locher and Watts (2005) define politeness as "a discursive concept arising out of interactants' perceptions and judgments of their own and others' verbal behavior" (2005: 10). This means that there is not a set of values that can be ascribed to a certain situation, but rather that depending on the context, the interpretation of what is polite lies with the interlocutors. Politeness in everyday language is, on the other hand, usually referred to as courteous, attentive behaviour and linguistic constructions. This is reflected in dictionary definitions of politeness as "courtesy, good manners, behaviour that is respectful or considerate of others" (OED, "politeness").

The linguistic conceptions of politeness differ greatly. Earlier notions of what Spencer-Oatey describes as "absolute" politeness (2005: 97) as in Brown and Levinson (1987), Goffman (1967) and Leech (1983) have often been criticised as they do not account for all kinds of politeness and there are various notions of what counts as polite in different situations, groups, and cultures. What is perceived as polite in one situation can be perceived as neutral or even impolite in another. Therefore, "no linguistic expression can be taken to be inherently polite" (Locher and Watts, 2005: 16, and cf. Holmes, 1995), a statement also supported by Spencer-Oatey (2005: 97). Politeness can perhaps best be described as a "dynamic interpersonal activity" (Janney and Arndt, 2005: 22) that "arises out of […] interaction" (Watts et al., 2005: 11) and is based on certain strategies we repeatedly employ. This means that politeness arises as we constantly negotiate our relationships with others (Watts, 2005; Locher, 2004). However, both Locher and Watts as well as Spencer-Oatey retain face as one of the attributes that determine the concept of politeness, as according to Goffman (1967) the negotiation of face is always involved in any interaction. As mentioned above, I do not consider "face" in this thesis, as it is not essential to my analysis.

Spencer-Oatey conceptualises politeness as an umbrella term, as it depends on "subjective judgements people make about the social appropriateness of verbal and non-verbal behavior" (2005: 97), behaviour which is "appropriate but marked" (2005: 95). Marked behaviour connotes any kind of salient behaviour. These judgments in turn hinge on the interactants' expectations, which originate from the beliefs they have about different kinds of behaviour. *Prescribed behaviour*, which is "legally and/or socially obligatory" (Spencer-Oatey, 2005: 97), and *proscribed behaviour*, which is "legally and/or socially forbidden" (Spencer Oatey, 2005: 97) are rather straightforward: if you do something that is considered forbidden or if you do not do something that is thought compulsory, then this action is considered "non-politic" (Spencer Oatey, 2005) or "impolite" (Watts, 2003), or even "rude" (Kasper, 1990). *Permitted behaviour*, which is allowed but neither pre- nor proscribed can, but does not have to be, socially expected. If the behaviour is "socially desirable" and therefore good, it will be considered "positively eventful" or polite (Spencer Oatey, 2005: 98). As politeness is negotiated discursively, what counts as "polite" behaviour is context-dependent and might change during an interaction.

The consideration that social appropriateness changes according to the context is very important in intercultural situations. Especially if there are non-native speakers involved, a lack of "pragma-linguistic knowledge [...] might serve to reinforce existing cultural stereotypes" (Crawshaw and Harrison, 2007: 219). Depending on the context of the situation, there are different expectations towards social and linguistic behaviour from the interactants. These expectations are rather vague in casual situations (Crawshaw and Harrison, 2007). On the one hand, this might make it more difficult for a non-native speaker or a person from a different culture to ascertain which behaviour is appropriate in a given situation. On the other hand, vagueness also allows for a more lenient interpretation of the situation by their conversation partners, who are likely to consider the other's non-native speaker or cultural status. A failure to recognise this (on both sides) and subsequently repair it can lead to a "sociopragmatic failure" (Crawshaw and Harrison, 2007: 220, 227) challenges rapport. Incorrect assumptions about the other speaker's linguistic behaviour and their understanding of sociopragmatic rules can lead to increased irritation and confrontation from both speakers. These conversations can escalate to "argumentative exchanges" (Crawshaw and Harrison, 2007: 227), sequences characterised by responsive conflict talk. Since the corpus data in this thesis is comprised of ELF speakers from different language backgrounds, this is considered in the analysis. According to Aston (1993), lingua franca situations prompt the need for

rapport management as there will be (pragmatic) errors that will cause delicate situations. This does not mean that speakers in intercultural, lingua franca, and non-native speaker communication will get into argumentative exchanges due to sociopragmatic errors or that all those speakers are prone to commit sociopragmatic errors in the first place. However, Planken (2005) finds that differences in pragmatic competence of lingua franca speakers of English determine to a great extent the success of a conversation. She investigates rapport building by professional and amateur negotiators (business students) and finds that they differ in their pragmatic competence to a much higher degree than in their linguistic competence, i.e. their language skills.

2.4. Conversational strategies involved in managing rapport

While there are a considerable number of studies that touch on rapport, not all of them are directly relevant to this dissertation. I therefore choose to present a briefer overview of studies which are of importance to my analysis and/or the general topic of rapport and the point I am making in this thesis.

2.4.1. The notion of *strategy* in linguistics

My research focusses on the linguistic features that reflect sociopragmatic variables like those described in 2.3.4 above in practice and the analysis investigates different factors that influence the production and interpretation of these linguistic features. The features are used by speakers to achieve certain conversational strategies, which speakers employ to a varying degree of efficacy depending on the context, the interactional goals, and the exchange itself. Research has established that in the particular context of this thesis' corpus data, these strategies might vary considerably. Haugh and Carbaugh (2015), for example, find differences in the realisation of strategies between native speakers of English from different cultural backgrounds. Crawshaw and Harrison (2007) and Yates et al. (2016) stress the difficulties non-native speakers have in interactions with native speakers. According to them, non-native speakers from different cultural settings often have troubles with correctly identifying sociopragmatic rules of an interaction and using appropriate pragmalinguistic strategies.

The term *strategy* is generally understood to be "a plan, *scheme*, or course of action designed to achieve a particular objective" (OED, 2017). In contrast to the general notion of *strategy*

that often, but not necessarily, implies targeting a long-term aim, linguistic definitions of *strategy* vary, but they are rather oriented towards short-term objectives. A strategy in linguistics usually means that interactional goals influence linguistic behaviour and vice versa (Enkvist, 1987: 204). Culpeper (2016) explores the linguistic strategy concepts that are often used in politeness research more closely, illustrating the differences between *discourse strategies* (cf. Gumperz, 1982), *communication strategies* (cf. Dörnyei and Scott, 1997), *pragmatic strategies* (cf. Leech, 1983), and *politeness strategies* (cf. Brown and Levinson, 1987). Culpeper compares the perhaps most general kind of these strategies, *pragmatic strategies,* to rhetorical ones, where something is said with a particular goal or effect on the interlocutors in mind. Those are what Yates et al. (2016) call *pragmalinguistic* strategies. They differentiate pragmalinguistic strategies from *sociopragmatic* ones, which relate to how people communicate in a certain context that imposes situation-specific rules onto the interaction. Similarly, *politeness strategies* are about doing one thing to achieve another, but with the specific relational goal as a basis. It is essential to the linguistic concept of *strategy* that, in contrast to the popular understanding, linguists do not consider these strategies to be meticulously planned and applied ("connotations of conscious deliberation", Brown and Levinson, 1987: 85). Rather, these linguistic strategies are conceived of as a blend of "innovative plans of action" and "routines" which are automatically applied in conversation (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 85). In this thesis, I use the term *linguistic strategy* as to avoid any unnecessary pre-conceptions or positioning within a specific linguistic tradition. I conceive of them in a similar way to the pragmatic or pragmalinguistic strategies described above, with a particular focus on Brown and Levinson's (1987) notion. It is an essential theme in this thesis to identify how these unacquainted English as a Lingua Franca speakers use the linguistic strategies in conversation and see how they aim to build rapport even though they might not necessarily follow the same internal set of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic strategies.

2.4.2. Rapport strategy taxonomies

The communicative strategies involved in creating rapport are manifold. The reason for this is that rapport as a feeling state can have many different origins or causes. It is conceivable that not one single linguistic feature alone in an interaction will make the conversation partners build or maintain rapport, but that many of the features work together in order to manage rapport. As stated earlier, research into rapport managing behaviour is rather

disparate and the language strategies under investigation are often analysed with a different research focus and not directly in relation to rapport management itself. Often, rapport is listed as a consequence of applying a linguistic strategy in conversation and is appropriated for a secondary function like trust-building in human-human interaction (Gremler and Gwinner, 2008) or human-machine contexts (Zhao et al., 2016) or increased learning abilities of a student through behavioural convergence (Sinha and Cassell, 2015). This is due to the fact that human communication is complex. There are many factors that potentially affect rapport management positively, neutrally, and negatively in a variety of linguistic domains (Spencer-Oatey, 2002: 543, and see above) and with a variety of functions. Grouping or categorising the linguistic strategies and features in a meaningful way is very difficult. There are too many individual features with each potentially expressing a variety of functions, sometimes multiple functions at the same time. Gremler and Gwinner (2008) found that in seventy percent of the cases they analysed, there are multiple communicative strategies occurring at once. This co-occurrence of strategies goes in hand with the complexity of rapport. It is also the reason for why there is great variation in attempts to create rapport taxonomies and to extract and study individual features.

I have only found three studies to date that investigate the influence of specific linguistic features on rapport and that use a larger dataset in order to create a taxonomy for rapport strategies. This is on the one hand due to the fact that larger spoken corpora have only recently started to become increasingly used in pragmatics. One the other hand, researchers lack the means or tools for automatically extracting the data from datasets and interpreting them meaningfully. Ädel (2011) manually extracted instances of rapport-managing linguistic features from her corpora of face-to-face (synchronous) and online (asynchronous) student group work. As Ädel's aim was to build a taxonomy of rapport strategies, she did not work on other automatic extraction techniques but rather collected examples manually. Ädel (2011: 2932) categorises rapport managing behaviour as "discourse-structuring, intratextual, face-saving and bonding units". Discourse-structuring strategies are greetings and conversation closings, for example. Intratextual strategies allow the speaker to link to other parts of the ongoing interaction, like pointing out something that had been said previously. Face-saving strategies refer to actions mitigating face threats and apologies. Bonding units relate to the interactants' need for building a common ground and finding similarities, be they only perceived or real (cf. Clark et al., 2003). While discourse-structuring and intratextual strategies differ in that one structures an interaction and the other creates links within an

interaction, they are both rather meta-discursive in that they structure language in some way. Distinguishing between face-saving and bonding strategies also seems in some ways superfluous. Mitigating behaviour also leads to bonding, as dissimilarities are softened or reduced. Ädel's (2011) study of student group work gives insight into many different kinds of rapport management strategies. Yet, forcing complex rapport behaviour in rather fuzzy categories makes the strategies seem very inflexible, which they are not.

Zhao et al. (2016: 381) generally distinguish between "verbal (linguistic), visual (nonverbal) and vocal (acoustic) features" that co-occur with certain linguistic strategies. In their study, they investigate four conversational strategies, which they derived from an earlier study where they manually tagged those strategies (Sinha et al., 2015): self-disclosure, reference to shared experience, praise, and violation of social norms. Each of these is realised by different features which are either verbal, visual, or vocal in nature. They first measure the co-occurrences of these strategies with other linguistic features from those three modes in the tagged data from Sinha et al. (2015). They then train a computer system to automatically recognise these features by being able to predict the existence of a strategy through these specific co-occurrences. For example, speaker disclosing personal information will use specific lexis, and they will nod their head and gaze at their conversation partner, making use of the visual mode.

Zhao et al. (2016) also categorise the features from Sinha et al. (2015) not only according to their modality, but also to whether the speaker or listener exhibits this behaviour. When the conversation partner discloses personal information, the listener will "nod and avert their gaze" (Zhao et al., 2016: 388). Whether their findings can be applied to any other conversational data has not been determined yet. Their study shows that vocal features help detect conversational strategies, finding, for example, that "speakers spoke in a lower voice when praising the interlocutor" and that speakers violating social norms will adopt a "'joking' tone of voice (Norrick, 2003) and pitch different than usual" (Zhao et al., 2016: 386). While these vocal features seem very promising for developing new research on rapport, special theoretical knowledge and technical skills as well as data annotation is necessary to do this kind of investigation, which is not feasible for this thesis or similar studies. Zhao et al. (2016) serve as an example for what is possible with regard to an analysis of rapport strategies. Their approach, however, is leaning more on quantitative data analysis,

as they are interested in finding linguistic patterns that can be automatically analysed and imitated by artificial intelligence.

In the following section, I will present the individual strategies and their functions as they have been discussed and researched in previous studies with a distinct focus on verbal strategies. I briefly discuss ELF strategies and then dedicate the majority of the section to stance and conversational positioning, the central strategy analysed in this thesis. The section focusses on three linguistic features. I then succinctly present other strategies, which I have loosely grouped together according to their function, and their corresponding features. Note that a particular feature can have different functions and can therefore appear in multiple sections.

2.4.3. English as a Lingua Franca strategies

Lingua franca situations prompt the need for rapport management where (pragmatic) errors can cause delicate situations if they are not understood as such (cf. Aston, 1993). This has already been explored to some extent above. Aston (1993) argues that delicate situations are usually not seen as an offence but rather as an inevitable negative product of lingua franca communication. Previous research has discussed lingua franca data with regard to, for example, pragmatic markers (see section 2.4.4 below) even though I make the argument that these features cannot be conclusively attributed only to non-native or lingua franca discourse. Lingua franca communication does, however, seem to favour some strategies that are very likely to occur in interaction and influence rapport. For example, speakers code-switch between languages when speaking English as a Lingua Franca, or ELF (Brunner and Diemer, 2018; Brunner et al., 2017). Code-switching allows lingua franca speakers to communicate more fluently in moments where they might have trouble expressing themselves in a non-native language. This allows them to keep up the conversational flow. Conversational flow is according to Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990) one of the features that establishes the essential rapport element *coordination*. This is in the sense of the interaction being qualified as responsive and seamless. Other ELF strategies like lexical innovation, syntactic variation and discourse explicitness have similar functions (Brunner et al., 2016). In addition, code-switching allows speakers to negotiate parts of their identity with their partner. A German speaker can, for example, portray themselves as such by switching into German or using German words to describe items particular to the German culture. But at the same time, that

speaker might also to some extent have knowledge of their Spanish conversation partner's culture and show that by using Spanish terms. This shows interest for the other person and directly contributes to rapport between the speakers.

Analysing data from different contexts reveals a variety of similar but differently functioning features in extant research. Ädel's (2011) study described in section 2.4.2 finds differences in type, quantity, and sequencing of existing features between the two datasets she uses. She does, however, not only compare different language backgrounds (Swedish non-native speakers of English and American native English speakers), but also compares synchronous face-to-face conversations with asynchronous online written conversations. She admits that these differences are quite drastic and make the data not very comparable. Nevertheless, this also shows how much these conversational strategies can vary between speakers from different cultural backgrounds. Haugh and Carbaugh (2015) report differences between American and Australian speaker's preferences for self-deprecation and reciprocal approval of self-disclosures. This shows that even native English speakers from different countries employ these strategies in different ways. It seems therefore essential to consider the (individual) speaker background when analysing rapport strategies.

Speakers from different linguistic backgrounds are also said to vary in the way they mark and take stance (Baumgarten and House, 2010: 1185). In the corpus used in this thesis, there are five different groups of native language speakers represented: Bulgarian, Finnish, German, Italian, and Spanish. In line with Baumgarten and House's (2010: 1185) assumptions, the speakers in ViMELF, the corpus I use in my analysis, might not necessarily know which conventionalised linguistic patterns the speakers from other linguistic backgrounds will adopt in stance-marking and -taking (see section 2.4.4 below). It is, however, not said that they are therefore likely to share only little "common ground of mutually expectable communicative behaviour" (Baumgarten and House, 2010: 1185), even though they are strangers. The speakers in ViMELF though are proficient users of English and have grown up with European culture. It is therefore very likely that they share knowledge about acceptable communicative practices or are at least aware of possible differences and norms. This is in line with Planken (2005), who illustrates how intercultural aspects play an important role in the creation of rapport between English as a Lingua Franca speakers. Those speakers create the shared identity of a non-native speaker, which invites rapport and "mutual appreciation" (Aston, 1993: 238).

2.4.4. Stance and conversational positioning

One of the central concepts in rapport research is how people position themselves in conversation. This has been initially discussed in section 2.3.2, in the context of speaker's interactional orientations and the constant discursive negotiations of those and the speakers' stance. Based on this, I investigate stance work as one of the central rapport management strategies in the ViMELF corpus. Since there are different definitions of stance (Du Bois, 2007; Kärkkäinen, 2006), I use Englebretson's (2007) interpretation of stance being either a physical, mental (attitudes and beliefs) or social position a person can hold. This means that there are different kinds of stance that a person can hold, based on their social relations, intentionality, evaluation, extent and validity of knowledge, etc. Stance is created interactionally with respect to other stances, it is publicly perceivable, and it reflects sociocultural frameworks or physical contexts. This thesis investigates how a speaker positions themselves in conversation, i.e. different forms of stance work, and how this positioning affects rapport. This can be realised by many different verbal and non-verbal features. Stance can, for example, be expressed by adverbials, modals, and choice of pronouns or nouns (Englebretson, 2007). However, similar to rapport in fact, stance is not created through specific, singular linguistic features, but is a product of many of these features acting together.

2.4.4.1. Stance-taking

Determining a person's stance during an interaction reveals how they position themselves with regard to their conversation partner. They can have separate stances (a *you* versus *me*) or the conversation partners can create a joint stance (a *we*). These shifts from, among others, an *I* to a *we* are called shifts in person deixis (Schneider, 2010) and are performed through the use of inclusive pronouns (see below). Speakers can align themselves with a stance and they can affiliate and align themselves with groups. As part of an in-group, there is inclusive, in-group speech that connects the speakers (Ädel, 2011; Seo et al., 2017). Firth (1996) and Thompson (2006) claim that interpersonal communicative goals ("socialising") and developing a particular speaker identity are less important than the transactional goals in ELF discourse compared to native speaker discourse. This conception certainly does not apply to all ELF discourse nowadays, where English is used as a lingua franca to communicate with

other people everywhere and where socialising can most definitely be in the foreground[9]. Research as early as Ochs (1993) shows how ELF speakers use social stances in order to build an identity and position themselves in discourse. Building on this, I investigate ELF speakers' rapport management in my data through the lens of stance and conversational positioning.

Shifts in person deixis (Schneider, 2010) in a conversation affect rapport management. As explained above, they are generally performed by turn-taking or through the use of pronouns, i.e., e.g., by switching from two separate individuals, an *I* and *you*, to a *we*. *We*, however, does not necessarily need to include the speaker and the listener (inclusive *we*), it can also refer to the speaker and a third person or even a group (exclusive *we*, cf. e.g. Handford (2010) and Pennycook (1994), on different forms of inclusive and exclusive *we*). In a conversation, switching between inclusive and exclusive forms influences rapport management as a person's relations are affected by the way they position themselves in conversation. For example, O'Keeffe (2002) finds that, in the context of national identity in radio phone-in conversations, *we* is used to denote a generic group that creates a common identity. This is also explored further in O'Keeffe (2006), where she investigates pronouns in media discourse as a way of creating identities and also looks at *they* (and *them*, etc.) as a way of othering, i.e. distancing yourself from a group.

Planken (2005) investigates pronoun usage in business conversations. She focuses on first- and second-person personal pronouns to identify to which degree the speakers engage with each other. Planken identifies this "degree of solidarity and involvement" (2005: 392) by analysing and categorising first- and second-person pronouns based on who they refer to and what they express. She finds that there are differences in pronoun usage between professional and aspiring negotiators: professional negotiators clearly distinguish between themselves as an employee and representative of their company and their own private stance by framing their own perspective from personalised (*I*- perspective) to objective (depersonalised) and vice versa. They are able to deliver rejections much more effectively by depersonalising them from the *I*-perspective (with exclusive *we* referring to the company as an entity or using impersonal constructions), so that not they as an individual are responsible for the

[9] As in the case of international students chatting, for example.

dispreferred response. They thereby shift the blame away from themselves (and the company) onto a non-entity, which weakens the focus of the other's argument. The aspiring negotiators frequently employ the *I*-perspective and offer their conversation partner a personalised "opponent", which creates a more delicate situation between themselves and the other negotiator. Their discourse becomes more subjective and emotional in potentially conflictive situations, using first person singular pronouns rather than "distancers like exclusive *we* and impersonal constructions" (Planken, 2005: 395) as done by the professionals. Depersonalising the dispreferred or conflictive parts of the negotiation gives the conversations less conflictive potential and positively influences rapport between the negotiators. This polite form of diffusing conflictive conversations and accommodating to the situation and the other (cf. Planken, 2005: 382-383) shows a high degree of pragmatic competence. Planken's approach, even though it is more qualitative in nature, is useful for the study of identity and attitudes towards identity in international corpus data. Depending on how the conversation partners position themselves towards each other and each other's culture, they can build rapport: for example, by showing interest in the other's culture or establishing common ground, as evidenced in Brunner et al. (2018), where the European ELF speakers create a joint European identity. Creating a common ground is central to the concept of stance-taking in discourse (Englebretson, 2007).

Other studies of forms of stance-taking that influence rapport focus on how an epistemic stance can be realised in conversation, like through pragmatic markers. The term "pragmatic marker" describes a form of "discourse particle" (Aijmer, 2002)[10], together with discourse markers like *right* and *so* and modal particles (which do not exist in English, cf. Degand et al., 2013) like German *ja* or *eben*. A distinctive feature of these discourse particles is that they have become structurally and pragmatically fixed (grammaticalised) (Cuenca, 2013; Degand et al., 2013; Andersen, 2001). I use Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen's (2009: 223) descriptive, inclusive notion of pragmatic markers as a category of linguistic forms such as "*well, you know, I mean, sort of*", as the detailed discussion on what specifically constitutes

[10] Defining discourse particles is still quite contested in linguistics, as it is an umbrella term for linguistic items that have different forms and perform various functions (cf. Aijmer, 2002; Andersen, 2001). The discipline is torn on "different approaches, terminologies and classifications" (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen, 2009: 223, and cf. Degand et al., 2013; Fedriani and Sansò, 2017).

the defining elements as well as differences and similarities between each individual category is not productive for this thesis.

There are several studies that comment on how two specific types of pragmatic markers influence rapport through stance taking, to which Kärkkäinen (2003; 2007) refers as epistemic personalised stance markers. They are *pronoun + predicate* collocations which mark evidentiality and epistemic stance, i.e. "the speaker's commitment to the truth of his or her message, the speaker's source of knowledge, and the speaker's certainty about his or her utterance" (Ohta, 1991: 225). Due to their grammatical structure, they are also referred to as "epistemic and evidential Complement-Taking Predicate (CTP)" (Põldvere et al., 2016: 192). Põldvere et al. (2016: 199), for example, consider predicates such as *assume, be certain, doubt, feel, know, see* and *think* to belong to this category.

In this thesis, I investigate *I + epistemic verb* constructions like *I think* (which has been originally mentioned as a rapport feature by Aijmer, 1997). The original meaning of *I think* describes cogitation, the action of thinking, and it has taken on epistemic meanings of "'belief', 'opinion' and 'subjective evaluation', which derive from the linguistic and situational context of occurrence and the hearer's inferencing" (Baumgarten and House, 2010: 1189; and cf. Aijmer 1998, 1997). Põldvere et al. (2016: 193) also comment on the fact that the pragmatic understanding of complement-taking predicates (see above) combines the inherent meaning of the predicate as well as the contextual information. "*I think* is the most common means of overtly encoding a subjective perspective in the discourse" (Baumgarten and House, 2010: 1194). *I think* can both express uncertainty about a statement or reassurance (Aijmer, 1997; Baumgarten and House, 2010; Simon-Vandenbergen, 1996). The uncertain meaning is encoded by the speaker using *I think* as a hedge, which Aijmer (1997) calls "tentative" *I think*. The reassuring form is a deliberative one, often occurring with *that* and "prosodic prominence", i.e. with distinctive prosodic features (Baumgarten and House, 2010: 1189); it indicates a degree of certainty of a speaker about their statement. According to Baumgarten and House (2010: 1190), the meaning of *I think* can be "vague and context-dependent", which is why the individual instances need to be considered. This is what Zhang (2014) calls the elasticity of *I think*. Baumgarten and House (2010) differentiate between *I think* in the main clause as a process of cogitation (e.g. *I think about)*, as an epistemic marker in complement clause constructions (which are the more opaque epistemic stance cases, e.g. *I think that I got it right*), in comment clauses (utterance-final finite adverbial clauses, e.g. *I got*

it right, I think) and as a verbal routine (the obvious, transparent stance cases like *I think so*). Where in a clause or utterance the non-formulaic, epistemic forms of *I think* occur, however, does not seem to affect the stance reading of subjectivity in general according to Baumgarten and House (2010). According to Kaltenböck (2008), though, the prosodic binding of *I think* can help determine its function. In this thesis, I consider the pragmatic marker's position in an utterance, but grammatical distinctions in general are irrelevant for the investigation of *I think* in the following (except for instances where *I think* is not a pragmatic marker are distinguished from those where it is).

The non-native speakers in Baumgarten and House (2010: 1193) apparently "consciously try to adjust their stance-marking to what they perceive as appropriate or communicatively effective". In risky contexts, i.e. where the ELF speakers make a potentially controversial statement, they use *I think* for positioning and making clear that this is their personal opinion. Where they are unsure about the appropriateness and reception of their utterance, speakers follow *I think* up with breakoffs and rephrasing the sentence often to a more impersonal construction such as questions, nominal constructions or disclosure of personal information (to justify the subjective utterance). In other cases, when the speaker can assume that the other speaker will agree/align, they interrupt themselves, using self-repair, and insert *I think*. The speakers clearly take a stance or avid doing so depending on the situation. This, according to the authors, indicates that ELF conversations are considered more fragile with the speakers paying close attention to each other's stance (Baumgarten and House, 2010: 1194). The authors of the study deliberate, however, whether ELF speakers are aware of the subjective differences *I think* can express. The study is strictly speaking not generalisable, as Baumgarten and House (2010) only used a very small dataset of three conversations in total. It is therefore interesting to investigate the use of *I think* with a larger dataset of ELF conversations.

Similar to *I think* not only in structure but also in (rapport-managing) function are the pragmatic markers *I guess* and *I mean. I guess*, in relation to rapport, allows a speaker to modify their stance retrospectively and thereby signal alignment and even affiliation with the other speaker's stance (Kärkkäinen, 2003). Additionally, the pragmatic marker invites the conversation partner to take a stance and thereby share their position with the speaker. While *I guess* invites stance alignment, *I mean* can also "often signals speakers' intention to make a point of their own, instead of jointly establishing a shared perspective" (Fernández Polo,

2014: 59, cf. also Schiffrin, 1987). Fox Tree and Schrock (2002: 741) add that *I mean* is especially used "if speakers are being more careful about expressing exactly what they mean to express".

The pragmatic marker is in that particular function closely connected to *you know*, an example for the second form of pragmatic marker that influences stance-taking and rapport, which Schneider (2010) refers to as "evidentials". These are linguistic items with which a speaker implies that their conversation partner can see a state of affairs (as in the case of *you know* and *you see*) or expresses their impression of a state of affairs (*it seems to me*). Evidentials "involve the interlocutor by (appearing to be) eliciting responses indicating that the interlocutor agrees with, remembers, understands or follows the thread" (Torgersen et al., 2011: 96). As such, evidentials commit or include the interlocutor in their conversation partner's stance – by presuming agreement, the evidentials draw them into the speaker's stance. Fox Tree and Schrock (2002) closely study the functions of *you know* and find extant research to agree that it can imply a shared understanding between the conversation partners.

According to extant research, *pronoun + epistemic and evidential verb collocations* allow the speaker to commit to a statement and avoid ambiguity, for example, when introducing a subjective statement. But using the markers does not only allow the speaker to position him- or herself and indicate that this is their personal opinion, thought, or belief. The speakers also invite their conversation partner to position themselves and create a shared stance. The same pragmatic markers can also have the opposite function and increase the ambiguity of a statement by avoiding committing to a stance.

2.4.4.2. Mitigation and stance-shifts

Using depersonalised forms as described by Planken (2005) shifts the stance and, in a broader sense, focus away from a specific speaker and their responsibility as an independent actor. In Planken's (2005) business conversations data, participants who negotiate with their conversation partner shift the "blame" of why they do not accept a lower price, for example, away from themselves and their company onto a non-entity, which weakens the focus of the other's argument. That way professionals use a more personal style in the casual part of the conversation and a more professional, depersonalised style in the transactional part. The stance shift in Planken's data is used to mitigate a delicate, i.e. potentially conflictive

instance. On a pronoun level, this can, for example, be done by shifting from first person singular *I* to agent-defocusing impersonal *you* (Jaffe, 2009). Impersonal *you* refers to a *you* that does not necessarily address a specific person, but has a more "generic" interpretation of reference, which is why De Cock (2016: 364) refers to it as the "generic 2nd person singular". De Cock (2016: 364) distinguishes between a "truly 'generic' uses, implying a universal reading" that refers to *everyone* and a quasi-generic reading with "speaker-referring uses", i.e. where a speaker refers to themselves in the second person. Impersonal *you* (and *one*) is therefore indexical, but its meaning has an "impersonal, variable interpretation" (Malamud, 2012: 1).

Diffusing delicate situations through forms of mitigation like stance shifts is a rapport strategy that occurs while building and maintaining rapport. Schneider (2010: 255) defines *mitigation* as a "process of reduction of commitment and its results". The aim is therefore to "minimize the responsibilities as well as the risks and offences entailed by their speech acts" (Schneider, 2010: 255). What the speakers are thereby essentially doing is avoiding committing to a stance. That way, speakers reduce the impact of an utterance. Apart from the shift in person deixis above, Schneider (2010) lists several other mitigation strategies, like using adverbs like *perhaps*, *maybe* or *probably*. Speakers also shift temporal deixis (*I wanted to ask*) and use modals (*I must say*) and semi-modals (*I have to say*) and combinations of those strategies to mitigate. Grammatical structures such as indirect speech acts, tag questions, and parenthetical clauses (*I think*, *I believe*, *I suppose*, which are referred to as epistemic/pragmatic markers in this thesis) also help the speaker reduce commitment. Schneider (2010) also lists more indirect strategies. Evidentials (see also section 2.4.4.1 above) can mitigate statements by softening their impact. Speakers can also describe the source of their information (*they say*), thereby shifting the responsibility for this information onto someone else or imply that the addressee understands and accepts what the speaker said (*you see*). Similar to this, other evidentials like *you know* allow speakers to "attribute a certain knowledge to the addressee", which allows them to pre-empt "possible objections by the interlocutor" (Schneider, 2010: 263). Dividing the responsibility for the information between the speaker and the interlocutor (e.g. using *we*) or removing it entirely (Planken, 2005, see above) work similarly in reducing commitment to the utterance.

Pronoun + epistemic and evidential verb collocations both allow the speaker to commit to a statement and avoid ambiguity (see above) and to avoid commitment by increasing the

ambiguity of their statement. Fox Tree and Schrock (2002) note that *you know* not only implies a shared understanding between the conversation partners and, like *I mean*, reduces ambiguity in their understanding each other, but also that *you know* and *I mean* can express a degree of imprecision that affects the reception of the speakers' utterance by avoiding taking a stance. The correct reading can only be understood in the specific context of the utterance the pragmatic marker occurs in. According to Fox Tree and Schrock (2002), speakers increase ambiguity so that the conversation partner has more liberty in expressing their stance, hence contributing to rapport. In that, both *you know* and *I mean* serve "to reduce commitment to or distance themselves from a face-threatening utterance" (Fox Tree and Schrock, 2002: 733), which means that they reduce the commitment to a delicate, potentially problematic utterance. How exactly the markers increase ambiguity is unfortunately not explained in detail by the authors. I would assume that this is similar to the function of *I think* that marks subjectivity and has taken on meanings of uncertainty as described in section 2.4.4.1 above.

Another *pronoun + epistemic and evidential verb* combination that can avoid commitment and increase the ambiguity of a statement is *I don't know.* In its prototypical sense, *I don't know* marks insufficient knowledge. When *I don't know* is used in its pragmatic sense, it constructs a stance of "uncertainty, avoidance, neutrality and non-commitment" (Baumgarten and House, 2010: 1198, c.f. also Beach and Metzger, 1997). As a pragmatic marker, *I don't know* "expresses the speaker's avoiding assessment, prefacing disagreement, avoiding explicit disagreement and commitment [and hence remaining neutral], minimizing impolite beliefs, and indicating uncertainty" (Baumgarten and House, 2010: 1194, citing Tsui, 1991). Beach and Metzger's (1997: 592) example for neutrality expressed by *I don't know* also includes the "postponing or withholding acceptance of others' invited and requested actions". These pragmatic functions seem to be hedging in a way to reduce and mitigate possible social repercussions. Scheibman (2000) found a difference between "full and reduced vowel variants" of *don't* in *I don't know* often marks the distinction between the prototypical marking of lack of knowledge and the pragmatic marker. Diani (2004: 167) notes that *I don't know* at the start of an utterance in a reply to a question or assessment signals either lack of knowledge or lack of commitment. Diani (2004) also detected co-occurrences with discourse markers *well, oh, I mean, you know* that influence the pragmatic functions of *I don't know*. The combination with other discourse markers like *I mean* in *I don't know I mean* increases the tentativeness of an utterance and the ambiguity in stance-taking. Depending on whether *I*

mean prefaces or follows *I don't know*, it increases the tentativeness or lowers it, respectively (Diani, 2004: 168 and see also Clancy, 2018).

Baumgarten and House (2010) find in their data that native speakers mostly use *I don't know* in the pragmatic sense, while non-native speakers "construct a stance out of the prototypical meaning of *I don't know* as a marker of insufficient knowledge, and they use the expression to verbalize and to overcome on-line planning difficulties" (Baumgarten and House, 2010: 1198). The authors wonder whether the possible lack of awareness of each other's specific (native language) communication strategies might cause the non-native speakers to opt for the more standard functions of indicating lack of knowledge or on-line planning (i.e. using fillers like *uhm*). While this is a valid argument, Baumgarten and House's (2010) dataset is so small (and the number of *I don't know* so comparatively low) that their findings regarding differences in native versus non-native speaker use cannot be considered conclusive. An investigation of *I don't know* in a larger ELF dataset such as the one in this thesis is necessary to corroborate these findings.

2.4.4.3. Laughter and humour

There are also other ways of mitigating a possibly problematic point in a conversation, by apologising (Ädel, 2011) or by laughing (Brunner et al., 2016; Gremler and Gwinner, 2008), for example. In layman's terms, laughter is usually considered a reaction to something funny, but there are many different kinds of laughter with various rapport-managing functions, which can be accommodated by one singular framework proposed by Stewart (1997). Stewart differentiates between three 'domains' of laughter functions: *metalinguistic*, *evaluative* and *joking* (see Table 2.1). A similar, earlier model by the same scholar (Stewart, 1995) is presented in Partington (2006). Stewart (1997) distinguishes between face-saving and face-threatening functions within each domain or, to use Stewart's 1995 terminology of *supportive* and *seemingly non-supportive or distancing functions* of laughter, respectively. This ties in with Spencer-Oatey's (2002: 543) rapport management types *enhancing*, *maintaining*, and *challenging* a relationship: if laughter is used mostly in a supportive function, it contributes to rapport enhancement and maintenance, whereas distancing or non-supportive functions contribute to rapport challenging behaviour. Stewart's sub-categories (supportive metalinguistic functions, etc.) are not rigid; the categories are quite open and comprehensive and can easily be supplemented with functions described by other scholars (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 – Functions of laughter in conversation (adapted from Stewart, 1995 and 1997)

Domain	**Supportive Functions**	**Seemingly non-supportive or distancing functions**
Metalinguistic	Backchannelling device/Response Overlap/positive interruption Topic-ending indicator Turn-taking cue Negotiate grammar & meaning Show understanding	Interrupt/Take the floor Comment on Form Disguise ignorance
Evaluative	Agree/Align Reinforce Support Accept Express amusement Indicate non-seriousness Display positive emotions Mitigate	Express amusement Disagree Challenge Contradict Display negative emotions Express disapproval Boast, brag Mitigate
Joking	Gain acceptance Tease Confirm in-group identity Display intimacy Amuse or express amusement	Ridicule Taunt Tease

The metalinguistic domain, "a sort of aside" (Partington, 2006: 98), is concerned with the regulation of speech itself, commenting not only on the ongoing discourse and "metacommunicatively 'punctuating' utterances" (Thonus, 2008: 334), but also on actions, facts, and (linguistic) behaviour linked to the on-going interaction. This category includes supportive functions like backchannelling (Yngve, 1970), laughter being a topic-ending indicator (cf. topic termination, Holt, 2010) or a means of facilitating topic transition or re-orientation (Warner-Garcia, 2014), and negotiating grammar and meaning of not only words but also larger stretches of discourse (Glenn, 1989; Norrick, 1994). Non-supportive

metalinguistic functions of laughter in Stewart's classification scheme include interruption and the disguise of ignorance, which I, lacking further explications of the intended meaning from Stewart, interpret as masking the disattention of a particular topic (Jefferson et al., 1987). Disattending a topic in this case means to not take up the topic, but indicate by means of short, disaffiliating laughter that the utterance of the speaker has been perceived, but is not further pursued.

Stewart's second domain is the evaluative one, which includes a variety of attitudes towards the on-going interaction, a concept closely connected to Edwards' *subjectivity work* (2005). Supportive evaluative functions of laughter include agreement, which Stewart further divides into reinforcing, supporting, and accepting prior utterances. Agreement is in this context often linked to alignment with the other person's stance (cf. Baynham, 2011; Glenn, 1995; Partington, 2006; Warner-Garcia, 2014). Another evaluative supportive function is the display of positive emotions, like joy or amusement. This ties in with Tanaka and Campbell's (2014) type of mirthful laughter, which for them bears the qualities of "hearty" and "amused". The indication of non-seriousness (Chafe, 2007) and the mitigation of problematic or delicate situations like disagreements or arguments are also evaluative laughter functions. Non-seriousness in this case does not mean humorous or funny, but simply that the linguistic or contextual item in question and focus is not worth considering as serious or "real" (with serious consequences). Indicating non-seriousness adds to Jefferson et al.'s (1987: 172) early concept of treating something as a "non-problematic item", where a potentially conflictive situation is defused by means of laughter. Because laughter has the connotation of non-seriousness (Chafe, 2007), speakers can use laughter to create an ambivalent stance (Schmidt, 2015). It then depends on the two conversation partners to negotiate how they interpret the utterance and whether the mitigation is successful (Schmidt, 2015).

The point in a conversation that is particularly delicate is described and investigated by Warner-Garcia (2014). A theoretical convergence between the display of non-seriousness and mitigation of delicate situation is *framing* (Bateson, 1972; Goffman, 1974), a change in "participants' expectations about the kind of activity they are involved in and what sorts of behaviours and interactions are appropriate in that context" (Warner-Garcia, 2014: 160). As it is very flexible and "continually transformed and co-constructed by participants", a salient feature like laughter is an adequate strategy for changing a situation, for *reframing* it. In a

delicate or serious situation, like a disagreement, laughter can help to change the frame from serious to non-serious, even playful (Schmidt, 2015)[11].

Reframing a situation can also help to mask the fact that a potential escalation point could not be diffused and did in fact escalate. Laughter then mitigates, even downplays the "damage" and possible conflict. Warner-Garcia (2014) coined the term *coping laughter*: any kind of laughter that is used to manage delicate situations. This is also observed in Partington (2006), who describes laughter as a remedy for any kind of breakdown, especially in situations of embarrassment and anxiety, but also any kind of salient incident or accident, like committing a minor transgression, a *faux pas*, or displaying one's own shortcomings. In cases of self-deprecation, laughter functions as a safe "exit strategy" (Partington, 2006: 94), inviting the interlocutors to show sympathy, while simultaneously shifting the frame to a non-serious one, in which it becomes clear that the speaker takes whatever he or she has said in a somewhat light-hearted manner. This also features in *troubles talk* or *troubles-telling* (Edwards, 2005; Jefferson, 1984). Those complaining seem to use laughter as a means of rectification for talking about their troubles, as this is a dispreferred option in interaction, much like disagreeing with somebody. Laughter lessens the severity of the complaint[12].

Pertaining to the seemingly unsupportive evaluative domain, hearers can also express their amusement at something through laughter, which might not have been rendered laughable by the speaker. This can create as much of a conflict as laughter that shows that the conversation participant disagrees with what has been said or that expresses disapproval. Even worse perhaps, and usually highly socially and interactionally distancing, is the possibility of displaying negative emotions like contempt with laughter.

The joking domain is very closely linked to humour research. Generally, supportive laughter can signal amusement and mark successful humorous utterances, like jokes, wordplay, and narratives, and it is also used to tease (cf. Partington, 2006 for humorous laughter functions).

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[11] Partington (2006: 85) similarly observes *register play*, as he calls the phenomenon, from "transactional to interactional mode" in press conferences.

[12] Depending on the severity of the trouble, there is somewhat of an asymmetry in the use of laughter by the interlocutors: listeners are not always invited to join in with the laughter; they are usually supposed to "acknowledge the seriousness of an ironically delivered complaint" (Edwards, 2005: 20).

When conversation participants signal amusement over something (Mullany, 2004: 21), they can bond by sharing laughter. S*hared*, *joint*, or *coordinated* laughter (Glenn, 2003; Holt, 2010; Jefferson et al., 1987; Kangasharju and Nikko, 2009; Thonus, 2008) are instances where the speakers align stance with each other. While Stewart classifies teasing as face-saving or supportive, other researchers point to its derisive character (cf. Rees and Monrouxe, 2010). Other derisive forms of laughter described in Carrell (2008), Chafe (2007), Partington (2006), Tanaka and Campbell (2014), and Warner-Garcia (2014) include ridicule, taunt, sarcasm, cynicism, profanity, and verbal duelling, which are said to "promote division," and "feelings of superiority" (Rees and Monrouxe, 2010: 3386). The feeling of superiority can in turn be supportive if it relates to other people who are not part of a conversation, by making fun of their behaviour, for example. Then, laughter has a social bonding function. It creates an in-group identity of the conversation participants who laugh with each other, excluding the ones laughed at. This is similar to the creation of a joint stance through pronouns.

For Stewart (1997), the joking domain closely links to social functions: gaining acceptance, creating and confirming in-group identities, and displaying intimacy can be the (pleasant) consequence of humours remarks. Intimacy does not have to be created through laughing at somebody's humorous comment but can also be created by a combination of alignment, a non-serious play-frame, and the display of positive emotions. Similarly, "polite laughter", as classified in Tanaka and Campbell (2014), for example, seems to be an umbrella term for several functions, both in the metalinguistic and the evaluative supportive domain. It might entail, for example, a breathy or chuckled weak agreement (Pomerantz, 1984), where the participant neither wants to verbally align with the speaker, nor in any way directly *dis*align with them, being "intentionally equivocal" (Warner-Garcia, 2014: 159).

Humour, as mentioned above, is another strategy that influences rapport (Gremler and Gwinner, 2008; Schnurr, 2010). In particular strangers or lesser acquainted people will, for example, use self-deprecating humour to portray themselves as a modest person who has shortcomings like anybody else and seem more approachable (Boxer and Cortés-Conde, 1997). Planken (2005) also demonstrates that intercultural aspects play an important role in the creation of rapport between English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) speakers. Those speakers create the shared identity of a non-native speaker and discuss "good experiences with the other's culture" while simultaneously jokingly demoting their own culture and putting the other culture "above" their own. This invites rapport and "mutual appreciation" (Aston, 1993:

238), and, in these situations of rapport building and maintenance, laughter. Humour can also mitigate delicate instances and help to soften criticism by communicating it in a collegial way (Schnurr, 2010: 314).

2.4.5. Other verbal and non-verbal strategies

Naturally, there are many other strategies that influence rapport. Following the discussion of rapport taxonomies in 2.4.2, I distinguish between verbal and non-verbal strategies. These are not central to the analysis in this thesis, but they are briefly discussed as they occur in the context of the analysis of stance and rapport.

2.4.5.1. Verbal strategies

Compliments, praise, and thanks

One of the most obvious conversational strategies to build a relationship with someone is to compliment and praise them (Abbe and Brandon, 2014; Ädel, 2011; Seo et al., 2017). Compliments are a form of courteousness or "affiliative behaviour" (Bronstein et al., 2012) and have been analysed qualitatively by Ädel (2011)[13], for example. Compliments can be rapport-threatening if they are not considered appropriate (Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Brown and Levinson, 1987), for example, if a compliment is either not meant as such by the speaker or not understood as such by the hearer. Responding to compliments appropriately is considered another rapport-building behaviour (Ädel, 2011; Seo et al., 2017). There are three general ways of responding to compliments: acceptance, rejection or deflection, and evasion or self-praise avoidance (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). What counts as appropriate complement responses varies depending on the identity of the speaker and the context (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001). Thanking and responding to thanks is also considered polite (Ädel, 2011). By doing so, similar to complementing, speakers show positivity (Seo et al., 2017), a friendly attitude, as well as other courteous behaviour, like civility and empathy (Gremler and Gwinner, 2008).

[13] While compliments are often mentioned as rapport building behaviour, to my knowledge, only two studies have included quantitative analyses of compliments in larger corpora. Sinha et al. (2015, see above) manually code verbal forms of praise in a corpus, differentiating between labelled and unlabelled praise forms. Labelled praise targets specific things like achievements, whereas unlabelled praise is more generic like "great". Zhao et al. (2016) then analyse them quantitatively by measuring co-occurring features with which they are able to predict praise in other datasets.

The strategies also increase intimacy by "decreasing interpersonal distance" (Cassell and Bickmore, 2003: 91).

Back-channelling and showing interest

Positivity and civility are also established by listening and answering emphatically (Argyle, 1990; Seo et al., 2017). This is expressed by non-verbal "immediacy behavior" signalling attention (see below) and "active listening" (Abbe and Brandon, 2014: 209-210). An example for active listening or back-channelling (Yngve, 1970) verbal feature is giving non-interruptive feedback like "yeah" or "mhm". Iwasaki (1997) differentiates three different types of verbal back-channels: non-lexical words such as "mhm", phrasal backchannels like "really" and similar "expressions of acknowledgement and assessment" and substantive backchannels "with referential content such as a repetition or a clarifying question" (Lambertz, 2011: 12). Referential content also includes strategies like sentence completion (Lambertz, 2011), paraphrasing (Abbe and Brandon, 2014), and repeating and summarising an utterance by the conversation partner (Vecchi et al., 2005). These signal attention to the ongoing discourse, and show support for, acknowledgement of and agreement with what the other speaker is saying (cf. Lambertz, 2011). Adolphs and Carter (2013) manually tag back-channels to show their usage in spoken corpus data. Active, emphatic listening and answering is very important for establishing interpersonal relationships (cf. also Ward, 2006). This behaviour shows interest in the conversation partner and involvement in the topic and the interaction in general.

Disclosing personal information and chatting

Interest and support are further expressed by disclosing personal information. Sharing increasingly intimate details over the course of a relationship builds rapport and trust (Zhao et al., 2016). There are different degrees of self-disclosure depending on how personal the information is considered to be. For example, expressions of likes and dislikes are easier to reveal than transgressive behaviour (Zhao et al., 2016). Zhao et al. (2016: 385) find that disclosing personal information will involve increased usage of first-person pronouns as well the use of specific lexis about personal concerns around topics like "work, leisure, home", etc. A co-occurrence of features like these and others (e.g. scores for positive and negative emotion words in LIWC (Pennebaker et al., 2015)), allow them to identify disclosure of personal information in a corpus and predict instances in other datasets.

In conversational settings where there is a specific task that the speakers have to do, chatting about off-task topics and asking off-task questions also manages rapport (Seo et al., 2017). The conversation partners can use this time to disclose personal information, for example, and to get to know each other better. While my data does not necessarily involve a cooperative task like solving a question, the conversation participants have to skype each other and cooperatively work on the task of upholding a conversation with a complete stranger for at least thirty minutes (this is addressed in more detail in chapter 3). Chatting about off-task topics and asking off-task questions is similar to "safe talk" (Planken, 2005) as a rapport building strategy in sales negotiations. Conversations usually have a specific aim or goal; negotiations have a transactional goal, for example. *Safe talk* refers to any part of the conversation that is "not directly related to or relevant for the primary transactional goal being negotiated" (Planken, 2005: 385). It therefore resembles polite (business) small talk (Pullin, 2010), which helps to ease into and out of a conversation. It structures and clearly frames different parts of a conversation. Following 'procedural norms' (Planken, 2005: 391) means removing tensions, ensuring a more harmonic procedural structuring and a more effortless flow of the conversation.

Chatting also helps conversation partners identify mutual interests and find similarities between them (Gremler and Gwinner, 2008), on which the speakers can have further conversations and will be able to build a deeper relationship. This is what Svennevig (2014: 322) calls "mutually involving topics". It is, however, not necessarily true that the more alike two people are, the better they get along. Rather, the more two people share with each other, the closer they are in one space, at one time, and therefore share experiences, the greater is their chance to build rapport (Ädel, 2011; Seo et al., 2017).

2.4.5.2. Non-verbal strategies influencing rapport

Non-verbal conversational strategies are usually not the focus of linguistic investigations into rapport. However, Schneider (2010: 254) argues that "visual and/or verbal interaction between participants" is equally important. This seems to be corroborated by research that finds that, in telephone conversations, the "absence of visual access [...] made coordination more difficult" (Drolet and Morris, 2000: 34). Rapport and affect have been reported greater in face-to-face conversations (Drolet and Morris, 2000), which could be due to the general lack of visual and the lack of information about the physical stance of the other speaker (cf.

Scollon and LeVine, 2004), i.e. a lack of immediacy behaviour that influences our perception of rapport.

Several features in combination usually create rapport (Zhao et al., 2016), even though "the same nonverbal behaviour sometimes functions in very different ways" (Cappella, 1990: 304). Having an open, inviting, friendly posture (Seo et al., 2017; Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal, 1990) displays positivity and friendliness. Smiling can indicate friendliness, alignment, understanding, amusement, among others and serves as a back-channelling device, as do nodding (Zhao et al., 2016) and waving (Seo et al., 2017: 4). This is what Abbe and Brandon (2014) call "active listening". The speakers signal support and agreement (Brunner et al., 2017). Engagement into the conversation is also realised through "immediacy behavior" (Abbe and Brandon, 2014) like leaning to signal attention or tilting the head (Zhao et al., 2016). Phenomena like pauses (i.e. silence; Kang et al., 2012) which influence rapport are rather tricky. Locher and Watts (2005: 20) find that silence is "a salient and very meaningful mode of communication, as it is very versatile in interaction (Locher and Watts, 2005: 30-31 and cf. Jaworski 1997). Creating a moment of silence in a discussion can signal disagreement, for example.

In a lingua franca setting, gestures have been shown to replace or substitute lexical items where the speaker does not know or cannot come up with the English word (Brunner et al., 2017; 2016), for example. These speakers also use a variety of different gestures to emphasise the content of the message and, therefore perhaps unconsciously, make the meaning of their utterance somewhat clearer[14]. This again shows that fluency and ease of understanding are important in lingua franca communication.

Probably the most difficult rapport strategy to retrieve is absence. Ädel (2011) notes that the absence of conversational features seems to be a valuable strategy. She gives the example of the absence of criticism. If a speaker decides not to criticise their conversation partner and thereby does not risk creating a possibly delicate situation, they actively but indirectly contribute to rapport. While absence seems to be a very interesting means for managing

[14] For example, shrugs in these conversations occur when the speakers signal acceptance and where they stress that what they say is normal or ordinary.

rapport, isolating this particular strategy would need very specific qualitative analyses and does not seem to be possible yet for quantitative analyses.

2.5. Co-occurrences of pragmatic features – between corpus linguistics and pragmatics

As I have shown across multiple sections above, the features and strategies that affect rapport do not occur in isolation. Rather, there are often multiple of them occurring at once. When investigating features like those in this thesis, it is therefore of interest to also analyse their co-occurrences. Without a computer, that would be a difficult task that humans are not attuned to (cf. Sinclaire, 1991). Corpus use is essential for this. As established above, however, pragmatic features are often not studied in larger corpora, since it is difficult to retrieve them automatically (Hunston, 2010: 154). This has been changing in recent years, especially thanks to the field of Corpus Pragmatics, which uses corpus linguistic methods to study pragmatic research questions (cf., among others, Aijmer and Rühlemann, 2015; O'Keeffe et al., 2019; Rühlemann, 2018).

Corpus linguistic methods allow researchers to look for patterns in their data. Patterns in language are a central concept in Corpus Linguistics, since meaning is established by words occurring together with other words (cf. e.g. Vaughan and O'Keeffe, 2015: 8). Hunston (2010: 152) defines a pattern as "a co-occurrence of a language form and a particular context", which means two things. First, that there is an understanding of these patterns being tied to specific contexts and second that these forms are not just words but can also be linguistic forms like the superlative, for example, or something like the pragmatic features analysed in this thesis. The meaning that arises from these co-occurrences can take on many different forms too. Aijmer (2015), for example, investigates how co-occurrences of discourse markers can either enhance or decrease the pragmatic function of those discourse markers.

One form of co-occurrences that are "one of the pivotal concepts in lexical studies today" (Vaughan and O'Keeffe, 2015: 8) are collocations. There are different ways of defining and conceiving of collocations, depending on the frequency, proximity and sequence of linguistic

forms[15]. This thesis understands collocations as one of the definitions described in McEnery and Hardy (2012: 123): "a co-occurrence pattern that exists between two items that frequently occur *in proximity* to one another – but not necessarily adjacently or, indeed, in any fixed order." The analysis chapters of this thesis therefore consider co-occurrences of pragmatic features not based on strict sequentiality or adjacency, but rather on this looser understanding (this is also further discussed in chapter 3). The statement from Vaughan and O'Keeffe (2015: 8) above shows that collocations are very much tied to lexical research and words. This is why in this thesis I will refer to these patterns of pragmatic features as co-occurrences rather than collocations, even though, conceptually, they are understood as the same thing.

The co-occurrence of multiple communicative strategies in rapport management has been observed by Gremler and Gwinner (2008), for example, who only describe and do not analyse the data with any specific identification methods. Zhao et al. (2016) also attempt to isolate certain linguistic rapport strategies like praise or disclosure of personal information by identifying co-occurrences of specific linguistic features used to realise these strategies, but they do not investigate how the co-occurrences affect the functionality of the general strategy and each individual form.

This has several implications for the following chapters. Rapport is managed by many communicative strategies with their set of corresponding features working together. In the light of this fact, studying the pragmatic features and especially their functions means that the features also have to be studied with each other, i.e. in places where they co-occur. During a standard qualitative pragmatic analysis, that is exactly what happens. The features are studied together in the context in which they occur. When the features are studied in a corpus, however, their functions are usually studied in isolation due to the functionality of corpus linguistic tools and a different set of methodological concerns. Since investigations into frequency and patterns without a computer are prone to human error, it is necessary to extend the analysis to a computerised quantitative one as well. I therefore use both qualitative and quantitative approaches to analyse the data. These considerations are discussed in greater detail in terms of the methodology of this thesis in chapter 3. With regard to the analysis, this

[15] Note that this does not necessarily have to be limited to lexical forms.

means that there are three chapters in which each pragmatic feature is analysed separately and a fourth analysis chapter that investigates the frequency, set-up and functionality of co-occurrences between the features. This also implies that the two ways of studying rapport and pragmatic features are united to gain an understanding of both context and frequency that each method alone cannot cover.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that rapport is of interest to various academic disciplines and that there is a considerable amount of research on how our behaviour influences our relationships. Overall, extant rapport research has given a great insight into how a diverse set of people manage rapport in different contexts. It has enabled new conceptions of how communication impacts the relationships between people: an almost universal phenomenon or mechanism.

What this chapter highlights, though, is that rapport is complex and there is not a singular comprehensive account of rapport that covers its theoretical foundations and the conversational strategies affecting it. Many situational or contextual factors influence rapport management in a variety of linguistic domains and with a variety of functions. This explains why taxonomies of rapport strategies have so far not been exhaustive and why they rarely get taken up and applied to new datasets by other researchers. The disciplines that analyse rapport use different terminology, preconceptions, and methodology, meaning that they analyse very different datasets in a variety of often rather incomparable ways. Linguistic features are often not studied specifically in the context of rapport, but rapport is described as a consequence of them. While this chapter details which linguistic strategies and features are known to influence rapport management, it shows that there is much need for closer investigations into how the strategies and features work.

There is a large variety of different approaches to analysing linguistic rapport strategies and to retrieving them from a dataset. Most research still relies on qualitative methods of extraction and analysis and only applies quantitative methods to statistical calculations of frequency and effect. Computational linguistics approaches to rapport features forgo a qualitative analysis of the sort that rapport studies usually incorporate. While they look at larger interactional strategies, the specific features they analyse are highly technical and

number-based so that a machine can process the data. While this is exactly their research aim, it disconnects their study from traditional rapport research.

There are two main gaps in rapport management research. There is a widening gap between qualitative and quantitative rapport research which needs to be bridged. At the same time, rapport research has become so specific and individual that it is difficult to compare findings or verify them in different contexts. This means that an analysis of rapport also needs to be more methodical and replicable. The implications for this thesis are that the analysis needs to combine methods from qualitative and quantitative rapport research in a meaningful way, building on existing knowledge from both approaches. The methodology also has to be precise enough to be replicable in different contexts and broad enough to apply to different contexts in which rapport is managed. The following chapter discusses my methodology to address these gaps in rapport research and its implications for this thesis.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

Chapter 2 highlighted two main problems in rapport research that my thesis aims to address. There is a considerable gap between qualitative and quantitative research approaches to rapport management, which needs to be bridged before the two strands of rapport research become too disconnected. Learning from existing research, the most appropriate way of bridging the gap between qualitative and quantitative rapport research seems to be to focus my analysis on tangible linguistic forms that realise a linguistic strategy that affects rapport. This is because they are analysed in qualitative as well as quantitative studies and they are clearly connected to the linguistic strategies that are analysed in traditional qualitative rapport research. Chapter 2 discussed the conversational strategies that have been studied by various researchers and are known to affect rapport and the methodologies used. As most of these strategies and linguistic forms are more specific and material than the larger concept of rapport, they can be identified more easily with the help of corpus linguistic approaches in larger datasets (see section 3.3.3). Many of the linguistic strategies concerned, however, are pragmatic in nature, especially with the larger concept of rapport as a core of the analysis, and therefore need to be analysed qualitatively in the context in which they occur (see section 3.3.2). This means the features and strategies can and must be studied both qualitatively and quantitatively to get a complete picture of their functionality.

The second problem this thesis addresses is linked to the state of rapport research described in chapter 2. The general topic has been researched quite extensively, but the concept of rapport management is very complex and the methods for analysing it, the taxonomies and types of datasets vary widely. It is my goal to make the research framework and approach more methodical and replicable. To do this, complex rapport managing behaviour can be feasibly studied in one of two ways: (1) by limiting the study to the application of one rapport strategy and one feature in multiple contexts, or (2) by limiting the context of study and analysing multiple features of the same rapport strategy in it. I adopt the second approach and investigate rapport in narrow, strictly defined categories, which makes the analysis easier to replicate in other datasets. In chapter 2, I focussed my attention mainly on one linguistic strategy, stance, and on three specific linguistic features, the choice of which I will discuss in more detail in section 3.3.4.

To address the problems illustrated above, in short, I limit the analysis to only three forms: pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter. This ensures that each form can be analysed exhaustively and with regard to their specific effect on stance and ultimately rapport management. I use a dataset of conversations that is sufficiently specific and thereby limit the context of the features in use, yet the dataset is also general enough to make the study replicable. I analyse qualitatively and quantitatively how the three linguistic forms affect rapport and stance in their different realisations in the data to understand how they manifest themselves in the particular unacquainted, lingua franca context. I do this as an applied example for closing the gap between qualitative and quantitative rapport research.

This chapter outlines the methodology used in the analysis of rapport strategies adopted by non-native speakers in an online English as a Lingua Franca context. It introduces the Skype conversations that form the corpus analysed in chapters 4 to 7. Section 3.2 explores the choice of this particular set of conversations and discusses how the corpus differs from other data used in studying rapport, by describing the corpus' specifications, its collection, and transcription. In sections 3.3.1 – 3.3.3, I discuss general methodological considerations in analysing the data, briefly deliberating the issue of measuring rapport, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative versus quantitative methods of analysis. This is followed by a detailed discussion in section 3.3.4 of the three chosen linguistic features that affect positioning and rapport—pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter—and the forms that this analysis focuses on. The last section of this chapter (3.3.5) describes the methodological procedure of the analysis.

3.2. Corpus

3.2.1. The CASE project

The Corpus of Academic Spoken English (CASE, 2018) is an unpublished collection of recorded and transcribed Skype conversations. The compilation[16] of the corpus started in

[16] I have been a contributor to this project since the beginning, first in the role of a research assistant to the project leads and later as one of the primary investigators of the CASE project. I have been involved at all stages of the project, especially during the compilation phase: I contributed by recruiting new partners, recruiting individual participants, helping to develop the recording and transcription guidelines, training transcribers and research assistants, transcribing, anonymising the recordings, and preparing the data for publication, among others.

2012, coordinated by Saarland University, Saarbrücken, Germany, and was initially intended only as a specialised corpus of spoken, academic English containing conversations between German and Bulgarian university students. With a changing project lead, the corpus project started to grow and, as of Spring 2020, CASE consists of more than 200 hours of conversation between university students from Germany, Bulgaria, Italy, Spain, Finland, Sweden, Belgium, France, the United Kingdom and the United States. The corpus project is currently being coordinated by Trier University of Applied Sciences, Birkenfeld, Germany in cooperation with its partner institutions[17].

The basic version of CASE is used for qualitative analyses. Extrapolations indicated that the finalised corpus will contain roughly 2 million words (Brunner et al., 2017). The length of the conversations as well as the word count per conversation in the corpus vary. The majority of them are between 30 and 45 minutes long, with the exception of some longer ones (up to 2 hours and 20 minutes).

The recorded conversations capture first encounters between these international students on Skype. They are native speakers of English from the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as non-native speakers of English from European countries. The non-native speaker participants are university students of English or translation or have English as a secondary subject. They can therefore be categorised as advanced academic second or foreign language users of English in an international setting.

CASE conversations include chats between:

- non-native and non-native English speakers (NNS-NNS),
- non-native and native English speakers (NNS-NS),
- as well as native-native English speaker (NS-NS) interactions.

There are no other Skype corpora and few other large spoken corpora have been transcribed to this detail. There are other spoken corpora available that also include non-native English

[17] Birmingham City University, UK; Boise State University, USA; Hanken School of Economics, Helsinki & Vasa, Finland; Helsinki University, Finland; St Kliment Ohridski University, Sofia, Bulgaria; Universität des Saarlandes, Saarbrücken, Germany; Université catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium; Université Lumière Lyon 2, France; University of Bologna, Forlì, Italy; University of Eastern Finland, Finland; University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain; and formerly Linnaeus University, Växjö, Sweden.

speaker conversations, like the International Corpus of English (ICE, Nelson, 2008), the Vienna Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE, 2013), the English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings project (ELFA, 2008), or the Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage (LINDSEI, 2010). These corpora do not only vary on the spectrum of informal and academic language, they also include various levels of detailed transcriptions (cf. Brunner et al, 2017, and Diemer et al., 2016), but none as detailed as CASE, which fills this gap.

3.2.2. ViMELF – Corpus specifications

In 2018, the corpus underwent a phase of repositioning to account for the fact that, after its extensions, the recorded language type could be more accurately described as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (cf. Brunner et al., 2017) Skype conversations, in the line of Seidlhofer's (2011) definition of ELF. She refers to English as a Lingua Franca as "any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice" Seidlhofer (2011: 10).

To reflect its composition more accurately, a part of the corpus was published under the name ViMELF, the Corpus of Video-Mediated English as a Lingua Franca Conversations. It contains 20 non-native–non-native speaker (NNS–NNS) conversations between 40 different speakers[18] from five countries: there are 20 German speakers speaking to five students each from Bulgaria, Finland, Italy, and Spain. The duration of the talks is on average 37.23 minutes, with individual chats ranging between 30 and 45 minutes. There is a total of ca. 12.5 hours of conversations (744.5 minutes). The plain text version of ViMELF contains 113,670 tokens, the annotated version (see section 3.2.5) 154,472 tokens. An average conversation in ViMELF consists of 5694.3 spoken words (i.e. plain text, excluding any annotation whatsoever, see below), ranging between 3732 and 7257 words. 11 conversations have been recorded with a video on both sides (from both speakers), 3 with a video on one side and 6

[18] Technically, these are the main speakers only. In some conversations, a partner, friend or housemate will drop in on the conversation for a brief moment. Utterances pertaining to the conversation are transcribed in ViMELF and CASE and marked in accordance with the dependency of the speaker to one of the main speakers by adding an X to the main speaker ID. This means that a friend of German SB51 would be marked as SBX51. In ViMELF, there is only one dependent speaker, SBX51.

with the audio only[19]. This was due to technical issues the conversation partners encountered during the recording (see section 3.2.4). The corpus is balanced with regard to the length of the conversations, the number of speakers, and the nationality of the speakers. It is available for both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

3.2.3. Other CASE components and publications

CASE records the sociocultural and linguistic background of the speakers, including age, gender and other social factors. CASE also features other criteria that allow for the creation of sub-corpora. While the CASE project is still ongoing, several preliminary datasets have been analysed and discussed in publications. A preliminary set of 20 conversations, and precursor of ViMELF, BabyCASE was compiled in 2017. CASE also compiled two sets of conversations about food in 2015 and 2017, making use of another criterion for filtering conversations: according to topic type.

In addition, CASE releases a corpus containing conversations with native and non-native speakers, TaCoCASE, the Transatlantic Component of the CASE project (forthcoming). These conversations are between German, British, and American speakers (in a NS-NNS and a NS-NS setting). Preliminary transcripts of additional conversations between Germany and Sweden, for example, or between Italy and Spain are also available.

3.2.4. Corpus collection

The conversations in CASE are categorised as "at the informal end of the academic language spectrum" (Brunner et al., 2017). They take place in an informal context: the students choose where and when they speak to their assigned conversation partner, rather than in a language lab or any other supervised setting. They are assigned a conversation partner at random by the corpus project coordinators and every participant receives their partner's name and email address to contact them and schedule their Skype conversation at their convenience. They are both assigned a participant ID so that their conversations can be linked anonymously to their sociocultural and linguistic background data. The participant IDs are an abbreviation of the

[19] The data at the basis of this analysis includes both conversations with and without video, depending on the technical affordances of each participant. This allows me to compare these two forms of communication with one another with regards to how rapport is managed.

city in which the students study followed by a chronologically ordered number: BI (Birmingham, United Kingdom), BO (Boise, Idaho, United States), FL (Forlì, Italy), HE (Helsinki, Finland), LV (Louvain, Belgium), SB (Saarbrücken, Germany), SF (Sofia, Bulgaria), and ST (Santiago de Compostela, Spain).

At the start of a recording phase, students receive specific guidelines. The guidelines specify the recording of the conversations, which are done by the students themselves. The software used to record the Skype conversations has changed over the duration of the project due to changing operating system requirements and software availability. The participants are asked to set the Skype recording software to an automatically recording side-by-side video configuration, whereby, in the finished recording, both video streams (i.e. the video feed that the callers can see of themselves and of the other person) are of equal size and aligned side-by-side. Recording a video has, however, not always been possible, which is why about 30 per cent of the conversations are audio only due to cases of low bandwidth.

Using the camera and audio stream from the participant computer ensures that the recorded data accurately reflects the speaker's perspective rather than a vicarious "researcher" perspective with added cameras. Running a program in the background of the computer rather than using visible cameras or microphones also reduces the effects of participants' awareness of being recorded. This is reinforced by the length of the conversations, since, as Adolphs and Carter (2013: 148) point out, the longer conversations are, the more natural they become. The CASE guidelines require conversations to last at least 30 minutes, resulting in recordings between 30 and 200 minutes.

Each conversation has a topic prompt from a loosely academic background. The topic prompts cover study-related topics regarding the university context and academic cultures, the ELF and CMC (computer-mediated communication) context, as well as issues specifically related to identity and (popular) culture (for a complete list of topics see Appendix II). The topic prompts are intended to start off the conversations and serve as a facilitator between the previously unacquainted interlocutors. The topic prompts prove a challenge to naturally occurring first encounters. Strangers who meet for the first time usually have to find and discursively negotiate a topic first by themselves if they do not have a transactional goal, for example. However, in my opinion, the specific set-up reflects real-life Skype conversations, where people usually call each other with a specific purpose in mind if

they do not know each other. For example, job interviews are often held via Skype. Prospective roommates can also call each other on Skype to get to know one another if they cannot travel to meet each other in person before deciding to move in. In all of these instances, the interactants might have emailed or chatted before, but would then meet each other face-to-face on Skype. So, CASE conversations reflect a common Skype conversation setting, even though it is a newer kind of conversation setting. In addition, usually, the topic prompts quickly lead to conversations developing in a natural way. The topics that are actually covered by participants go beyond just the proposed topic, including, for example, participants' research interests, personal background, general small talk, the project itself, technical difficulties or meta topics like external factors from interlocutors' surroundings intruding on the Skype conversation (cf. Brunner, 2015; Diemer et al., 2016).

Each topic has an allocated number to easily filter the conversations for likely conversation content. Together, topic ID and participant IDs make up each specific conversation ID: for example, 01SB14SF11 refers to topic number one ("course of studies and job prospects"), the first participant SB14, Saarbrücken speaker number 14, and the second participant SF11, Sofia speaker number 11. Finally, the corpus (transcripts and audio) is anonymised regarding any names and other sensitive information. All video recordings are contour filtered, which renders any individual unrecognisable while preserving facial expressions and gestures essential for analysis. The anonymised videos, audios, and the background data are available for analysis, as they have been consented to appear alongside the transcripts.

3.2.5. Corpus transcription

CASE conversations are transcribed according to specific guidelines (see Appendix IV). These are very detailed, as the corpus is intended to be available to researchers with all kinds of different research focuses and from different academic disciplines. However, as these disciplines investigate a variety of different features, it is of course not possible for the CASE compilers to capture all of the complex features of spoken language. Only a selection can be transcribed, and those only with a certain degree of simplification. CASE contains more complex transcription features in order to preserve the meaning-producing aspects of the audio-visual data that might get lost if they were not transcribed. This means that the corpus includes as much of the original data as manageable with current technology and to allow research in a wide range of fields.

CASE transcription conventions generally follow British English spelling and orthography. The conventions regulate the transcription of non-standard features like characteristic pronunciation patterns with existing standardised spelling, such as *gonna*, *wanna*, *gotta*— these are transcribed accordingly. CASE transcribes linguistic features like overlap, pauses, pitch, and paralinguistic features like laughing or coughing. It includes various types of hesitation marker and response token like "hm" or "uh", as well as a transcription of features specific to Skype like echoes. The corpus also contains non-verbal behaviour like supporting gestures, non-verbal backchannels, and references to the speaker's physical environment. These features are all captured in the "pragmatic" transcription layer of the corpus (cf. Schmidt, 2015). The recordings are transcribed in this "pragmatic" version first (see Appendix V.A) and then run through a conversion program by RDUES, Birmingham City University (Gee, 2014). This creates an orthographic version of each transcript that contains only verbal utterances and no other linguistic features (see Appendix V.B).

The full transcription conventions can be found in Appendix IV and are discussed in Brunner et al. (2017). The purpose of the scheme is to be easily retrievable from the corpus and intuitively readable by a corpus user. With the annotations available for analysis, all levels of meaning can be accessed as necessary and be more easily extracted. The high level of details of spoken language transcribed in the corpus means that both qualitative and quantitative readings of the data are possible. The inclusion of these additional features is referred to as rich data in corpus linguistics. 'Rich data' denotes any information beyond the scope of a traditional corpus of written data. This means that not only the text is included in corpora, but also audio or video components, for example, as well as prosodic, paralinguistic and nonverbal features annotated in the transcripts. The inclusion of rich data in larger corpora of spoken language is relatively recent (for some features) but has become much more established over the years, since it is essential for studies that go beyond syntax, semantics, and morphology: much of the linguistic information we process is not conveyed by words, but by these other features that convey information about the context and how something is said. Interdisciplinary research demonstrates that the corpus investigation of rich data has clear positive functions and results. Brunner et al. (2017) and Partington et al. (2013), for example, argue for the inclusion of these features, especially regarding the combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses of language (see 3.3.2 below). Adolphs and Carter (2013), and Diemer et al. (2016), among others, explore the complexity of rich data in corpora and discuss the benefits of detailed prosodic, paralinguistic, and nonverbal corpus

annotation for linguistic research. Brunner et al. (2017), demonstrate in detail how adding paralinguistic, prosodic and visual information to the transcription can change the understanding and interpretation of the data in CASE. The three stance features under investigation in this thesis have different forms: laughter, for example, is one of the additionally transcribed pragmatic features, whereas pronouns and pragmatic markers are part of the orthographic transcript. I use various versions of a transcript in the data analysis (see below) in order to enable a thorough analysis.

In essence, working on this large, annotated corpus of international speakers allows me to reinforce qualitative readings with quantitative data and thereby investigate different aspects of complex features more thoroughly. This makes it possible to look for linguistic features in hundreds of thousands of words and identify instances of interest for the investigation of rapport.

3.2.6. Data preparation

The recordings of the conversations are transcribed in a pragmatic version (see description above and Appendix V.A for an example) first and then run through a conversion program by RDUES, Birmingham City University (Gee, 2014). The tool translates the CASE annotations into files with XML (Extensible Markup Language) tags. The XML file can be used to create further versions of the transcripts, according to what is required for the analysis. This is necessary, as the CASE transcription conventions allow annotations to appear at any point in the transcript, even mid-word, like in the case of conversational overlaps, lengthening of syllables, or changes in velocity of speech. By converting the annotation to XML, an XML editor can hide all or selective display XML tags, which enables words to appear as intact units that can be searched and displayed by corpus software. I use BaseX, an open source XML database management system, to create two orthographic versions of each transcript, one containing only verbal utterances and no other linguistic features and one including the speaker annotations too (see Appendix V.B), and one version which includes the speakers, the orthographic transcript and laughter annotation (see Appendix V.C). If ViMELF is entered as a database, the whole corpus or individual conversations can be searched with database queries to display the content (i.e. the transcripts) with the required annotations.

I use the orthographic transcripts in chapters 4 to 6 for basic corpus inquiries, collocations, and n-grams, while I then use the extended transcript (speaker, orthographic transcript and laughter annotation) for further annotations and analysis in chapters 4 to 7. In addition, I converted the orthographic version to a part-of-speech (POS) tagged version with the CLAWS POS tagger by UCREL, Lancaster University (CLAWS, no year). I use the POS tagged transcripts to identify pragmatic markers in the corpus analysis. The XML file also makes it possible to create further versions of transcripts, if required. I have, for example, created a sub-corpus containing only utterances (and laughter annotation) from speakers pertaining to the same national part as well as a sub-corpus of individual speaker transcripts (i.e. excluding their conversation partner's parts) this way to assist the analysis at various stages. The different versions of the transcripts are stored individually.

3.3. Methodological considerations

3.3.1. Measuring rapport

Chapter 2 has briefly mentioned that researchers have attempted to measure rapport between conversation partners. How rapport is measured depends on the theoretical basis in which the researchers conceive of rapport and what in their eyes constitutes rapport. Measuring rapport is to some extent always subjective and mostly relies on whether certain characteristics of rapport can be observed in the conversation. I am not trying to establish the individual characteristics of rapport as there are existing definitions (see chapter 2) and it is not essential to this thesis. My research focuses on rapport management, i.e. the strategies involved in creating, maintaining, and challenging rapport. I do not evaluate each individual conversation. Rather, my analysis focuses on how pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter contribute to a harmonic relationship and conversational flow and therefore contribute to rapport or challenge it; it is not essential for the analysis to give an exact measure of conversational rapport itself. I determine whether the strategies are absent or present, how often they occur and how they affect rapport. I analyse the data to describe the different rapport management strategies employed and how they can be found in and extracted from the data.

3.3.2. Quantitative and qualitative analyses: the advantage of a combined approach

ViMELF is created with the requirements of both corpus linguistic and pragmatic researchers in mind, in adherence with analytical practices from these two areas of linguistics. This study

approaches rapport management by analysing how individual linguistic forms contribute to a larger interactional phenomenon and how socio-psychological characteristics of the speakers and their context influence language choices. It contributes to the development of means for analysing a corpus reliably regarding rapport strategies. A particularly good example in the context of this thesis is research by Partington et al. (2013), which serves as a model of a methodology that shows how a pragmatic feature can be identified and analysed to a certain extent with corpus linguistic methods. This work is exemplary because, by definition, pragmatics is concerned with meaning beyond the text (spoken or written), while corpus linguistic analyses are based on the text. Partington et al. (2013) determine concrete features in the text that are indicative of occurrences of impoliteness. Their research demonstrates how certain forms of irony and (im)politeness can be analysed effectively with a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Partington et al. (2013) first determine what constitutes a linguistic phenomenon like deference and then use corpus analysis software to identify instances of negative politeness in the data. In this thesis, I identify linguistic forms (pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter) in chapter 2 that allow a speaker to position themselves in an interaction and then annotate them. Therefore, similar to Partington et al. (2013), I use corpus linguistic methods to analyse instances where a complex interaction feature such as rapport is realised by concrete, identifiable linguistic forms. Partington et al.'s (2013) research also highlights current limitations of corpus linguistic approaches to spoken language based on the annotation of the corpus (how much detail is included) and the software. I address both of these issues with my data analysis.

Many other studies have emerged which use this kind of methodology, not lastly from the field of Corpus Pragmatics, which provides an intersection between the two disciplines. Relevant to the methodology of this thesis are also works mentioned in Diani (2015), who gives an overview of how politeness is discussed in the context of corpus pragmatics, as well as, for example, Archer and Culpeper (2003), McEnery et al. (2002), and Rühlemann and O'Donnell (2012) who have all developed additional kinds of pragmatic annotations for features that cannot be easily identified in texts. The latest detailed methodological considerations for Corpus Pragmatics are described by O'Keeffe et al. (2019). Due to the time of publishing, their considerations have not influenced the methodology in this thesis, but their systematic overview of Corpus Pragmatic research methodology allows me to define the research approach used in this thesis in clear terms. The *function-to-form* methodology from Pragmatics and the *form-to-function* methodology from Corpus Linguistics described by

them (2019: 47-48) largely reflect the methodology I have employed. Their framework is discussed in chapter 8 in the context of how they are pointing the way ahead for future studies.

The combination of the paradigms of qualitative and quantitative research has become prominent in linguistics with the emergence of a great variety of corpora and user-friendly analytical software. As McEnery and Hardie (2012: 2) put it, the "two forms of analysis, namely qualitative and quantitative, […] are equally important to corpus linguistics". Most of the data could hypothetically also be accessed or analysed without corpus linguistic methods. ViMELF, for example, is small enough to be read in two days. Reasonably, however, that would mean that the corpus could only be used "as a resource bank" (Partington et al., 2013: 262 and Diani, 2015), because actual quantitative analyses would take far too long and be impractical. Computer-aided search can return many results which makes it possible to make statistical statements about the findings rather than basing conclusions on only a few examples. The benefits to linguists of combining qualitative and quantitative research are discussed by Angouri (2010): language is very complex and neither approach alone can thoroughly analyse a speech situation. Combining the two paradigms ensures a thorough, exhaustive analysis, as each investigates different aspects and therefore values of a feature (Holmes, 2007) and it is seen as "a robust methodology for dealing with the intricacies of spoken language" (Evison, 2010: 161). If employed correctly, the two can support and add to each other's analysis (Angouri 2010; Holmes and Meyerhoff, 2003). The discovery of "non-obvious meanings" of discourse (Partington et al., 2013: 11) and linguistic patterns is facilitated by this approach. This is also one of the aims of corpus pragmatics (Rühlemann and Clancy, 2018). Haugh and Carbaugh (2015: 490) propose "quantitative analyses that are grounded in close, interactional analyses, which thereby recognise not only putative macro-social variation, but also inter-speaker as well as intra-speaker variation". This thesis follows this approach.

I base my analysis on three foundations that reflectively inform each other: I (1) use existing corpus linguistic tools and literature on the selected rapport strategy and the three features that realise it to search for and investigate the strategy in the corpus and (2) with the findings in the data reflect on existing literature and analytical methods, add to them and refine them where necessary. I also work towards (3) developing new methods for isolating and

investigating the linguistic features that constitute this strategy and influence rapport management.

3.3.3. Investigating rapport strategies in a corpus of lingua franca Skype conversations

This thesis focuses on three linguistic forms that affect rapport: pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter as ways of positioning in conversation. In this particular form of stance work, the analysis concentrates on how these features contribute to committing to a stance or avoiding doing so by creating ambiguity. There are existing frameworks for analysing these linguistic features, but they do not aim at how the features influence rapport. This is why I develop a new framework for analysing them in this thesis. The framework is based on existing studies that link pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter with rapport and combines their methods through replication, extension, and the development of new tools.

In section 3.3.2, I established that a thorough analysis of complex conversational strategies is best done with a combined approach. The identification of pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter is aided by the corpus I use (see above). The thesis observes patterns of usage of pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter to identify how they shape the stance of a person in detail by enabling them to position themselves with regard to their conversation partner and their statement. Which forms do the speakers combine and when? Is a feature used more often in certain parts of a conversation and, if so, why? Is there a difference in the use of a feature according to sociolinguistic differences between the speakers, like different cultural conventions or linguistic backgrounds? Lastly, I also consider the differences in use between features in conversations, especially their absence, and, especially in the case of pronouns, what the speakers in these interactions do instead. All of these considerations will feed into my analysis and discussion of rapport strategies in lingua franca Skype conversations.

3.3.4. Positioning and rapport: linguistic features and forms

In chapter 2, I noted that in conversations between unacquainted speakers the participants operate on less common ground than acquaintances would, for example. Similarly, ELF speakers communicate on the basis of less shared knowledge about each other's sociopragmatic norms. In conversations with strangers in general, but especially between unacquainted ELF speakers, this lack of common ground can affect the interaction. Positioning oneself in conversation through linguistic means, stance-taking (through

expressing identity or opinions), can be delicate in these instances and affect the rapport between the conversation participants. Certain "interactional elements" (Cogo and House, 2017: 215) allow a person to position themselves, commit and assess or avoid commitment and assessment in conversation and thereby affect how the speakers build and maintain a harmonious relationship.

In section 3.1, I explained in general terms that this thesis aims to connect qualitative and quantitative research and to make the research framework used in the analysis detailed enough to be clear and understandable but also open enough to be replicable. This is why my research focuses on one strategy that affects rapport and three features that realise that strategy. I did of course consider investigating other strategies like compliments, back-channelling, hedging and self-disclosure[20] as well as other stance features such as adverbs and adjectives. The reason for choosing stance and three of the features that realise it is that an analysis that explores the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods and that aims to be replicable needs to be based on existing research on rapport in order to have the space to address these gaps in research. The strategy and the features I have chosen are rather well researched compared to some of the other strategies when it comes to rapport management, but there is still a need to investigate how they connect to rapport in detail. There are also several reasons for focussing the analysis on pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter in this thesis rather than some of the other features mentioned in chapter 2. It is their similarities as well as their differences that make them ideal for this study. They all have in common that they affect stance in similar ways, which means that they share the function of allowing interlocutors to express or explicitly avoid expressing their stance which encodes their own identity and opinions. The three features also function on the pragmatic level of meaning-making: their use creates meaning beyond the purely semantic in specific contexts. In a dyadic interaction, for example, the pronoun *we* has two meanings: a group of two or more people including the speaker and their conversation partner, inclusive *we*, or a group including the speaker but excluding the conversation partner, exclusive *we*. Choosing to use inclusive or exclusive *we* (or interpreting it as such) can express more than what it semantically implies. Using inclusive *we* creates a shared stance between the speakers and

[20] All of which have overlapping functions with the stance features analysed in this thesis, e.g. laughter for back-channelling and the pragmatic markers to disclose a thought and marking the point as personal, subjective.

signals belonging to that group, for example. Another similarity between pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter is that they are all clearly tied to grammatical or lexical forms (pronouns and pragmatic markers) or exist as annotations in the analysed corpus (laughter), i.e. they all possess tangible, concrete forms and can therefore be searched for and identified using corpus linguistic methods. This means they do not necessarily need additional annotation in order to be identified in the corpus, as would other pragmatic features like speech acts, for example.

The difference between the three features is that even though pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter affect stance and rapport, they do so on different linguistic levels. Pronouns and pragmatic markers are realised by specific grammatical and lexical forms, whereas laughter is a paralinguistic feature with rather fuzzy boundaries between the different forms. The fact that they exist on different linguistic levels makes the features especially appealing to the analysis of their co-occurrences in chapter 7. In that analysis, the fact that it is possible to identify co-occurrences on different linguistic levels is an advantage. I illustrated in chapter 2 that research on specific types of pronouns, laughter, and pragmatic markers link these linguistic forms with rapport. Yet, there are only a few, mostly independent, very specific studies on the influence of pronoun use, laughter and pragmatic markers on rapport. I expand my analysis to other known types of these linguistic forms and investigate how they in turn affect rapport.

3.3.4.1. Pronouns

Pronouns, the first category of the three features under investigation, take on different linguistic forms: there are, for example, personal pronouns (nominative and oblique form) and possessive pronouns, as well as reflexive, reciprocal, relative, demonstrative, interrogative, and indefinite ones. However, not all of these seem to affect rapport or at least have never been connected to it in extant literature, which is why this study concentrates on personal pronouns in subject position (nominative form) and in object position (oblique form), as well as possessive pronouns and possessive determiners (see Table 3.1). The reason for including these additional forms and not only the nominative form lies in the fact that existing research on pronouns and rapport management only focuses on personal pronouns in subject position and I would like to establish whether there is a difference in function between the forms.

Table 3.1 – List of personal and possessive pronouns and determiners

Personal subject pronoun (nominative)	**Personal object pronoun (oblique)**	**Possessive pronoun (nominal)**	**Possessive determiner (pre-nominal)**
I	me	mine	my
you	you	yours	your
he	him	his	his
she	her	hers	her
it	it	its	its
we	us	ours	our
you	you	yours	your
they	them	theirs	their

Possessive determiners are of a different grammatical category and cannot strictly be classified as pronouns, as they cannot replace a noun but only determine the possessive aspect of a noun (i.e. who or what something, the noun, belongs to). Nevertheless, I include possessive determiners in this study. Even though they are of a different grammatical category, possessive determiners are a variation of possessive pronouns, according to Carter and McCarthy (2006). They both encode the same meaning, attributing a possession to a person or thing. Possessive determiners are also sometimes listed with possessive pronouns in learner material (cf., e.g., material distributed by the British Council[21]) and, depending on the publication, can even be referred to as pronouns. Cambridge Dictionary Online, for example, references an entry in Carter et al. (2016) where possessive determiners are classified under "pronouns: possessive" and UCREL POS-tagger CLAWS classifies them as "possessive pronoun, pre-nominal" in its "UCREL CLAWS7 Tagset" (though listed with articles rather than pronouns). With regards to stance, possessive determiners fulfil a similar function to that

[21] http://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/grammar-vocabulary/grammar-videos/personal-pronouns-possessives

of personal pronouns: *our*, e.g. in *people of our age* (ViMELF, 07SB51ST01) works similarly to *inclusive we*, which creates a shared stance between the conversation participants.

Personal pronouns have more or less the same distribution in ViMELF as they do in Biber et al.'s (1999) distribution in casual conversation. The only salient difference is that *I* occurs much more often in comparison to all other pronouns in ViMELF than in Biber et al.'s observations, whereas he and she occur less often. This seems to reflect on the type of text (or conversation) that ViMELF represents: the speakers are unacquainted and are more likely to talk about themselves and address each other rather than speaking about a specific person. This is due to the fact that they are unlikely to have a common referent. In this thesis the analysis of personal pronouns in subject position (nominative form) and object position (oblique form), as well as possessive pronouns and possessive determiners is limited primarily to first-person plural (*we, us, ours, our*) and extended to first-person singular (*I, me, mine, my*) and second-person pronouns (*you, you, your, yours*) where they occur in the context of the first-person plural pronouns. This is further discussed in section 3.3.5.1. Third-person pronouns have been excluded from this study, even though the third-person plural pronouns (*they, them, theirs, their*) have been linked to stance work in ELF conversations by Brunner et al. (2018). In an initial pilot study into pronouns in the corpus, I analysed third-person person plural pronouns to determine who is referred to as the 'other' by the speakers and whether this correlates with another rapport-managing use of pronouns, the use of inclusive *we*, for example. For this purpose, I tagged the data according to the referent. As there is no existing framework available for this, I annotated the referent specifically and then determined how the referents can be grouped. While there are some interesting findings that would be of value especially in a qualitative study, the categorisation and quantitative results have not been significant enough to be included in this thesis.

3.3.4.2. Pragmatic markers

There is an ongoing discussion about the functions and features of what Aijmer (2002) labels "discourse particles", and then relabels "pragmatic markers" in Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen's (2009), forms which are also sometimes known as discourse markers, as well as modal particles (cf. Fedriani and Sansò, 2017). The discussion also extends to how specific linguistic forms belong to one of these categories. As discussed in chapter 2, this thesis follows Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen's (2009: 223) descriptive, inclusive notion

of pragmatic markers together with the list of formal and functional criteria that describe pragmatic markers (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen, 2009: 226). This analysis focuses on one kind of pragmatic markers, to which Kärkkäinen (2003; 2007) refers as epistemic stance markers. They are *pronoun + predicate* collocations which mark evidentiality and epistemic stance, i.e. "the speaker's commitment to the truth of his or her message, the speaker's source of knowledge, and the speaker's certainty about his or her utterance" (Ohta, 1991: 225). At the same time, they "signal the speaker's position vis-à-vis the hearer's, his or her expectations or contextual assumptions" (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen, 2009: 225).

The analysis focuses primarily on the pragmatic markers *I + predicate* collocations that mark epistemic stance, but it also considers evidentials like *you + predicate* (e.g. *see, know,* etc.) collocations where they occur in the analysed extracts. The reasons for not focussing on forms with *you* is that they position the conversation partner rather than the speakers themselves. In complement clauses, the former ones are referred to as "first-person epistemic and evidential Complement-Taking Predicate (CTP) constructions" (Põldvere et al., 2016: 192). I analyse these markers not only in a complement clause construction, but also in simple clause, parenthetical clause, and comment clause, i.e. utterance-final finite adverbial clause constructions. Examples for these markers are *I + think, know, believe, suppose, imagine, guess, mean* in their base forms. I disregard their variant forms, that is to say as negation, progressive, modal auxiliary (*would,* etc. + predicate), past tense, etc. as these do not share the functions under investigation. In addition, I include combinations of these forms, e.g. *I don't know I think* and *you know what I mean* (cf. e.g. Torgersen et al., 2011).

In order to account for and identify all instances of epistemic verbs in present tense first-person singular in ViMELF that functioned as pragmatic markers, I used the POS-tagged version of the transcripts (see 3.2.6 above) in AntConc (Anthony, 2018)[22]. This gives an overview of all *I + predicate* constructions like *I + think, know, believe, suppose, imagine, guess, mean* in the data. To identify these verbs, I used the CLAWS POS-tagged version of the transcripts (see section 3.2.6) were the verbs are tagged (VV0 for base form of lexical

[22] Searching for *PPIS1@_VV0* (no spaces in-between the words) in the transcripts returns all instances of the first-person singular subjective personal pronoun *I* (*PPIS1*) followed by the base form of a lexical word (*_VV0*), i.e. present tense in this case. The at sign (@) in the sequence is a wildcard that functions as a placeholder for any word before the base form tag, i.e. the actual verb itself.

verb, see UCREL CLAWS7 Tagset[23]). There are 1645 instances in total, with 90 individual forms. I then went manually through the concordance lines of the original AntConc output to determine which of those *I* + base form combinations above fulfilled the criteria of being both (1) an epistemic verb and (2) a pragmatic marker as such. While the former criterion excludes instances such as *I call*, the latter excludes cases such as *I know*, which indicates epistemic stance but does not have the same function as the other pragmatic markers.

The three most frequent pronoun + epistemic verb collocations with this form that are functioning as pragmatic markers in the data are *I think, I mean,* and *I guess,* which is why the analysis focuses on these in the first part. They occur a combined 1047 times in ViMELF. *I believe* occurs nine times overall, three times in the context of a pragmatic marker (other instances included, for example, *Catholics believe, believe in God*, etc.). In addition, *I assume* occurs twice in ViMELF, both used by a German speaker who also uses one of the two cases of *I suppose.* There is only one instance of *I find*. Other combinations described in previous literature like *I reckon* do not occur in the data. *I feel* is used several times in the data, yet these examples relate to sensory or emotional experiences rather than its grammaticalized forms. In addition, there is one form of *I think* with a hesitation marker in the middle, while there are no such instances of *I mean* and *I guess.*

The second part of the analysis then contrasts these findings with another very prominent pragmatic marker with a slightly different form, *I don't know*. *I don't know* in its core meaning expresses almost the opposite of those three pragmatic markers, indicating a lack of knowledge. Yet, research indicates that the four pragmatic markers have similar functions regarding stance and rapport.

3.3.4.3. Laughter

The effect of specific forms of laughter on rapport has not been researched extensively, not least because there are "fuzzy boundaries" (Attardo, 2001) between the defined "categories" of conversational laughter. The research framework in which laughter is studied determines how it is perceived and also annotated. There are numerous approaches to that, the

[23] UCREL CLAWS7 Tagset via http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/claws7tags.html

investigation of acoustic features, for example, has been employed in different ways to identify laughter types. The disparate results of these technical approaches to the segmentation of laughter (e.g. Campbell et al., 2005; Provine, 2000; Tanaka and Campbell, 2014) reveal the complexity of laughter and its perception (Trouvain, 2003). A typical sequence of laughter has been described by Jefferson et al. (1987), for example, even though their approach does also not account for the fact that the perception of vowel qualities in laughter is subjective and varies between transcribers (Chafe, 2007). Diemer et al. (2016) review several ways of annotating laughter in larger corpora to retrieve them with a simple search that does not involve manual work, concluding that there is an unlimited number of ways in which to subjectively transcribe all perceived laughter forms. ViMELF, as part of CASE, uses the CASE annotation scheme for laughter in corpora which is limited to nine easily retrievable types of laughter[24] (CASE laughter transcription, 2017). The types proposed include laughing, chuckling, several short laugh/"chuckle" pulses, as well as the laughter-oriented linguistic phenomena (cf. Warner-Garcia, 2014) exhaling laugh pulses and laughing speech. The annotation scheme roughly describes the laughter form but leaves the analysis of functions to the researcher's interpretation.

Table 3.2 – Laughter annotation, adapted from (CASE laughter transcription, 2017)

Feature	**Description**
((LAUGHS))	separate, loud laughter
((laughs))	separate, laughter
((laughing))	laughing while speaking
((chuckles))	chuckle
((chuckling))	chuckling while speaking
((hehe))	short chuckling, two laugh pulses
((heh))	short (monosyllabic) laugh pulse, initially aspirated
((ehh))	short (monosyllabic), exhaling laugh pulse, initially not aspirated
((thh))	aspirated laugh pulse starting with alveolar plosive sound

[24] Cf. Diemer et al. (2016) for the reasoning behind choosing these nine distinct forms (e.g. different laughter forms have different functions: compare e.g. loud laughter with the laugh pulse ((thh)) and see section 2.4.4.3).

My analysis includes all these types of laughter. This is due to the fact that there is not enough evidence in research pointing to certain types of it being more influential in rapport management, not least because existing annotations vary significantly and could therefore not be reliably differentiated. In addition, laughter form is not only limited to acoustic or vocal features, but also encompasses facial expressions (Haakana, 2010; Tanaka and Campbell, 2014), as well as posture and gestures. ViMELF and CASE annotation in general include gestures and facial expressions; but as they do not share all of the same functions and pragmatic aspects as vocal laughter, this analysis only considers verbal representations of laughter. A loud version of laughter in ViMELF is transcribed as ((LAUGHS)), in line with the transcription conventions that have louder speech and stressed syllables transcribed in capital letters. As this means that loud laughter is a variation of standard laughter, in the analysis, I do not differentiate between loud laughter and standard laughter in the quantitative analysis.

3.3.5. Procedure

The analysis serves to explore how the international speakers in ViMELF manage rapport by first positioning themselves with regard to their conversation partner, i.e. they establish a stance, and then by re-positioning themselves throughout the conversation. The main objective of the analysis is to determine how and when the speakers commit to a stance or an assessment (and avoid ambiguity) or do the opposite by avoiding that commitment (creating ambiguity) and how these two strategies manage rapport, especially in situations of unacquainted speakers. The procedural aspects of the analysis can be divided into more general methodological considerations and the detailed steps of the analysis of the pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter each. The analyses chapters can be conceptually divided into two parts. The first three analysis chapters are concerned with the individual functions of each pragmatic feature, whereas the fourth chapter investigates co-occurrences of the features and how that affects those previously described functions.

For each analysis of one of the linguistic features, the first step explores the data quantitatively. In the second step, then, the analysis extends existing studies on one realisation of the linguistic forms within a similar linguistic context to the present corpus data and to other realisations of that form. This gives an insight into how the linguistic form (pronouns, pragmatic markers, laughter) in its various realisations influences conversational

positioning and rapport. This also means using the unacquainted ELF corpus data in order to make statements about rapport managing behaviour based on cultural and linguistic speaker background. Each chapter uses a combination of descriptive quantitative and detailed qualitative analyses to describe how each of the linguistic forms affect stance work and thereby rapport.

3.3.5.1. Replication and expansion

The three linguistic features, pronouns, pragmatic markers, and laughter are analysed in several steps, first by replicating existing studies and then by expanding the analysis in several ways. Replicating existing studies allows for a comparison of rapport management in their data with the ViMELF corpus data revealing the differences and similarities between them with regard to ELF, video chats and conversations between unacquainted speakers.

In instances where there are existing studies about a specific type of that linguistic form (e.g. *I think* as a pragmatic marker), I replicate the part of that study that relates to rapport and compare my findings to the ones in the study. This allows me to answer partially the first, but mostly the second question of this thesis regarding how these linguistic features contribute to rapport in the specific dataset. For example, Baumgarten and House (2010: 1194) find that "*I think* is the most common means of overtly encoding a subjective perspective in the discourse", which means that *I think* is used to introduce a subjective utterance. Subjective statements can create a delicate situation and affect rapport. In the first step of the analysis of pragmatic markers, I compare Baumgarten and House's (2010) findings, among others, to ViMELF data to see whether the unacquainted ELF speakers in the corpus follow the pattern of Baumgarten and House's (2010) acquainted, both native English and non-native speakers, or whether there are differences in their linguistic behaviour. I then use this study to expand it to the other types of that linguistic form, from *I think* to *I mean*, for example.

As a second way of extending existing studies, I use new ways of aiding my analysis for linguistic forms that have been analysed before. For example, *I don't know* in utterance-final position links to rapport as it opens the floor for the other speaker to express their opinion and also signals ambiguity. There are several ways for investigating where *I don't know* occurs in utterance final positions. A completely manual analysis of every instance like in Baumgarten and House (2010), who only had very few examples, is unnecessarily complicated and long,

while searching with Microsoft Word, for example, would not consider all possible instances (see chapter 5 for more details). A possible solution is to use Microsoft Excel to identify instances where the five words following the node (*I do n't know*) contain a speaker mark, which means that there is a change of speakers and that the example is therefore likely to occur towards the end of an intonation unit. This drastically reduces the number of instances of *I don't know* in intonation-unit final position and allows for an easier further analysis. This method can than again find application in the positioning of other pragmatic markers and also laughter, e.g. in back-channelling laughter in a unit-initial position or floor-opening, unit-final position laughter (see chapter 6).

The last way of using expansion in the analysis is adding to the annotation in the corpus with existing and new frameworks. I manually analyse and tag data in cases where a corpus inquiry does not yield enough meaningful information. This is the case of the pronoun *we* with an inclusive or exclusive function that indicates the level of solidarity between two speakers. Determining the inclusive or exclusive value of *we* in the corpus is only possible via manual annotation, as there is no automatic way of identifying which instance belongs to which category. After the manual annotation has been completed, these instances can then be quantified and analysed qualitatively. This method is applied to other pronouns too. This method is very established in corpus pragmatic research since it "has the advantage that complex non-surface phenomena can be captured reliably" (Rühlemann, 2018: 3).

Pronouns

The analysis of pronouns and their relation to rapport focuses on how the speakers position themselves in conversation. This chapter builds on existing research and frameworks concerning pronoun usage and rapport. It especially considers studies that are concerned with the specific corpus setup and ELF language use. These have for the most part focused on the first-person plural pronoun *we*, which is why this analysis is centred around first-person plural pronouns (see section 3.3.4.1). Chapter 2 has described how speakers use inclusive *we* (a group including at least the speaker and their conversation partner) to draw their conversation partner into their stance and thereby create a common ground, which is an assertive way to manage rapport. When using *we,* speakers not only affiliate and align themselves with a group, they also align with a certain stance. Exclusive *we* (a group including at least the speaker and one other person but excluding the conversation partner) on the other hand is a way of defocussing an agent, i.e. depersonalising an action. This analysis

uses the framework of the degree of solidarity, i.e. inclusive and exclusive forms, of first-person pronouns as a basis for the analysis and data annotation to understand how the speakers position themselves in relation to each other and other contextual referents and how this in turn affects rapport between them.

The chapter starts with a general, exploratory context analysis of collocations as well as a plot analysis for each of the different pronouns, to determine whether anything can be learnt from that quantitative data alone, also differentiating between native languages (and home country), as well as individual speakers. The specific focus of the analysis is on the 1st person plural pronouns (*we, us, ours, our*). *We* has been related to rapport managing behaviour in qualitative research before (see chapter 2). Similarly, I investigate how these non-native speakers use the pronouns in the data; this task, however, cannot be achieved by an automatic tagger, which is why it is necessary to manually tag the data based on existing models, as has been done Semino and Short (2004), for example. The level of precision necessary for their analysis could only be achieved manually, not least because it is essential for them to take contextual pragmatic features into account, which is mirrored in my analysis.

As there is no existing exact framework for the analysis of these pronouns' functions, I test the annotation framework on 100 randomly selected instances of *we* and 100 randomly selected instances of the other first-person plural pronouns (*us, ours, our*) for inclusive and exclusive uses. I also have a colleague annotate the same 100 examples with this tag set to see whether there were any disagreements in tagging. Discussing the results, the decisions matched and were accepted unanimously. In addition, I annotate the context and speaker of each instance to determine whether there are any recognisable patterns as to in which context speakers use exclusive and inclusive forms, whether there are differences based on conversation topic, nationality or idiosyncrasies. I annotate the very specific context and then, based on the list of these, determine superordinate categories that are able to accommodate each case. I then extend the analysis to all instances of first-person plural pronouns in the data. With these results, I conduct an analysis of collocations and compare it to the findings from manually annotating the context, taking into account differences based on native languages (i.e. German, Finnish, Spanish, etc.) and individual speakers. In addition, I compare the concordance plots of the annotations to the context identify additional patterns.

In a qualitative analysis of instances of all identified patterns and other instances, I compare findings in line with existing research as well as data that has not been described in research so far, concerning the switching between exclusive *we* and impersonal *you* in the data. In order to analyse these switches, I annotate all instances of the 2nd person singular and plural pronoun (*you, yours, your*) following an exclusive *we* according to a personal, an impersonal, and an unclear use for a quantitative and qualitative analysis. I then examine the places where the speakers switch between personal and impersonal uses, as these are places where epistemological stance is negotiated, a feature of rapport managing behaviour.

Pragmatic markers

There are two different parts to the analysis of pragmatic markers. I first search the corpus data for instances of the pragmatic markers that index epistemic stance which I have shown in the pilot study described in section 3.3.4.2 above. The two sets of pragmatic markers, *I think, I guess, I mean*[25] on the one hand and *I don't know* on the other hand, are analysed with regard to how often they occur in the ELF data and where they occur depending on the conversation but also on the speaker background.

The analysis of markers of epistemic stance (*I + epistemic verb* collocations) is structured around the two opposing functions they have in conversation: to commit to a statement and avoid ambiguity and to avoid commitment and increase ambiguity. Various pragmatic markers work in different ways to achieve this. Whereas the former is semantically expressed through the first group (*I think, I guess, I mean*), the latter one is expressed by *I don't know.* Research has found, however, that the functions do not necessarily match the core meaning of the pragmatic markers and that those functions can in fact be very versatile. In the case of *I think*, for example, according to extant research (see chapter 2), a speaker will commit to a statement when they can assume that the other speaker will agree/align with their stance: in self-repairs, for instance, after a speaker interrupts him- or herself, they commit to their utterance by restarting the utterance with *I think.* Speakers also use *I think* to mitigate, like when they stress the subjectivity of their statement to indicate uncertainty and do not want to commit to something. I therefore analyse how ELF speakers use the pragmatic marker in the data in general, but also compare it to extant research.

[25] I decided to group them together because their functions are reported to be relatively similar.

In existing studies, Baumgarten and House (2010) report that in risky contexts, i.e. where the ELF speakers make a potentially controversial statement and introduce it with *I think*, but then are uncertain about its appropriateness and reception, they seem to follow it up with a more impersonal construction such as questions, nominal constructions or disclosure of personal information (to justify the subjective utterance). As noted before, Baumgarten and House (2010) base their findings on only two ELF conversations, which is why I expand their analysis to a larger dataset (ViMELF) to see whether their findings are valid there too. I analyse all instances of *I think* in ViMELF (excluding single clause constructions (*I think about*) expressing cogitation and formulaic uses (*I think so*)). In a quantitative analysis, I describe the general distribution of the pragmatic marker in the data. As established in chapter 2, the meaning of *I think* has to be determined by considering individual instances, i.e. a qualitative analysis. The qualitative analysis does not only investigate the different functions, but also examines the context in which each function is used, focusing on surrounding discourse and individual speakers.

The other two pragmatic markers which are similar to *I think* both in structure and in the function of qualifying the commitment to an utterance are *I guess* and *I mean.* In the analysis, I compare the existing research findings detailed in chapter 2 to the ViMELF data in order to see how the international non-native English speakers use the pragmatic markers especially compared to native speakers in previous research as well as the non-native speakers in (Baumgarten and House, 2010). Similar to *I think,* I annotate the data according to uses as a pragmatic marker and those where *I guess* and *I mean* are used in a sentence in their non-grammaticalized form. Each of these sections is structured the same way: a quantitative, descriptive analysis is followed by a qualitative one which investigates the individual functions.

The last pragmatic marker the analysis focuses on is *I don't know*. Unlike the markers above, there is quite a large proportion of instances in the data where *I don't know* is not used as a pragmatic marker, but simply to communicate a lack of knowledge to another person. I therefore annotate the data accordingly and then, similar to the three markers above, conduct a quantitative and a qualitative analysis of the data.

There are two hypotheses about the occurrence of *I don't know* in non-native speaker data proposed by (Baumgarten and House, 2010). The pragmatic function according to them

usually occurs utterance or sentence final and implies that the speaker is aware of potential disagreement of opinions and invites the other speakers to contribute their thoughts. They also find in their data that native speakers mostly use *I don't know* in the pragmatic sense, while non-native speakers "construct a stance out of the prototypical meaning of *I don't know* as a marker of insufficient knowledge, and they use the expression to verbalize and to overcome on-line planning difficulties" (Baumgarten and House, 2010: 1198). This means that they use it as a pragmatic marker in the same way that *I think* is also used for on-line planning difficulties, however, only as that and not in the other functions described above, i.e. to reduce or mitigate possible social repercussions from their statement, for example. I therefore compare these findings to ViMELF data, in order to establish whether this still holds true for a larger dataset. For the former, I develop a mechanism to pre-sort instances automatically according to where in an utterance the pragmatic marker occurs. The detailed qualitative analysis focuses on the pragmatic occurrences and their effect on rapport between different ELF speakers. Like in the case of the other pragmatic markers, the analysis also takes into account the context, i.e. the location of the pragmatic marker within the conversation and the usage of them by specific speakers or groups of speakers. In addition, there are two comparative (quantitative) analyses regarding how the four pragmatic markers are used according to the nationalities of the speakers and idiosyncrasies.

The second step of the analysis of *I + epistemic verb* combinations examines co-occurrences of these pragmatic markers, such as *I don't know I mean* and as observed in Diani (2004). The combination with other discourse markers like *I mean* is in these cases said to increase the tentativeness of an utterance and the ambiguity in stance-taking. The analysis first focuses on combinations based on *I don't know*, but then extends the discussion to instances where only the other three pragmatic markers co-occur. The analysis also considers other pragmatic markers like the evidential *you know* if they occur in the context of the pragmatic marker that the thesis focuses on (cf. Torgersen et al., 2011). The quantitative and qualitative analysis therefore focuses on whether there are co-occurrences of these markers in the data, which patterns they follow and whether they only increase ambiguity as has been stated in extant research or whether also fulfil different functions.

Laughter

Laughter increases ambiguity in delicate situations, i.e. laughing when nothing is funny. Every single instance of non-humorous laughter can have that effect and it is not currently

possible to automatize the identification of the general functions of laughter and thereby differentiate between humorous and non-humorous laughter (however, there are acoustic approaches to this, cf. chapter 2). It is even more difficult to differentiate in more detail which specific function an individual laugh has. All laughter affects rapport in some way, but humorous laughter has already been extensively researched, so that this analysis focuses more on non-humorous functions (see chapter 2). In previous research, I showed that co-occurrences with many instances of laughter (i.e. where laughter occurs in close proximity to more laughter) do usually not include humorous laughter at all, but rather the non-humorous one. In a pilot study that intended to categorise laughter according to its functions in these instances where laughter co-occurs in ViMELF, I made the following observations: one instance of laughter can fulfil many different functions at once and only in rare cases it is undoubtedly clear which function is the prevalent one. The categories and especially the three domains established by Stewart (1997, see chapter 2) are quite clear-cut, but in the data the frequently overlap in individual laughter instances. As a consequence, there is not much sense in annotating every single instance in the whole dataset, since the data that would produce would be rather inconsequential.

The chapter therefore only briefly quantitatively describes the different laughter forms in ViMELF and discusses their use across the corpus according to conversations, nationality and individual preferences by the speakers. The qualitative analysis mainly focuses on the co-occurrences of laughter. For this purpose, I further refine the tool mentioned in the sections above and explained in section 3.3.5.3. I analyse the sets of co-occurrences qualitatively with regard to whether they increase or decrease ambiguity in the conversations and to how specifically this is achieved, i.e. how laughter in ViMELF affects rapport management with respect to Stewart's functions.

3.3.5.2. Co-occurrences

I established in chapter 2 that the linguistic features in the focus of this thesis cannot only be investigated individually, but also have to be studied together. This is because rapport as a phenomenon is managed by many different strategies and their individual features working together rather than one specific one on its own. By analysing co-occurrences in ViMELF, I cross-reference the linguistic forms and investigate where and why they occur together in a conversation. As explained in chapter 2, in this thesis, the co-occurrences are not defined in

the strict sense of 'lexical bundles' (cf. Biber et al., 1999) or n-grams (e.g. Scott, 2010) and I do not refer to them as collocates. This analysis is based on a looser proximity of the linguistic items in the text and the features do not have to be sequential. The co-occurrence of multiple communicative strategies in rapport management has been observed by Gremler and Gwinner (2008), for example, and Zhao et al. (2016) have used co-occurrences of specific linguistic features to identify linguistic strategies. Similarly, I examine places in the data where pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter co-occur to identify instances of stance work that influence rapport management. I first explore whether there are particular patterns, i.e. regularities to these co-occurrences. In a qualitative analysis, I then analyse the functions of these co-occurrences with respect to the functions of the individual features discussed in the previous analysis chapters. This might at first glance resemble concepts from Biber's multi-dimensional analysis (MDA, 1992), but is considerably different to that in several ways. While both look at the functionality of linguistic features and consider the functional interpretations of patterns in text, MDA is used to analyse, measure and determine text registers and genres, which is not in the focus of this thesis. MDA mostly relies on quantitative measures, whereas the qualitative analysis is an integral part of this thesis. This thesis works on the underlying assumption that if these linguistic features co-occur, then they stress the need for rapport management in that situation. A study such as this that studies functions of rapport features to this degree by using both qualitative and quantitative methods has to my knowledge not been implemented so far.

An additional factor of this analysis is to explore in how far this method is realisable with these linguistic features, i.e. to what extent it can be done with corpus linguistic methods or has to be done manually. Of particular importance for this analysis is the tool mentioned in the previous sections, which I developed over the course of this thesis. The method is exploratory and two of the central points of the analysis are the actual meaning of these co-occurrences and the operability and feasibility of the method itself for the study of rapport management.

3.3.5.3. Developing new analytical tools

The third research question that this thesis seeks to answer asks how corpus linguistic methods can be appropriated to analyse a rapport strategy and its realisations in the form of linguistic features. One further way of answering this question is the development of tools

that aid the analysis of these features in the context of spoken data. Tools like AntConc (Anthony, 2018) and other concordancers are very useful when analysing co-occurrences in written texts, but less so in spoken ones.

I appropriate the functionality of these programs and apply it to transcripts of spoken language by developing a tool called SpanExtract (2018). The development occurred in collaboration with a computer programmer, Niccolò Granieri. SpanExtract is based on Python code and can be run in macOS Terminal, Windows, and anywhere Python code is able to run. As part of the collaboration, I defined the functional range and requirements for the software and designed it, while the developer transformed this into code. The development of SpanExtract can be traced over the course of this thesis, as the software is extended chapter by chapter to include additional functionalities. It was originally conceived of as a means to identify co-occurrences in transcripts based on intonation units or turns by creating a sub-corpus around a chosen feature, like laughter (which I first conceptualised with colleagues in Brunner et al., 2016). What this means is that rather than looking for co-occurrences in a specific span of words, the span can, for example, be set to a specific amount of intonation units or turns around the utterance containing that feature, i.e. laughter in this example. The need to extend a corpus linguistic analysis to the level of a turn has also been expressed by Vaughan and O'Keeffe (2015: 15). They describe how the analytical focus of the corpus linguistic scope and search span has slowly broadened.

This extension then allows searching for the other features, i.e. the pronouns and pragmatic markers, in the vicinity of the target feature or word. In its final version, the tool finds a search term in the text and is able to display the search term and the co-text around it. It does so by creating a text file with all identified instances and the desired search span. The tool can take into consideration multiple search terms at once. In a separate mode, the tool can also automatically return instances which contain another set of search terms that co-occur within the defined span. In addition to the text file, in this mode the program can also export the data in form of an excel sheet, which automatically counts all the instances.

As a second tool, I developed a Microsoft Excel macro in co-operation with Mathias Alt (16 March 2018) that searches a column for a specific value inside each cell and returns a true/false judgement for each cell. The columns can thereby be filtered according to which cell contains the search value. In practice, I use this to analyse AntConc (Anthony, 2018)

output, in particular the columns that AntConc displays in a concordance search, i.e. a column for the text left to the node, one for the node, and one for the text on the right of the node. The macro then allows me to use the data copied to Excel and, for example, look for speaker marks to the right of the node, indicating that the search term in the node occurs towards the end of a turn.

3.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have addressed how this thesis intends to fill the two main gaps in rapport research identified in chapter 2 and thereby answer the main research questions. I limit the analysis to three linguistic forms that are known to affect rapport management and can be investigated qualitatively and quantitatively: pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter. The thesis therefore adds to the understanding of how several linguistic features affect something as complex as rapport, while at the same time limiting the scope to make the study feasible. I use a dataset of conversations that is sufficiently specific and thereby limit the context of the features in use, yet the dataset is also general enough to make the study replicable. In order to do this, I analyse qualitatively and quantitatively how the three linguistic forms manifest themselves in the unacquainted, lingua franca context.

The detailed analysis is divided in four parts. In three analysis chapters, I analyse each linguistic feature (pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter) individually and in the fourth, I combine the findings of these individual analyses to rapport behaviour into a larger corpus analytical approach. Each analysis contributes to the discussion of the research questions of this thesis by answering how the individual features contribute to a rapport strategy depending on the specific context in which they occur. Each chapter also shows the integration and appropriation of analytical methods both from qualitative and quantitative approaches. This third research question is central to the fourth analysis chapter, chapter 7, that is a synthesis of the qualitative and quantitative corpus analytic methods used and refined in the first three analysis chapters. It brings the individual findings of each chapter together and applies them in a new way to the corpus data.

In chapter 7, the dataset is analysed based on an approach that investigates co-occurrences of the linguistic features examined. I not only investigate how the specific linguistic features work in lingua franca data, but also how they are spread across the data. I observe patterns of

usage: combinations of features, particular forms used in different parts of a conversation, and feature use according to sociolinguistic differences between the speakers. This gives an insight into stance and positioning and ultimately rapport management on a larger scale, in a way that has not been done as such in rapport research. The analysis of the features' co-occurrences is therefore essentially a synergy of the three research questions.

The structure of the analysis as a whole allows for an integration of qualitative and quantitative research and it makes that form of studying a rapport strategy more methodical and replicable. It is therefore directly addressing the gaps in rapport research identified in chapter 2. The following chapter presents the first step of that analysis and focuses on pronouns and their effect on rapport management.

Chapter 4: Pronouns

4.1. Introduction

This analysis of pronouns in ViMELF examines how pronoun usage affects rapport management in the specific setup of the corpus. It is the first of the three individual analyses of the features that affect stance. The chapter contributes to answering the three research questions of this thesis. To address the first research question, this chapter gives an insight into how the analysed pronouns affect a speaker's stance and thereby influence rapport between the conversation partners. The chapter is divided into three parts. First, there is a quantitative analysis of the use of first-person plural pronouns in ViMELF. I then apply an existing framework regarding the degree of solidarity of *we* onto the data and extend it by developing an annotation system for pronoun use and their effect on rapport in ViMELF. This is extended to a full analysis of the topical context of each of these annotations with detailed quantitative and qualitative descriptions. This first part also explores the feasibility and value of including other first-person plural pronouns apart from *we* in the analysis. In the second and third parts of the analysis, I analyse instances of inclusive and exclusive *we* with regard to their effect on rapport in ViMELF qualitatively and compare the findings to extant literature. The third part specifically focuses on a qualitative analysis of changes between exclusive *we* and impersonal *you*, which is a phenomenon whose functionality and impact on rapport has not been described to this extent by rapport research so far.

To address the second research question, the analysis considers the speakers and the situational context in detail to provide an overview of how the functions of the pronouns are affected by these parameters. The use of each of the analysed pronouns and their function is broken down according to nationality, idiosyncrasies and speaking situation in the respective qualitative and quantitative analysis sections. As an answer to the third research question, the chapter integrates and appropriates several methods and tools from quantitative research. As explained in section 3.3.5, I annotate the data according to frameworks that are defined through qualitative research, but that allow me to determine frequencies, occurrences (or locations) within a conversation and collocations of individual forms, functions and contexts. In section 4.7.1, I introduce the piece of software described in 3.3.5.3 that I designed as a concordancer for pragmatic data that identifies (co-)occurrences of features and automatically

creates a sub-corpus of these instances than can then be used for further qualitative and quantitative analysis.

4.2. *We* in ViMELF

I use AntConc (Anthony, 2014) for an initial overview of first-person plural pronouns in ViMELF. There are 1008 instances of *we* and additionally 64 instances of *us,* 5 of *ours* and 132 of *our.* Table 4.1 shows the absolute frequencies of all first-person plural pronouns in ViMELF. The instances were counted by AntConc and verified manually.

Table 4.1 – Absolute frequencies of 1st person plural pronouns in ViMELF

Transcript	WE	US	OURS	OUR	Total
01SB32FL06	49	4	0	5	58
01SB36FL10	24	0	0	4	28
01SB75HE01	48	0	0	20	68
01SB78HE04	72	4	0	14	90
02SB80HE06	67	2	0	1	70
04SB25SF01	63	4	0	5	72
04SB33FL31	76	3	0	11	90
04SB69ST05	28	1	0	9	38
05SB70ST07	52	7	0	12	71
05SB93HE19	48	6	0	3	57
06SB73ST14	60	1	0	6	67
07SB17SF10	29	5	1	8	43
07SB49FL33	39	3	0	1	43
07SB50FL34	59	4	1	10	74
07SB51ST01	40	4	0	3	47
07SB53ST03	22	0	0	0	22
08SB05SF05	112	7	3	10	132
08SB106HE03	61	3	0	5	69
10SB03SF09	27	1	0	2	30
10SB07SF07	32	5	0	3	40
	1008	64	5	132	1209

We occurs across the 20 conversations, and, as expected, there are much fewer instances of *our, us* and especially *ours*[26]. In the case of first-person plural pronouns, there is an average (mean) of 60.45 words per ViMELF conversation (normed 1.06 instances per 100 words or roughly 1 instance every 94th word), with quite a high standard deviation of 25.90 from the mean and a range between the highest and lowest value of 108. This is to say that the number of first-person pronouns in the conversations is quite unevenly spread.

Table 4.2 shows the spread of the sum of all first-person plural pronouns across the conversations, including the total word count of each conversation, the total count of all first-person plural pronouns and the percentage frequency of these pronouns within their conversation. The colour grading in each column shows the highest (green) to lowest (red) values in the table based on the average value of each column, with the mid-ranging values in lighter colours. The colour grading reveals that there is little difference between the values of the raw count, i.e. the total frequencies of the first-person plural pronouns (absolute 1st ps pl) and the normed frequency (frequency per 100 1st ps pl), meaning that even when accounting for different text sizes, the frequency distribution of the first-person plural pronouns remains similar. In addition, when comparing the normed frequencies of *we* and the total of all first-person plural pronouns, there is very little difference between the numbers, meaning that the other plural pronouns spread similarly or have little impact on the overall count.

There are minute differences between some raw and normed frequencies, as in 01SB32FL06, where, compared to the other conversations, the number of pronouns seems slightly below average in the raw frequencies, whereas the normed frequency shows that it is in fact very slightly above average (1.06). This is of course because the normed frequency is relative to the total number of words in that conversation. The opposite is the case for 01SB75HE01. In another conversation, 10SB03SF09, the absolute frequency (30) is the third lowest, but the normed frequency (0.80) shows that there are five conversations with relatively fewer pronouns (per 100 words). As a general trend, it seems like conversations with the topic number 07 (food: eating habits/preferences) and 10 (the future of the English language) have fewer first-person plural pronouns than the other topics, but this could be purely coincidental.

[26] In conversations 01SB36FL10, 01SB78HE04, 06SB73ST14 and 08SB106HE03, there were further instances of *us* identified by AntConc which had to be omitted because they were mentions of the acronym for the United States of America, the US.

Upon superficial inspection, there seems to be no apparent reason for this discrepancy in numbers of first-person plural pronouns per conversation. If anything, especially conversations about food habits would be expected to have higher numbers of *we,* etc. in when the speakers talk about their customs and experiences.

Table 4.2 – Frequencies of 1st person plural pronouns (including *we*) and *we* in ViMELF; as a proportion of all words in ViMELF

TRANSCRIPT	word count	absolute 1st ps pl	frequency per 100 1st ps pl	frequency per 100 *we*
01SB32FL06	5256	58	1.104	0.932
01SB36FL10	5162	28	0.542	0.465
01SB75HE01	6830	68	0.996	0.703
01SB78HE04	5572	90	1.615	1.292
02SB80HE06	5733	70	1.221	1.169
04SB25SF01	5906	72	1.219	1.067
04SB33FL31	6440	90	1.398	1.180
04SB69ST05	4456	38	0.853	0.628
05SB70ST07	4569	71	1.554	1.138
05SB93HE19	7225	57	0.789	0.664
06SB73ST14	5251	67	1.276	1.143
07SB17SF10	6847	43	0.628	0.424
07SB49FL33	4591	43	0.937	0.849
07SB50FL34	7257	74	1.020	0.813
07SB51ST01	5126	47	0.917	0.780
07SB53ST03	4793	22	0.459	0.459
08SB05SF05	5881	132	2.245	1.904
08SB106HE03	6342	69	1.088	0.962
10SB03SF09	3732	30	0.804	0.723
10SB07SF07	6917	40	0.578	0.463
Total	113886	1209		

For this detailed examination of first-person plural pronoun use in ViMELF, i.e. *we, us, ours, our*, I split the analysis into different parts on several levels. The most general distinction is that between the kinds of first-person plural pronoun. Here, I differentiate between all cases of *we* on the one hand and *us, ours, our* on the other hand. *We* has been the focus of the research literature; so separating *we* from the other pronouns makes a direct comparison with existing research findings possible. Expanding the analysis to the other first-person plural pronouns then allows for an investigation of whether there is a difference in how these plural pronouns work.

4.3. Tagging inclusive and exclusive *we*

Existing literature determines that *we* influences rapport management: inclusive *we* establishes a common ground between the conversation participants and exclusive *we* shifts the focus away from a speaker to a larger group of people. I therefore tagged all instances of *we* according to their inclusive or exclusive reference in ViMELF to be able to determine how the different kinds affected rapport in the data. The tagging categories were determined after an initial examination of samples of the data and are based on existing research on the topic. The case study is described more closely in chapter 3. The initial tagging aimed at establishing whether it was possible to tag each instance according to their inclusive or exclusive reference: inclusive *we* at the very minimum includes both speakers and can even be generic, whereas exclusive *we* refers to the speaker and at least one other person, but not their conversation partner. This initial annotation showed that, apart from inclusive and exclusive uses, some instances could not be categorised as it was unclear what they referred to, whereas some cases did not include the speaker either and could therefore by definition be neither exclusive nor inclusive (see examples below). Based on this, I developed the following annotation scheme[27]:

[27] There is no number two annotation (i.e. _#2) in this chapter. This is because the annotation was cumulative, meaning that, with every chapter, I added to the annotation of the transcript. The _#2 tag can be found in the following chapter. Since other forms were not of interest, I annotated them for both pronouns in this chapter and pragmatic markers in the next one as the "other" category with the tag _#3. Laughter received no specific annotation (see chapter 3).

_#0 = exclusive *we* (including the speaker and at least one other person, not the conversation partner)
_#1 = inclusive *we* (including, at the very minimum, both conversation partners)
_#3 = other forms of *we* (formulaic, reported speech)
_#? = unclear cases

The tags were added to each instance of *we*: *SB32: yeah but we_#1 have to do this in English* (ViMELF, 01SB32FL06, speaking about the Skype call). In this example, the inclusive *we* refers to both conversation partners. Before this utterance, the Italian speaker FL06 mentions that the next Italian student who their present German conversation partner SB32 would speak to in the project also knew German. SB32 then replies with the above utterance, referring to *we*, the participants in this project. She includes FL06 in that stance and therefore establishes a common ground between the two speakers. In contrast, exclusive *we* refers to a group consisting of the speaker and at the very least one other person which is not their current conversation partner. In example (4.1) below, FL06 comments on the weather in their region in Italy, which obviously does not include their conversation partner who is skyping them from Germany:

(4.1) FL06: oh now yeah it 's[28] raining here also **we_#0** have uh like uh ten degrees […] (01SB32FL06)

An unclear instance describes any exchange where there is no apparent referent, or the reference is not unequivocally clear, even if there is a possible interpretation. An example for an unclear instance of *we* would be the following exchange (4.2):

(4.2) SF09: and uhm I have a presentation about Canadian education and it 's really
SB03: oh
SF09: yeah really interesting it was really yeah
SB03: so uhm what was it about can you remember some facts that you could tell me

[28] Note that all examples from the corpus show contractions like *don't* and *it's* as *do n't* and *it 's* with a space in-between, so that corpus software can distinguish them as two different words while also representing the actual stylistic choice of the speaker.

SF09: uh most of it ((ehh)) **we_#?** find that **we_#?** can find anywhere and uhm you know it was really interesting when I found out that uhm Canadians spend a lot of money into -you know unis really the kids it 's really different from this yeah and uh also that there are people from different nationalities and they 're so really diverse

(10SB03SF09)

The Bulgarian speaker SF09 tells SB03 about their presentation on Canadian education and answers SB03's request for further information by saying *most of it ((ehh)) we_#? find that we_#? can find anywhere.* It is unclear whether this means that SF09 thinks the information is available anywhere and thereby easily accessible or retrievable or whether they say that the facts they found about Canadian education they have also found in other places. Regarding the referent of *we*, it is unclear whether this includes the interlocutor as well in the form of a generalised *we*.

In some instances, the speakers use forms of *we* that do not include even themselves (see section 4.5.2 below for examples). The usual sense, the core meaning of *we*, references a group composed of the speaker and at least one other person. In any case where the referent is clear but does not include the speaker themselves, I tagged the data with *_#3* to collect all instances and analyse what they had in common. I annotated all 1008 instances of *we* in the data according to these four categories by manually going through each conversation and had a colleague corroborate the annotation. Table 4.3 shows that there are 748 cases (74.2%) of exclusive *we*, 223 (22.1%) instances of inclusive *we,* 20 (2%) instances of other uses and 17 (1.7%) cases of unclear uses of *we.* The tagged instances could then be extracted with a concordancer and be further annotated and analysed.

Table 4.3 – Frequency of different functions of *we* in ViMELF

we		
Function	absolute	% of total
Exclusive (we_#0)	748	74.21
Inclusive (we_#1)	223	22.12
Other (we_#3)	20	1.98
Unclear (we_#?)	17	1.69
	1008	100

As a first step, I annotated the speaker of each occurrence of *we* (in Excel). With these annotations, it was possible to split the *we* according to nationality (see Table 4.4). In addition, I used the sub-corpora based on native languages to compare the relative frequency of *we* occurring in one respective part of the corpus with the other language parts (based on the word count per native language).

Table 4.4 – *We* in sub-corpora according to nationalities

we	**sub-corpora**[29]					
	SB	FL	HE	SF	ST	total
Total word count	57,414	12,755	16,843	14,001	12,831	113,844
Exclusive	359	99	114	105	71	748
Inclusive	102	22	40	24	35	223
Sum exclusive/inclusive	461	121	154	129	106	971
Relative frequency per 1000 words	8.03	9.49	9.14	9.21	8.26	8.53
Percentage of *we* across sub-corpora	47.48	12.46	15.86	13.29	10.92	100

The German sub-corpus is about four times as big as the other sub-corpora because there are four times as many German speakers (twenty, who chat with five speakers of each of the other four parts; see chapter 3 for details). When comparing only the distribution of *we* used across the sub-corpora (not accounting for the total word count of each sub-corpus), they are all more or less equal. Nearly half of the instances are produced by German speakers who also account for half of the speakers and half of all words uttered. The lowest proportion of all instances of *we* in ViMELF is produced by the Spanish speakers (10.92 per cent), the second highest by Finnish speakers (15.84 per cent), which, when accounting for the fact that there are four times as many German speakers, would make up the highest proportion. However, when accounting for the word count of each individual sub-corpus, the German speakers actually use *we* less than the other parts (8.03 per 1000 words), even less than the Spanish participants (8.26 per 1000 words). In fact, the Italian speakers produce the most instances of *we* per 1000 words: 9.49. The differences are minimal, however, and in general the use of *we* seems to be stable across all native languages in the corpus.

[29] SB = German, FL = Italian, HE = Finnish, SF = Bulgarian, ST = Spanish; see chapter 3 for details.

The results for individual conversations are very mixed. Based on the average of all conversations, a standard conversation should have about 74.2 per cent of exclusive *we*s and 22.1 per cent inclusive ones. The actual numbers, however, deviate by quite a bit from these means: the standard deviation of exclusive *we* is 17.9 and that of inclusive *we* is 15.5. The conversation that is a complete outlier is 04SB69ST05, where 85.7 per cent of all instances are inclusive and only 7.1 per cent (2 instances) are exclusive. This can probably be attributed to the kind of conversation the participants were having. They speak about English as a Lingua Franca and often refer to their commonalities based on language with inclusive *we.* The rest of the conversations have either considerably higher or lower proportions of individual distributions.

4.4. Tagging inclusive and exclusive *our, ours,* and *us*

In a next step, I applied the annotation scheme for marking the degree of solidarity in utterances containing *we* to all first-person plural pronouns. As in the case of *we,* I went manually through each conversation (the ones that were annotated with *we*) and tagged instances of *our, ours,* and *us* in the data according to these four categories inclusive, exclusive, unclear and other. I did not include instances where *us* was shortened to *'s*, i.e. used only full lexical forms[30]. I then had a colleague corroborate the annotation. There are 201 occurrences of *our, ours,* and *us* in total. I then proceeded to analyse the concordances of these instances qualitatively and quantitatively. The results in Table 4.5 show a likeness to those of *we* in Table 4.3: there are 139 exclusive uses of these three first-person plural pronouns (69.15%), as well as 59 inclusive uses (29.35%), two other (1%) ones and one unclear one (0.50%). The relative frequencies are similar to those of *we* and the differences between them are in fact not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). This means that again there seems to be no significant difference between the degree of solidarity of *we* and the other forms of first-person plural pronouns in ViMELF.

[30] The grapheme (*'s*) is identical to the contractions of *is, does, has* (and sometimes even *are*) as well as to the possessive *'s*. To make sure that I did not skip any forms, I manually went through the concordance lines of all 2805 occurrences of *'s* in AntConc, sorted 1L, 2L, 3L and searched for abbreviated *us*. The only form I was able to identify occurs in *let's* and, as such, is formulaic (to the point of usually occurring in this sense only in its abbreviated form), of which there were 36 cases in total. No other abbreviated forms of *us* were identified in ViMELF.

Table 4.5 – Frequency of different functions of *our, ours, us* in ViMELF

our/ours/us			absolute		
Function	absolute	relative (%)	our	ours	us
Exclusive (_#0)	139	69.15	90	4	45
Inclusive (_#1)	59	29.35	42	0	17
Other (_#3)	2	1	0	0	2
Unclear (_#?)	1	0.50	0	1	0
	201	100	132	5	64

4.5. Annotating the context of first-person plural pronouns in ViMELF

While annotating the degree of solidarity of *we* in the corpus, it became apparent that the first-person plural pronouns always seemed to appear in similar contexts. To investigate this further, I did a collocation analysis of all instances of *we* in ViMELF with AntConc[31]. The span was set to 5 left and right, with a minimum collocate frequency of 5. The full list of the thirty-five most frequent collocates can be seen in Appendix VII.A). Upon closer inspection of the words in the list, there are three main larger contexts, to which the individual occurrences seem to belong:

- *skip, participate, list, project, talk, topic, minutes*: the call itself as well as the research project for which the participants are having the chat,
- *celebrate, tree, snow, church, eat, dinner*: customs and traditions,
- *points, Erasmus*: university/studies.

These initial results seemed to point towards a perceived pattern in the data. Therefore, I determined the context of the initial random 100 examples of utterances containing *we* from the pilot study by going through the concordance lines one by one and, if necessary, expanding the context. I first annotated the context very specifically and then narrowed the final list of categories down to the following:

[31] As these instances are tagged *we_#0, we_#1, we_#3* and *we_#?* in ViMELF and AntConc recognises the hash (#) as a wildcard for any one word, I search for *we&&* in AntConc instead. The ampersand is another wildcard that replaces a non-word and therefore allows the two special characters to be identified.

- task/project
- studies/class/education
- language/identity/culture
- interpersonal
- personal background

I also annotated formulaic and reported uses for other cases and did not categorise unclear cases (which are discussed further below in section 4.5.2). These are the broader contexts in which first-person plural pronouns are used. I decided to use broad categories because there were many individual contexts which could be grouped under these more general terms, especially since they often overlapped in some way. This is most definitely the case for the category language/identity/culture, as the examples below will demonstrate.

4.5.1. The context of inclusive and exclusive first-person plural pronouns

The category "task/project" marks cases in which *we, us, ours,* and *our* are used while the participants talk in some form about the specific task of skyping each other or the general research project. This includes metadiscursive utterances organising the conversation by speaking about the order and kind of topics they discuss, like in examples (4.3) and (4.4).

(4.3) SB80: well I I would suggest **we_#1** just introduce ourselves then **we_#1** uhm […]
(02SB80HE06)

(4.4) SB07: well I think **we_#1** can talk about that and **we_#1** c **we_#1** see how far **we_#1** uhm can comment […]
(10SB07SF07)

Utterances about the length (4.5), the set-up (4.6), the recording (4.5) and the storage (4.8) of the conversation are also marked as task/project, as are comments about the CASE research project in general (4.9).

(4.5) SB70: p uh ye-ah I think **we_#1** already have thirty-two minutes now
(05SB70ST07)

(4.6) HE06: uhm **we_#1** are supposed to v-v-video call right
(02SB80HE06)

(4.7) HE06: should ((hehe)) should **we_#1** set d-do you do you have the recording programme also

(02SB80HE06)

(4.8) HE19: yeah so I ’ll I ’ll save the file on I guess **we_#1** ’ll both just save the same thing

(05SB93HE19)

(4.9) HE01: it ’s like this really concrete way whi and it ’s really nice to s actually see I **we_#1** ’re you know contributing to science hurray ((chuckles))

(01SB75HE01)

The second category, studies/class/education, revolves around comments about the university (4.10), the course of studies and degrees (4.11), specific classes (4.12) and comments on the personal education background (4.13) or general education (4.14).

(4.10) HE06: yeah yeah it ’s quite different because in Finland **we_#0** really do n’t have any I do n’t think **we_#0** have like those campus areas in any town so **we_#0** kind of have the university buildings in the well all all the halls and student lounges I use are in the centre

(02SB80HE06)

(4.11) FL06: ah yeah here is more or less the same I think but uh yeah here **we_#0** have uh a really fixed uh table so uhm yes can you so **we_#0** uh **we_#0** ’re forced to do some courses and **we_#0** ca n’t uh **we_#0** HAVE uh **we_#0** have no freedom at all I think

(01SB32FL06)

(4.12) SF09: uhm my tests are going to be in stylistics and **we_#0** have a subject called uh Canada

(10SB03SF09)

[speaking about Latin lessons:]

(4.13) SB33: well **we_#0** **we_#0** had to it was not even a choice but uh at the school that I went they uhm **we_#0** **we_#0** had to do it uhm from seventh seventh grade till ninth grade I think

(04SB33FL31)

(4.14) HE04: […] how how does your school system work like because **we_#0** have ONe school from uh like one to six

(01SB78HE04)

Perhaps the broadest, but equally hardest to define category is language/identity/culture. The category includes utterances about contexts as varied as the political system (4.15), national languages and dialects (4.16), traditions (4.17), religion (4.18), TV and other media (4.19), and food (4.20). The reason for this is that very often, these individual contexts overlap in some form or another. When a participant speaks about television consumption in example (4.19), for example, that usually involves culture. This category therefore includes anything vaguely related to these contexts:

(4.15) SB51: uhm well I actually ((chuckling)) uhm I live in the Federal State of Saarland like in Germany **we_#0** 've got uhm several states uhm

(07SB51ST01)

(4.16) HE01: **we_#0** talk Finnish AND Swedish

(01SB75HE01)

(4.17) SB49: so do you have a special uhm Christmas food like uhm **we_#0** uhm **we_#0** have every year on Christmas uhm **we_#0** make raclette do you know that

(07SB49FL33)

(4.18) HE06: […] **we_#0** have the Lutheran CHUrch in Finland

(02SB80HE06)

(4.19) HE03: yeah yeah yeah yeah okay yeah it 's it 's kind of funny because like usually here in in Finland **we_#0** 're such a small country that usually like only the TV shows for the small children are dubbed and the rest is like just with like the real actually actual spoken language and then it 's just with comes with subtitles

(08SB106HE03)

(4.20) ST03: I think in Spain **we_#0** have breakfast very early like before **we_#0** go to work or before **we_#0** go into uni […]

(07SB53ST03)

How some of these contexts overlap can be seen in examples (4.17) and (4.19). Utterance (4.17) is an example of food and traditions overlapping. The German speaker tells their Italian counterpart about the tradition of having raclette for Christmas, which in Germany usually involves melting raclette cheese under a special grill and eating it with potatoes, bread, and many other condiments. This is a food-based tradition and cannot be classified as either one or the other category, which illustrates why a less fine-grained differentiation of the context is sensible. Utterance (19) above is another an example of one of these overlaps: the Finnish speaker explains how foreign TV series in Finland are usually only subtitled, except for children's TV (those who are presumably too young to read at all or with the speed of spoken language). This is, however, not just about the media, but also about language use and a Finnish cultural phenomenon/choice. Similarly, example (4.20) occurs in the context of food consumption in Spain, but also reveals a custom or a common practice of that nation.

Where I did have to differentiate, though, was between personal practices and general ones. Work-related contexts, for example, were split into "personal background" for anything relating to a specific participant's job and "language/identity/culture" if the utterance referred to a general work context independent of a particular person.

(4.21) SB17: uhm well my mum I see of course a lot because it 's her travel uh agency and **we_#0** work together

(07SB17SF10)

(4.22) HE06: yeah but some people do that especially I think in Finland you might do that so you drive between your hometown and for example Helsinki because **we_#0** have so many jobs here

(02SB80HE06)

I proceeded similarly with utterances about tradition. Personal background as a category generally refers to anything the participants reveal about themselves in the conversation, for example, when they tell their conversation partner anything personal about their childhood and their family (4.23), their partner (4.24), and other aspects of their personal life.

(4.23) SF01: […] I have other friends and me and my sister as well there were always animals around **us_#0** w **we_#0** 've grown up surrounded by animals and **we_#0** had to take care of them to take them for walks to uhm like look after them when they are sick and that develops some very strong feeling of responsibility

(04SB25SF01)

(4.24) HE01: so that WOUld be easier but ((ehh)) but **we_#0** 're ((heh)) **we_#0** 've actually discussed moving to China […]

(01SB75HE01)

"Interpersonal" uses of first-person plural pronouns occur in statements where the participants talk to each other not in the context of a specific topic, but rather to relate with each other, often also doing small-talk. Examples of this are exchanges about the weather (4.25) and pleasantries such as promises for further contact (4.26).

(4.25) FL06: uh ah that 's not BAD but uh yesterday **we_#0** had like uh twenty-two was like summer **we_#0** were wearing uh t-SHIRTS […]

(01SB32FL06)

(4.26) SF09: **we_#1** can KEEP in contact

(10SB03SF09)

The result of tagging all instances of first-person plural pronouns according to context can be seen in Table 4.6. The most frequent context they are used in is language/identity/culture with 35.32 per cent followed closely by studies/class/education with 29.77 per cent. As the former category is rather broad and the participants are students, skyping with each other in the larger context of a university research study, this result is not very surprising. The participants mostly speak about language, food, traditions and other characteristics of their culture, as well as about their universities, classes, degrees, and their lives as university students (note that this is not a general number but only in the context of the first-person plural pronouns). Similarly, the fact that they are part of a research project makes them discuss it quite frequently (21.06%) and they talk about the task as a means of structuring and framing their conversation. Discussions of the individual, private personal background of the participants, such as talking about their partner, are much less frequent in the conversations with only 7.71 per cent. This is likely an indication of the kind of conversation these

unacquainted strangers from different nationalities have with each other: they do not know their conversation partner and in this first conversation talk about more general things, rather than their relationships with other people, especially since the conversation partner does not know those people. There were few cases of interpersonal use of first-person plural pronouns, which make up only 1.49 per cent of all instances. These included mostly talk about the weather, the exchange of pleasantries at the end of a conversation, and remarks about the future where participants wish to stay in contact.

Table 4.6 – Frequencies of contexts in which 1st person plural pronouns occur in ViMELF

1st person plural pronouns		
Context	absolute	relative (%)
Language/identity/culture	426	35.24
Studies/class/education	359	29.69
Task/project	254	21.01
Personal background	93	7.69
Interpersonal	37	3.06
Unclear	18	1.49
Quotative	13	1.08
Formulaic	9	0.74
	1209	100

4.5.1.1. Contexts of inclusive and exclusive *we*

The frequencies of contexts in which *we* occurs can be seen in Table 4.7. The proportional distribution does not differ significantly from that of all instances of first-person plural pronouns: 35.81 per cent for language/identity/culture, followed closely by studies/class/education with 29.27 per cent, as well as task/project with 20.83 per cent. Personal background occurred as a context in 7.34 per cent of all instances of *we*, interpersonal makes up 1.69 per cent of all cases ($p > 0.05$ in all cases). Unclear, quotative and formulaic cases are discussed in section 4.5.2. This similarity in relative frequency is of course partially due to the fact that *we* constitutes by far the highest proportion of first-person plural pronouns in the data.

Table 4.7 – Frequencies of contexts in which *we* occurs in ViMELF

***we* – all instances**		
Context	absolute	relative (%)
Language/identity/culture	361	35.81
Studies/class/education	295	29.27
Task/project	210	20.83
Personal background	74	7.34
Interpersonal	31	3.08
Unclear	17	1.69
Quotative	11	1.09
Formulaic	9	0.89
	1008	100

The tagging of all examples suggested a pattern, which is why I repeated the collocation analysis from section 4.5 with all cases of exclusive *we* in AntConc. With a span of 5 left and right and a minimum collocate frequency of 5, the list of the 25 most frequent collocations (see Appendix VII.B) shows that they relate to the context of culture, identity and traditions as well as some concerning university studies. Examples of the former category are *tree, celebrate, snow, church, eat, dinner, party, Christmas,* as well as *normally*, which upon closer inspection showed to precede the recollection of traditions and customs. *[Credit] points, Erasmus, pay [fees],* and *choose [subjects]* on the other hand create the context of university studies. I then repeated the analysis with inclusive *we* (we_#1), with a search span of 5 left and right and a minimum collocate frequency of 5. In the first 25 instances (see Appendix VII.C), the most prevalent occurrences relate to the context of the task at hand and the larger research project they did the task for: *skip* (a topic), *supposed* (to talk about a specific topic, to talk for a certain number of minutes, to record the conversation, etc.), *topic, record, minutes, talk, conversation, talking, half* (an hour), *start* (talking, the conversation, with the topic)*, thirty* (minutes). In addition, a little further down the list of collocations, instances of the other two features under investigation in this thesis occur: laughter (all forms) and pragmatic markers (*[I] think* and *[I] guess*).

When separating the annotated data into inclusive and exclusive cases (see Table 4.8), this clear pattern also becomes visible: exclusive *we* occurs mostly in the context of language/identity/culture, as well as studies/class/education, while inclusive *we* occurs in the context of task/project-based conversation. From the 748 instances of exclusive *we* in the

data, 44.12 per cent (330 cases) are mentioned in the context of a cultural topic, and 37.43 per cent (280 instances) in the context of a topic related to education. Likewise, personal background information makes up every tenth instance of exclusive *we* (9.89 per cent, or 74 cases of all exclusive *we*s), with task/project-related and interpersonal utterances at 6.95 per cent (52 cases) and 1.6 per cent (12) respectively. The numbers for inclusive *we* are very different: the majority, 70.85 per cent or 158 out of 223 instances, occur in the context of the task or project, with 13.9 per cent (31 occurrences) of language/identity/culture contexts, 8.52 per cent interpersonal ones (19), and 6.73 per cent (15) about studies/class/education. Not surprisingly, inclusive *we* does not occur in the context of disclosing private, personal information. The speakers do not know each other and therefore have no shared personal history they could possible refer to with an inclusive *we*, such as closer acquaintances would when discussing an event they both attended. The numbers show that inclusive *we* is in most cases used when the speakers talk about the project or the task itself, either organising it or simply discussing it. Exclusive *we* on the other hand is mostly used to talk about the students' studies as well as their culture, their identity or their language. Figure 4.1 shows a visual representation of these differences in distribution according to degree of solidarity and context.

Table 4.8 – Frequencies of contexts occurring with exclusive and inclusive *we*

	we_#0 (exclusive)		**we_#1 (inclusive)**	
Context	absolute	relative (%)	absolute	relative (%)
Task/project	52	6.95	158	70.85
Personal background	74	9.89	0	0
Studies/class/education	280	37.43	15	6.73
Language/identity/culture	330	44.12	31	13.9
Interpersonal	12	1.6	19	8.52
	748	100	223	100

Split into first languages of the speakers (i.e. German, Finnish, Spanish, Italian and Bulgarian), there is very little variation between the different sub-corpora regarding the use of *we*, with some noticeable exceptions, however. The sub-corpora mostly follow the distribution of the main corpus as seen in Table 4.8, with language/identity/culture being the most prominent context in all but one sub-corpus; only in the Italian part are there more instances of *we* within the context of studies/class/education. This stands out as the Italian speakers did not have more education-related conversation topics assigned to them than the

other speakers. The Italian speakers seem to use exclusive *we* more when talking about these topics.

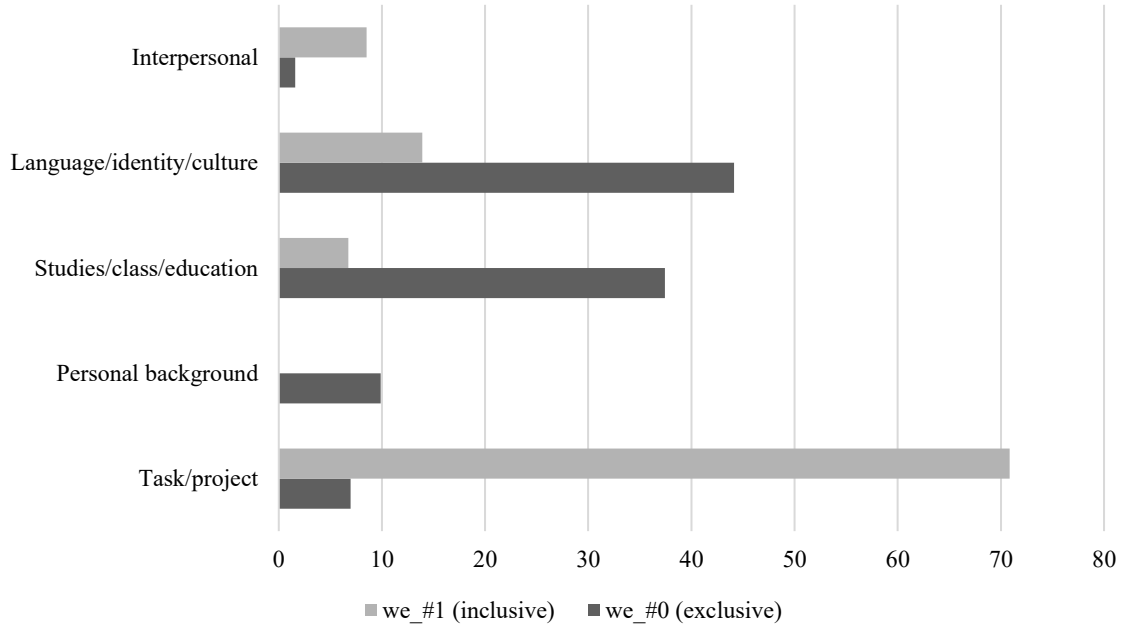


Figure 4.1 – Proportional distribution (%) of contexts occurring with inclusive and exclusive *we* compared to all cases of inclusive and exclusive we, respectively

Another exception was the Finnish part, where the context of task/project occurred a lot more frequently than in the other languages: 34.42 per cent of *we* related to the task/project context compared to an average of 17.80 per cent in all the other parts. When separating inclusive and exclusive functions, it becomes visible that there is no difference between Finnish use of inclusive *we* and the other parts. However, there is a higher than normal use of exclusive *we* in the Finnish part, i.e. where participants describe the project and task from their view and on their side, excluding the conversation partner. Another "irregularity" is that the Bulgarian sub-corpus contains more *we* in a personal background context compared to all other conversations: 16.28 per cent of *we* compared to an average of 4.95 per cent in all other parts. This does not necessarily mean that the Bulgarian speakers talk more about their personal background relating to groups such as families and friends, but it rather means that the Bulgarian speakers seem to more often use exclusive *we* in these cases compared to other speakers.

4.5.1.2. Specific contexts of inclusive and exclusive *we*

A concordance plot analysis of inclusive *we* in AntConc makes the places in a conversation in which inclusive *we* occurs easily visible. Inclusive *we* can occur anywhere in a conversation, but more often it occurs towards the beginning and end of a chat. While an Excel table with the context annotations can reveal a similar pattern when shuffling the table according to occurrences of *we* within each conversation, it cannot show the actual distribution of *we* within the conversation, but only in relation to all other *we*s. The concordance plots on the other hand are able to do exactly that. It is therefore necessary to use both and compare the results. When comparing these results to the context annotations in the Excel table, certain patterns stand out: inclusive *we* at the beginning and towards the end of a conversation concern mostly the task itself, i.e. whether the recording is set up properly, which topic they will discuss, how they will approach the conversation and how long they have already talked to each other. Two prototypical conversations in this sense are 04SB33FL31 and 04SB69ST05. In the concordance plot of the former (see Figure 4.2), the speakers mostly use inclusive *we* at the beginning of the conversation (the block of black lines at the left) and towards the end of the conversation.[32] Compare this to Figure 4.3, a concordance plot of the same conversation but searching for exclusive *we*, where exclusive *we* occurs all over the conversation, but definitely less clustered towards to beginning and end. The close context analysis of the inclusive *we*s in 04SB22FL31 shows that the majority of them are task or project-related, with some instances of language/identity/culture-related *we* in-between and interpersonal ones at the end. This again shows that the structuring of the conversation mostly takes part at the beginning and towards the end of the conversation, with an exchange of courtesies at the end.

Figure 4.2 – Concordance plot of 04SB33FL31 in AntConc, node: inclusive *we*[33]

[32] Note that concordance plots in AntConc are based on characters, not words.
[33] In a concordance plot, the bar represents the chronological course of the conversation and each black bar is an instance of the node.

Figure 4.3 – Concordance plot of 04SB33FL31 in AntConc, node: exclusive *we*

Conversation 04SB69ST05 (see Figure 4.4) shows a similar pattern for inclusive *we*, but with slightly deviating details: the participants briefly discuss the task in the beginning, followed by instances of language/identity/culture with task-based occurrences in-between and a number of interpersonal uses at the end.

Figure 4.4 – Concordance plot of 04SB69ST05 in AntConc, node: inclusive *we*

A general examination of the other ViMELF concordance plots with inclusive *we* (see Appendix VIII.B) show some disparate results between the conversations: some conversations only have very few instances of inclusive *we*, while others follow the prototypical dispersion above. 01SB32FL06, 01SB78HE04, and 07SB53ST03 all have only three instances respectively, all concerning the task and/or project. 04SB25SF01 has only two of them and 10SB03SF09 four, but in the latter all four instances are interpersonal; one occurs in the middle of the conversation and three clustered at the end. In 05SB93HE19, all fifteen instances of inclusive *we* are about the task of calling each other. This does not mean, however, that the participants do not exchange pleasantries at the end of the conversation, for example, they simply use a form solely focussed on their conversation partner instead of them as a group: *so nice to meet you* and *have a lovely Christmas* (ViMELF, 05SB93HE19), for example, instead. Similarly, in conversations 07SB51ST01 and 08SB05SF05, all instances of inclusive *we* but one are about the task itself. Whereas these are more spread throughout the conversations, in 10SB07SF07, where all instances are task/project-related, they are clustered towards the middle and end of the conversation. 08SB05SF05 has its inclusive *we* with various contexts clustered at the beginning and towards the end. Similar patterns could not be observed for exclusive *we* in ViMELF. It is spread throughout the conversations, as concordance plots show (see Appendix VIII.A).

One of the context/function combinations that stands out is interpersonal exclusive *we* (see Table 4.8) of which there are twelve instances. The interpersonal context means that participants talk to each other not in the context of a specific topic, but rather to relate with each other. I would therefore have expected this category to appear mostly with inclusive rather than exclusive *we.* However, there are only a couple more of these in ViMELF (nineteen instances). A more detailed analysis of interpersonal exclusive *we* shows that they are all about the weather and constitute a form of small-talk, therefore being used in a phatic way. Interpersonal inclusive *we* on the other hand mostly contains affirmations to stay in contact with each other after the talk (twelve instances), one reference to both speakers with regards to something they had both heard in the background and one longer exchange where both participants envision a future scenario together where they might meet up again (this is further discussed in section 4.6).

4.5.1.3. Context of inclusive and exclusive *us, our,* and *ours*

The context analysis of inclusive and exclusive *us, our,* and *ours* does not show distinctively different patterns compared to *we* (see Table 4.9). In fact, the difference between these results and *we* is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). This means that just as with the general distribution of inclusive, exclusive, other and unclear functions with all first-person plural pronouns, they work in a similar way and do not need to be considered separately in the analysis of rapport.

Table 4.9 – Frequencies of contexts occurring with exclusive and inclusive *us, our, ours*

us/our/ours	**exclusive**		**inclusive**	
Context	absolute	relative (%)	absolute	relative (%)
Task/project	18	12.95	26	11.66
Personal background	17	12.23	2	0.90
Studies/class/education	56	40.29	8	3.59
Language/identity/culture	48	34.53	17	7.62
Interpersonal	0	0	6	2.69
	139	100	59	100

4.5.2. Unclear and other functions of *we*

As mentioned in section 4.3, there are certain cases where the *we* in an utterance can be interpreted as neither inclusive nor exclusive. Where the referent of the first-person plural

pronoun is unclear, even though it could likely include the interlocutor, I tagged the instance with _#?. Out of 1008 total utterances containing *we*, there were 17 (1.69%) cases of unclear uses, as well as one case of *ours*, out of the 201 total cases of *our, ours,* and *us* (0.05%), with the difference between the frequencies again not being of statistical significance (see section 4.4). The reasons for why an utterance had to be qualified as unclear varied, but example (4.27) shows one of these cases, where the referent was not unequivocally clear. SB73 and ST14 talk about Easter traditions and SB73 explains how German parents tell their children that the Easter bunny brings them gifts each year, and that even now that they are adults, she continues the tradition by giving sweets to her partner and family:

(4.27) SB73: ((chuckles)) but I will give uhm some sweets to my boyfriend or to my parents as well so it 's not that uhm yeah ((hehe))

[…]

SB73: how do you say it secret anymore like when **we_#?** were kids

(06SB73ST14)

SB73 introduces the whole exchange with *we_#0 have that figure of an Easter bunny* (ViMELF, 06SB73ST14) and then talks about her family and her partner, so it is not clear whether she is including her conversation partner in the example above (similar to "people of our age") or whether this is a reference to her partner, possible siblings, or her generation as a whole. The one case of unclear reference of *ours* occurs when SB17 says *but that use of ours_#? of course* (ViMELF, 07SB17SF10), when they talk about them speaking to their professor because the recording initially failed. There is no indication in the surrounding text as to what "use" she is talking about and whether this refers to the conversation participants, SB17's class, or the whole project.

In addition to the unclear cases, there are 20 instances (2% of the total) where *we* has a clearly discernible referent, but where the function was neither exclusive nor inclusive. In some cases, the speaker even uses a form of *we* that does not include the speaker themselves, which in the usual sense constitutes the core meaning of *we*, i.e. referencing a group composed of the speaker and at least one other person. After tagging and collecting all the instances as described in section 4.3 with *_#3*, I analysed them qualitatively to establish what these cases had in common.

The twenty instances of other uses of *we* can easily be categorised. Where *we* could neither be categorised as inclusive nor exclusive, it was either used in a formulaic or a quotative way. The nine formulaic uses included seven cases of variations of *we will see* (*we 'll see, we will see, we shall see*), as well as two utterances containing *there we go*. In example (4.28), HE01 tells her conversation partner about a standing job offer in Shanghai that she is considering taking after graduating:

(4.28) HE01: yeah but well **we_#3** 'll see if it 's if it gets realised

(01SB75HE01)

In this example, the *we 'll see* does not necessarily include nor exclude SB75, the conversation partner. The *we 'll see* could arguably be exclusive, as HE01 speaks about moving to Shanghai with her partner and that they would have to see whether this specific plan will work out. Another possible interpretation is that the *we'll see* is inclusive and means that both conversations partners would see what happens in future. More likely, however, it is used to wrap up this specific topic, in which case it is a quasi-generic use that in my opinion can be interpreted as neither inclusive nor exclusive, since it is a fixed expression. The same holds true for *there we go.* In addition to the formulaic cases, there are the above-mentioned cases, where *we* does not refer to the speaker at all. These are utterances where the speaker uses reported speech to quote someone else:

(4.29) HE03: […] he said well **we_#3** can just speak German for half an hour […]

(08SB106HE03)

In two special cases, the speakers do not quote a third person, but rather quote an impersonal *you*:

(4.30) SB93: yeah but to me it 's it 's alway it always seems a bit like artificial if **you** say okay **we_#3** have to have a chat now ONLINE

(05SB93HE19)

(4.31) HE19: oh oh well in that c if it 's like a safety thing then yeah ((hehe))
SB93: yeah it 's a s but you know you have to imagine that th there 's the sign like do n't go there it 's dangerous
HE19: yeah
SB93: and **you** think uhm where do **we_#3** live

HE19: yeah ((laughing))
SB93: in Germany ca n't you ca n't you give **us_#3** a little bit of money to like yeah
HE19: exactly
SB93: put things back into shape but yeah

(05SB93HE19)

In example (4.30), SB93 and HE19 speak about virtual (online) courses offered by universities. SB93 expresses her dislike of traditional classes on campus which offer an online forum where participations are required to post content and speak to each other about the classes. SB93 refers to this forced exchange as *artificial*, quoting a hypothetical conversation with a classmate, saying they had to chat online even though they see each other in class regularly. The utterance is introduced with quoting a generic *you* in *if you say okay we_#3 have to have a chat now ONLINE*, the *we* thus becoming an equivalent of the generic *you.* Similarly, in example (4.31), the same speaker tells her conversation partner about her university fencing off areas around a building because of its decreasing structural integrity, which meant that parts of the building (in this case *balconies*) were no longer safe and could drop onto passers-by. Her disbelief stems from the fact that in a country like Germany, which is supposed to be economically well-off, the university chose to close off areas rather than invest money into fixing the building. In this example, again, SB93 quotes a generic *you* when introducing the reported speech, therefore the *we* in a way also becomes generic. In both cases it is clear that SB93 is referring to her private thoughts, i.e. to herself, but she chooses to generalise the personal example. This generalisation allows the speaker to soften the subjectivity of the argument she is making. SB93 increases ambiguity regarding whose opinion this really is, only her individual one or also that of a larger group of people.

4.6. Inclusive *we* in ViMELF in comparison with extant rapport research

As mentioned in chapter 2, inclusive *we* occurs both in transactional and non-transactional situations in Planken (2005). In the transactional phase of their sales negotiations, speakers use *we* to create an inclusive stance and increase productivity when working on a joint task. In non-transactional periods, inclusive *we* creates common ground to increase empathy and shared responsibility between the speakers. In ViMELF, there are no sales negotiations, but I would argue that the task of skyping each other and having a conversation with a stranger also has a transactional and a non-transactional period: the transactional periods are all those

where the participants talk about the task itself and organise it, while all other parts count as non-transactional. In the data, there are certain tensions or problematic points. Simply the fact that the participants talk to a stranger can create a tense situation. Following procedural and, by extension, conversational norms therefore means that the speakers remove the additional tension by structuring also the non-transactional periods. This avoids irritation, conflict, or even a breakdown of communication that can threaten rapport and therefore seems to be an important tool for communication between unacquainted speakers. How the speakers in ViMELF use task/project-based inclusive *we* to frame a conversation has already been discussed in section 4.5.1.2 with the help of concordance plots. In relation to rapport, examples of these instances can affect framing and positioning in numerous ways. For example, simple conversational organisation as in example (4.32) manages rapport by directly inquiring about conversational expectations. This reduces ambiguity and it keeps the interaction smooth and focussed, while showing respect to the other speaker by giving them the opportunity to share their expectations. The *if I'm not mistaken* in the following utterance offers the conversation partner the possibility to disagree or correct the speaker, for example.

(4.32) FL10: so if I 'm not mistaken the topic that **we_#1** have to talk about is uh what **we_#1** study

(01SB36FL10)

Other utterances are more obviously contributing to rapport, even though they still occur in the context of organising the task and speaking about the project. In example (4.33), SB75 tells H01 about her conversation with the project organisers in preparation for the Skype call and asking them specific information about its organisation:

(4.33) SB75: […] and I was like yeah well so do **we_#1** have to stop after thirty minutes or
HE01: ((hehe))
SB75: no do **we_#1** have some freedom can I contact her later on or ((chuckling))
HE01: ((laughs))
SB75: ((laughs)) .H it 's like I do n't know it 's a bit
HE01: no no no now **we_#1** have to you know BURN **our_#1** computers so that there will be NO trace of this conversation ((thh))

(01SB75HE01)

SB75 could also have used first-person singular *I* instead of *we*, but includes HE01 in her stance and thereby also shares the responsibility of a successful conversation according to the guidelines with HE01. At the same time, SB75 also asks HE01 indirectly whether it is appropriate to remain in contact after the project by still masking it as a question to the research coordinators. She first still refers to them as an entity (*do we have some freedom*) but then switches into a politer *I* (*can I contact her*), which as such does not imply that HE01 could want the same and offers HE01 the opportunity to not address this specifically and neither confirm nor decline. In addition, SB75 invites a comment by HE01 to share her expectations towards this conversation and their relationship. HE01 answers jokingly (and laughing) by saying that both would have to delete any trace of the conversation. This is again an ambiguous answer that reveals HE01's intentions without directly stating them.

Another example of how rapport can be managed in different ways by *we* in the context of an utterance on the task or project is excerpt (4.34) where HE04 jokingly hints at ending the conversation for the benefit of her conversation partner SB78, who told her that he would have to transcribe the conversation afterwards, to minimise his work load. HE04 proposes an action (jokingly, but nevertheless) that has positive consequences for SB78. This creates a joint stance and puts HE04 actively in the position of a benefactor and well-wisher of their conversation partner. Through the joking element, though, she reduces the seriousness and therefore otherwise possibly perceived exaggerated generosity.

(4.34) HE04: okay but then **we_#1** should stop talking so you get less work ((laughing)) ((laughs)) work to do ((chuckling))

(01SB78HE04)

Lastly, there are also classical examples of a speaker including the conversation partner in their stance by declaring and affirming their agreement with each other:

(4.35) HE06: okay so glad **we_#1** agree ((heh))

(02SB80HE06)

(4.36) HE06: yeah well but that sounds pretty similar to what **WE_#0** have so
SB80: alright
HE06: yeah yeah **we_#1** 're kind of the on the same page yeah uhm WHAT Else

(02SB80HE06)

In example (4.36), this is done in the context of the formulaic expression *to be on the same page*. HE06 first uses a more impersonal construction in line 1 with *that sounds pretty similar to what WE have*, but then chooses a more personal one, including the conversation partner SB80 in her stance. In this instance, though, HE06 relativizes or hedges the immediacy of the utterance by inserting *kind of*. This lessens the impact of the perceived commitment to the stance and makes it easier for their conversation partner to accept it and align with it.

In the non-transactional part, there are many examples of inclusive *we* that can be found in extant research, such as interpersonal inclusive *we* discussed in section 4.5.1.2 above. Other traditional examples directly draw the conversation partner into a joint stance, as in the following example:

(4.37) ST07: face-to-face conversations with my tutor planning the work planning the methodology the concepts and online courses are useful but they should NOT substitute the direct the direct contact between a student and the teacher
SB70: m yeah
ST07: this is what I think maybe it ’s too traditional I do n’t KNOW
SB70: well but I think **we_#1** are both used to the classroom setting
ST07: A book
SB70: so this is the the thing **we_#1** know what is so
ST07: mh
SB70: what is very common to **us_#1**

(05SB70ST07)

Here, SB70 pre-empts ST07’s stance and draws her into his own, which is assertive and could be potentially problematic if ST07 were of a different opinion. As they had been talking about the subject for a while at this point, SB70 has already got an impression of ST07’s opinion on the matter and seems to feel certain enough to not only commit to this stance, but also include ST07 in it.

Rather than pre-empting a stance, SB73 in the following example (4.38) creates a joint stance based on something her conversation partner said previously. The conversation partner SB14 initially only uses an impersonal construction (*it ’s necessary to have good teachers -t it ’s*

very important), which SB73 changes into inclusive *we*. They both use a generalisation, but SB73 signals agreement and alignment with SB14's stance by creating a joint, generic *we* and aligning it with SB14's one.

(4.38) SB73: yeah I think uhm as you said **we_#1** need people who know how to educate children

(06SB73ST14)

In other cases, a speaker openly points out their similarity, again referring to them both as an entity as in (4.39) and in the case of (4.40) even evaluating this bold, unambiguous affirmation.

(4.39) ST14: I 've seen it ((chuckling)) so **we_#1** 're not that different ((thh))

(06SB73ST14)

(4.40) ST14: ((ehh)) oh well see **we_#1** 're not that different after all
SB73: yeah
ST14: ((ehh)) that 's cool

(06SB73ST14)

These instances manage rapport by aligning stances. This can become problematic, if the conversation partner does not wish for those to be aligned, does not consider it appropriate or feels like their opinion is misunderstood. If the conversation partner agrees, however, it can increase rapport between the speakers. In (4.41), SB51 and ST01 jointly create a common ground by drawing on similarities between them.

(4.41) SB51: José ((laughs)) sorry sorry I do n't know any Spanish ((laughs))
ST01: well ((heh))
SB51: but I 'm ready to learn ((laughs))
ST01: I I do n't speak German either so **we_#1** are ((heh))
SB51: on the same on the same train there ((laughs)) […]

(07SB51ST01)

The exchange occurs in an instance where SB51 apologises for her lack of Spanish, which the Spanish ST01 politely defuses by pointing out her own lack of German. She ends the turn with *so we are*, which is completed by SB51 with *on the same train there*. This is an example

of both speakers actively creating a joint stance and committing themselves and the conversation partner to it. There are many more examples where speakers align very transparently and non-ambiguously with another speaker's stance or include the other speaker in theirs. Perhaps the most striking example of this is (4.42):

(4.42) ST05: yeah I I think I think it is the sa I think it is the same uhm but talking about lingua franca lingua franca 's it 's just one and I think that it 's ONE variety of English and WHAT **we_#1** are **we_#1** well I speak an inclusive **we_#1** ((heh)) […] **we_#1** all tend to think that British English is more prestigious when i in reality it is AMERICA who has this power for ((hehe)) to say it in ((heh)) in some way

(04SB69ST05)

ST05 specifically states *I speak an inclusive we* and follows it up with the generalisation *we all*. She can do this without impolitely assuming her conversation partner's stance so openly, because she is merely reiterating and rephrasing her conversation partner's opinion and therefore knows that she will agree.

Of particular interest is also where language/identity/culture correlates with inclusive *we.* There are only 31 instances of this in ViMELF but they occur in utterances where the speaker creates an inclusive stance based not on their common task or their being a student, but actually something else they perceive to have in common. Most of these instances are directly related to language. These are cases where the speakers commit themselves and their conversation partner to a certain stance. The conversation partners position themselves as learners of English, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) speakers or non-native English speakers and in that context mostly express their attitude towards different kinds of English, how English has taken over as a lingua franca and what that means for their native languages.

(4.43) ST05: because it IS about ENGlish and if uh **we_#1** are non-na non-native speakers therefore I think it is very good to to learn from the native

(04SB69ST05)

In example (4.43), the speaker unambiguously creates a non-native speaker stance and includes their conversation partner in it, while expressing their (positive) attitude towards the status of native speaker varieties. This creates a situation whereby they automatically align

the other speaker with that view. SB33 in utterance (4.44) seems to do the same, without, however, explicitly referencing their non-native speaker status. Together with her conversation partner, they discuss the status of languages other than English and how the lingua franca might threaten them:

(4.44) SB33: but t I think that all the languages that **we_#1** still have **we_#1** should try to preserve them definitely

(04SB33FL31)

Instead of simply stating an opinion, SB17 directly includes her conversation partner into the experience of a non-native speaker and learner of English trying to make themselves understood:

(4.45) SB17: but but most often **we_#1** can uhm s s uhm subscribe and what what **we_#1** mean so that that so that **we_#1** still can convey our uhm meaning

(07SB17SF10)

Other examples include e.g. the speakers identifying themselves as Roman alphabet users, for which the logogram-based Chinese writing system is much harder to learn than the Roman one. Apart from these language-related instances which make up the majority of cases, there are also a few other ones which concern the speakers' age (being *ancient* and *old*) as well as their being aspiring English teachers as non-native speakers of English. The same holds true for examples of the category of language/identity/culture for inclusive *us/our/ours*. They mostly refer to the speakers' age or status as ELF or non-native speakers, or learners of English:

(4.46) ST05: […] a disadvantage for for **US_#1** as non-native speakers for example

(04SB69ST05)

In this category especially, there were a considerable number of age-related inclusive first-person pronouns like *people of our_#1 age* (ViMELF, 07SB51ST01)*, for people not in our_#1 age* (ViMELF, 07SB50FL34), *older people than us_#1 like our_#1 parents* (ViMELF, 01SB78HE04)*, from our_#1 from today's p perspective* (ViMELF, 10SB07SF0). These are all examples where speakers unambiguously create a joint stance with their conversation partner. Notice, however, how the speaker corrects themselves in the latter towards a more neutral expression.

A likely reason for why most of the utterances in this category (inclusive first-person plural pronouns in the context of language/culture/identity) are only around these specific topics is that these parts of their identity are known to the conversation partners. They are aware of each other's non-native speaker status or can assume to be of a similar age and can therefore be sure that including their counterpart in a shared stance will not likely offend them or create a potentially delicate situation. In other words, using inclusive pronouns with the conversation partner when the conversation topic does not concern the task at hand or their studies seems only to be done by the speakers in ViMELF when they can be reasonably sure that they will not offend their conversation partner by doing so.

That does not mean that the speakers never take risks, however. There are instances in ViMELF, where the conversation partners make very direct attempts at creating rapport and where the utterance and the use of inclusive pronouns can create potentially delicate situations. In one instance, for example, FL31 and SB33 talk about each of their countries and the weather there. SB33 remarks that the weather conditions described by her Italian counterpart would be great for her, upon which the following exchange occurs:

(4.47) FL31: oh well you can ((heh)) you can come visit ((laughs))
SB33: YEAH I should come to Italy and then you can come to the Saarland and ((heh)) see the snow ((chuckling)) ((laughs))
FL31: YEAH I love it ((heh))
SB33: **we_#1 we_#1** should change places I assume ((laughing))
FL31: oh why not ((hehe))

(04SB33FL31)

FL31 presumably jokingly (see the laughter) tells SB33 to visit if the weather would be perfect for her. SB33 accepts this and goes one step further by proposing to swap countries to experience each other's culture. In this instance, it is not so much the use of the first-person plural pronoun itself that has a big influence on rapport. It is rather that the pronoun is used in rapport-relevant contexts and strengthens rapport management in these situations. The conversation partners both contribute to a non-serious situation where they imagine exchanging places and living in the country of the other, learning German and Italian respectively. It does not seem to be taken seriously by either of the speakers as they laugh and do not pursue the topic any further. This seems to be beneficial for the rapport between

them as they show a positive attitude towards the other's home by collaboratively fabricating a non-serious but positive stance regarding exchanging places with each other.

I was unable to identify cases where the speakers use an us-versus-them theme based on nationality, which had been stated in previous research, with this method. While I know that there are instances in ViMELF where speakers refer to their identity in opposition to an "other" which is often America and speakers even create a joint European stance in opposition to America, I could not find any example in the data where an inclusive first-person pronoun was used in this way.

4.7. Exclusive *we* in ViMELF in comparison with extant rapport research

Exclusive *we* in previous research has been linked to rapport in that it is said to create a type of professional distance that allows speakers to create more ambiguity on who was the person in charge in delicate instances during the interaction, thereby effectively averting blame. In the analysis above, I did not find any specific results for this switching between forms of inclusive and exclusive *we*. While annotating the data, however, I observed a similar pattern: exclusive *we* often occurred in combination with an impersonal *you*. In ViMELF, exclusive *we* is predominantly used in the context of language/identity/culture and the degree of studies/education (see Table 4.8). In these instances, the speakers talk about personal issues as well as their professional and private lives, thereby to a certain degree excluding the conversation partner who is a stranger to them from their stance. At first glance, it seems counter-intuitive that these instances of *we* would somehow affect rapport. However, as mentioned in chapter 2, disclosing personal information is a rapport management strategy: opening up to another person and sharing more or less intimate details invites them to align and affiliate with the person sharing their stance. Planken (2005) mentions general use of impersonal constructions instead of the first-person singular *I,* for example. I am unaware of previous research mentioning or explaining the phenomenon of exclusive *we* being followed by this impersonal form, other than a passing note in O'Keeffe (2006: 135): "The inclusive pronouns *you* (generic) and *we* are used to be inclusive". This statement is done in the context of an analysis into markers of pseudo-intimacy in media discourse: radio presenters using generic forms to make listeners feel included in the discourse, for example. As the following analysis will show, however, the ELF speakers' use of these forms can vary quite significantly from that. See the following utterance, for example, where SB32 talks about the

different options students have when choosing subjects as part of their degree and how that affects the length of study:

(4.48) SB32: yeah **we_#0** CAN go abroad for a third language but uhm then **we_#0** have to uhm study more which is more expensive and yeah **you** study läng uh longer than expected

(01SB32FL06)

SB32 changes in the middle of her turn from an exclusive *we*, which refers to her and her fellow students, to a *you* which is neither a second-person singular nor plural one, but an impersonal *you*. Initially, this seems to mean nothing more than the fact that SB32 is not affected by this and therefore does not include herself anymore, i.e. that she does not have to study longer than normally and uses an impersonal expression to signal that. However, she initially says *we have to uhm study more*, which counters that argument. Instead, it seems like SB32 is distancing herself from the group of people taking longer to study than the standard period of study. This is considered rather undesirable in Germany and it is a personal topic that people are less likely to discuss. By switching to a more impersonal stance, SB32 distances herself from this socially dispreferred topic. This pattern continues with every instance similar to this that I came across during the annotation: the speaker first shares some personal information and then switch to a generic or impersonal *you* within the same or the next turn. The pattern is analysed in more detail below.

4.7.1. Isolating and annotating changes between exclusive *we* and impersonal *you*

To identify in how many instances in ViMELF this pattern repeats, I used SpanExtract[34] (Granieri, 2018; see chapter 3) to search for instances of exclusive *we* (*we_#0* and *WE_#0*) co-occurring with *you, your,* or *yours* (for the sake of making sure to get every last instance for this initial investigation) in the same turn or in the next turn by the same speaker (in order to capture instances where an argument is interrupted by the conversation partner). SpanExtract creates a file in which, for each hit, it returns four lines: (1) the line/turn before

[34] SpanExtract can extract the context of multiple nodes. This is useful because Python is case-sensitive and the program can therefore extract both instances of *we_#0* as well as *WE_#0* in ViMELF. The two versions exist due to the fact that loudness and stress in intonation were annotated in capital letters and cannot be transformed by the CASE conversion tool (see chapter 3).

the node (for context) by speaker A, (2) the line/turn of the node by speaker B (which may or may not contain *you, your,* and *yours*), (3) the line/turn following the node by speaker A (for context), and (4) the second line/turn following the node by speaker B, which is the first turn speaker B has after the node (which may or may not include *you, your,* and *yours*). Either line two or four has to include one or more instances of the second person marker. See the following example for how the program would return such an instance from the file:

(4.49) SF09: and can you miss classes ((ehh)) when you have to or
SB03: yeah **you** can **we_#0** can miss classes twice so
SF09: mhm
SB03: **you** have to choose wisely when **you** miss **your** classes because when **you** **you** m

(10SB03SF09)

The node is in line two. There is a *you* in the same line before it and five more (including *your*) in the next line by that same speaker (SB03), which are of interest to the analysis. The first *you* in the first line (by SF09) is not considered by the program, as it is by the other speaker. SpanExtract returned 174 instances where *we* and *you* co-occurred in the above-mentioned pattern. I then went manually through each of the 174 instances and annotated them according to what kind of *you, your,* and *yours* was used. I used similar categories as in the case of *we*, to keep the annotation simple and recognisable:

_#0 = impersonal *you*
_#1 = second-person *you* (singular or plural)
_#3 = other forms of *you* (formulaic, reported speech)
_#? = unclear cases

It was not necessary to distinguish between second-person singular and plural, because only instances with an impersonal *you* were of significance for this analysis. Other forms included formulaic *you know*, which occurred quite often, and reported speech. I then extracted the instances which contained impersonal *you* and was left with 73 cases where exclusive *we* occurs with impersonal *you* either within the same or the next turn by the same speaker. While at first this does not seem like much, it is important to remember that there are only 748 instances of exclusive *we* in total in ViMELF, which means that at least every tenth of them co-occurs with impersonal *you*. In the final 73 instances, there are 145 cases of

exclusive *we* (about a fifth of the total in ViMELF), which means that every example contains on average two exclusive *we*, which shows how frequently the pattern occurs in the data.

Table 4.10 – Instances of *we_#0* followed by *you, your* and *yours* in ViMELF identified by SpanExtract

we_#0* followed by *you, your* and *yours		
Transcript	all instances	impersonal *you*
01SB32FL06	11	7
01SB36FL10	0	0
01SB75HE01	12	5
01SB78HE04	17	10
02SB80HE06	9	3
04SB25SF01	10	5
04SB33FL31	10	6
04SB69ST05	1	1
05SB70ST07	10	4
05SB93HE19	11	2
06SB73ST14	8	6
07SB17SF10	2	1
07SB49FL33	11	0
07SB50FL34	18	6
07SB51ST01	6	5
07SB53ST03	7	2
08SB05SF05	18	7
08SB106HE03	4	2
10SB03SF09	5	1
10SB07SF07	4	0
	174	73

I repeated the analysis in SpanExtract with inclusive *we* (we_#1), but the output includes only instances with personal and other forms of *you*, usually the second person singular or formulaic *you know*. The only exception where impersonal *you* follows inclusive *we* is where the speaker references back to a statement they made earlier in the conversation, so that the *we* is technically not connected with the *you* and only occurs in its proximity:

(4.50) ST05: and that ’s the way I practice English but if I want to practice it really I ’ll have to to go abroad ((heh))

SB69: okay yeah yeah of course because uhm **we_#1** had that ex before when **we_#1** said that uh when **you** are abroad or when **you** ’re at home with **your** uh people from home **you you** tend to use **your** own **your** mother tongue **your** own language

ST05: yeah

SB69: and also when **you** ’re abroad **you** have really to ((chuckling)) be around native speakers otherwise **you** ’ll always tend to **your** uh **your** own language

(04SB69ST05)

During the manual annotation of all instances of exclusive *we* described in the beginning of this chapter, I came across another informal construction that replaces exclusive *we*:

(4.51) SB03: **we_#0** have snow yeah but it ’s not really nice snow it ’s just uhm there is snow

(10SB03SF09)

SB03 switches from exclusive *we* in *we have snow* to *there is snow*. Why this change occurs is not clear. It could be motivated by the insertion that the snow is not very nice, which then makes the speaker distance themselves by a certain degree with a more impersonal construction. On the other hand, it might also simply be a non-native speaker (NNS) mistake that the speaker becomes aware of and corrects after the insertion.

4.7.2. Qualitative analysis of changes from exclusive *we* and impersonal *you*

4.7.2.1. Impersonal *you* – referents

In a qualitative analysis of the 73 cases of exclusive *we* followed by impersonal *you*, it becomes apparent that exclusive *we* in these instances is used almost entirely when disclosing personal information, describing how things are in the speaker’s country, community, family or their university, for example. This is hardly surprising, as the majority of instances of exclusive *we* occur in the context of these topics. It seems that when sharing personal information, especially in cases where the speakers could also use a generic *you* from the beginning, the more personal *we* creates a closer link between the information given and the

person themselves. That does not explain, however, why they switch to a more impersonal construction mid-turn as in example (4.48) above, where the speaker explains how certain module and degree choices affect an individual's course of study at her university in Germany.

Upon close inspection, there are three generally distinct cases, which seem to be based on De Cock's (2016) distinction of different grades of generalisation or abstraction that the generic *you* can have: (1) the "truly" 'generic' use referring to *everyone* that extends the speaker stance and thereby either reduce their own commitment by quasi-diluting it (as part of a large amount of people) or draw everyone into their stance and assert commitment in that sense and (2) the quasi-generic reading where a speaker refers to themselves in the second person seemingly to reduce commitment. The analysed instances seem to include an additional kind of impersonal or generic *you*: one where the speaker distinctly excludes themselves from a group. In ViMELF, when the speakers use exclusive *we* followed by impersonal *you,* that *you* is either generic and includes the speaker or it is generic and markedly excludes the speaker from a group, or it can be an instance where the speaker references mostly to themselves rather than anyone else. This means that there are various degrees of genericness expressed by an impersonal *you* in ViMELF.

When speakers use impersonal *you* to refer to everyone, that usually means everyone within a more or less well-defined group of people. In example (4.52), the speaker tells her conversation partner about her parents' travel agency and which destination holidays they sell there, explaining that the Mediterranean region is very popular because of its proximity. The impersonal *you* in line four includes the speaker most obviously due to her geographical location and refers to anyone in the same (large) area:

(4.52) SF10: sounds very exotic to me and very expensive I do n't know
SB17: yeah but uhm **we_#0** also sell a lot in the Mediterranean area
SF10: mh I like the Mediterranean Sea ((chuckling))
SB17: because it 's not it 's not far **you_#0** are quickly there what is what is uhm what is with families very uhm very uhm

(07SB17SF10)

In this case the change from *we* to *you* can most likely to be attributed to the differentiation between the group of people selling the holiday and the much larger group of people including the first group who are in close proximity to the holiday destination. A generic use where the speaker excludes themselves from the *you* occurs in (4.53), where SB69 speaks about other students who are doing a Master's degree versus herself, a teaching candidate:

(4.53) ST05: no I I do n't think so uh Language Acquisition is basically teaching ENGlish so ((chuckles))
SB69: yeah but **we_#0** do n't uhm well for **our_#0** studies **we_#0** have to do with Sociolinguistics and […] such stuff but uh yeah I think **you_#0** when **you_#0** 're a MAster student in English uh **you_#0** have to attend a lot more courses about that I think **you_#0** have more experience
(04SB69ST05)

Instances where the speaker only refers to themselves in the impersonal *you* are rare in combination with (exclusive) *we*, probably because they are less likely to refer to a group and then themselves immediately after in the same context. One example where this is the case and the participant likely only refers to themselves when using impersonal *you* is the following:

(4.54) HE01: yeah because **we_#0** are just discussing tuition fees in Finland and uh like all the research been done and and like all the what 's it called like all the bench marking suggests that it would be a horrible idea to introduce tuition fees in Finland
SB75: yeah
HE01: and then there 's still some politicians that are like no no but this is a good idea and **you_#0** are just like what please listen to reason NO
(01SB75HE01)

The speaker first generally talks about the discussion of introducing tuition fees in Finland and how some politicians are continuing their effort to do so even though studies have found tuition fees to have a negative impact in Finland. HE01 expresses her disbelief and (internal) plea for those politicians to be reasonable but uses an impersonal construction with *you* instead of clearly marking it as her own a subjective attitude.

4.7.2.2. Changing from exclusive *we* to impersonal *you* – structures and functions

Going through these examples, at first it seems like there is a simple generalised pattern. Speaker B describes something from their country, family, etc. as a response to either a description or a question by speaker A of how something is (done) in their country, university, family, etc. *You* versus *us*, i.e. "that's how you do it and this is how we do it", seems to be the underlying mentality in that case. At first, this seems to stress the difference between the speakers rather than necessarily creating a joint stance and seems to explain why they then switch into a more generic, impersonal mode that lessens this stress on the perceived difference, similar to the experienced negotiators in Planken (2005). However, there are multiple instances where impersonal *you* occurs before exclusive *we* within the same context, which shows that the pattern is more complex and does not necessarily mean that the speakers decrease perceived personal distance. An example for such an instance is the following remark by Finnish speaker HE06 from Helsinki about commuting for work:

(4.55) HE06: yeah but some people do that especially I think in Finland **you_#0** might do that so **you_#0** drive between **your_#0** hometown and for example Helsinki because **we_#0** have so many jobs here

(02SB80HE06)

What seems to be "the wrong way around" compared to the above examples is the *we* occurring only towards the end of the utterance rather than before the *you*. Nevertheless, both pronouns are used in the context of HE06's description of commuting and both refer to a generic group of people, i.e. *everyone*. The Finnish speaker describes the general situation in Finland, where bigger cities like Helsinki, where she lives, offer more employment, which has people commute regularly. HE06 distances herself from that practice with impersonal *you* because she does not belong to the group of commuters (as she already lives in Helsinki and does therefore not need to commute), even though it forms part of the culture in her country. The *we*, however, just describes the general state of employment levels in the area that HE06 belongs to, which is why she includes herself in that reference. The switching around of these instances is therefore only due to the order in which HE06 chooses to present that information. This example points at a pattern which can also account for other cases in which *we* occurs after *you*. Exclusive *we* in the SpanExtract output (i.e. in the utterances where there is a change from *we* to *you*) is often in some way linked to a description of a certain state or custom and as such expressed in various forms of *we have*, cf. the examples above: *we_#0*

have so many jobs here in (4.55), *we_#0 have to do with Sociolinguistics* in (4.53) and *we_#0 have snow* in (4.51).

An analysis of the annotated SpanExtract output in AntConc stresses this pattern. A bigram analysis (min. frequency set to 5, min. range 1) shows that *we have* is the third most frequently occurring bigram in the 73 examples. In addition, the most frequent collocates of *we* in the data (5 left, 5 right, minimum collocate frequency of 5) are *got, our, also, ve* (abbreviation of *have*), *studies* and *have*. Three of these, *got, ve* and *have* are variations of (*we*) *have.* Some of these examples that follow this structure seem to be a general description of a situation or a custom with *we have*, which is then further explained in detail with *and you, where you* or *that you*:

(4.56) SB73: so uhm **we_#0** have the tradition that **you_#0** search for Easter eggs

(06SB73ST14)

(4.57) SB78: and then **we_#0** 've got more vocational schools so […] where **you_#0** already learn stuff like business administration in school

(01SB78HE04)

The above speaker, SB78 seems to use this structure particularly often. His utterances could be considered virtually parallel in their formulation:

(4.58) SB78: so **we_#0** have got one internship that y **you_#0** should uhm do it after **your_#0** first or second semester

[…]

SB78: then **we_#0** have two internships where **you_#0** just uhm sit in class and and watch the teacher and

(01SB78HE04)

In one instance that same speaker and his conversation partner both use this structure. The formulation is very prominent in their conversation, always introducing a general description of a state with *we have* (like in the above examples) and then providing further details with *and then* […] *you.*

(4.59) HE04: do those uh kids go to the same school like or how how does **your_#1** school system ((chuckling)) work like because **we_#0** have ONe school from uh like one to six […] classes o one to six and then like eight ni eight an wait ((heh)) one to six ((chuckling)) and then seven to nine is in one school and then uh **you_#0** go somewhere else

SB78: yeah uhm in Germany it 's like **we_#0** have a primary school for

HE04: mhm

SB78: kids from uh five to ten and then uhm at the end of this school **you_#0** get a recommendation

(01SB78HE04)

A closer inspection of these instances shows in more detail how exclusive *we* and *you* work together in positioning the speaker with regards to certain stances. Consider the following description of Spanish food culture, for example:

(4.60) SB53: I 'm I 'm usually not hungry r er right after I get up so yeah I hardly ever have breakfast

ST03: I think in Spain **we_#0** have breakfast very early like before **we_#0** go to work or before **we_#0** go into uni and normally have breakfast at half seven but then **we_#0** have lunch very late like two between two or four that 's average **you_#0** can go and eat in a restaurant at that time and **you_#0** will be served without any problems for instance but if **you_#0** go to a restaurant at seven o'clock and **you_#0** ask for dinner **you_#0** wo n't probably get dinner at seven in the afternoon

(07SB53ST03)

ST03 first tells her German conversation partner about general conventions regarding meal times in Spain, with an early breakfast but a late lunch. She then switches to a hypothetical case in which someone would go to a restaurant at different times and only be served during the conventional lunch and dinner hours, which are considered very late by Central and Northern Europeans like her German counterpart (notice also the phrase *at seven in the afternoon*). In the example, ST03 distances or removes herself from that hypothetical example, which describes a "behaviour" or action that people could but would not do.

Something similar also occurs in a conversation between a German and Italian pairing speaking about their countries' coffee culture and the influence of Starbucks.

(4.61) SB50: actually there 's really no point of it and an I do n't I 'm not a coffee drinker
FL34: yeah yeah
SB50: but the same is same with Starbucks **you_#0** got Germany is Germany is also they **we_#0** got **we_#0** got so nice coffee uh uh you_#3 know co uh c uh w **we_#0** call them even cafés where **you_#0** just where **you_#0** just go in there and have a have a coffee and maybe maybe something in uhm you_#3 know like a cake or whatever and uhm and **we_#0** got lots of them and they 're good and uh there 's no reason for uh ridiculously expensive uh uh Starbucks COffees in

(07SB50FL34)

German SB50 describes traditional German cafés where they have good coffee, initially using *you got*, then the more impersonal construction *Germany is* and *they* and then switching to *we got*. He adds the brief hypothetical example of someone going there and ordering coffee and cake: *you just go in there and have a have a coffee*. He then changes back to *we* in a description of those cafés again: *we got lots of them and they 're good*, to conclude that Starbucks, which is far too expensive anyway in their opinion, is not needed. Rather than distancing himself from this hypothetical example because he disagrees with it, here it seems like he himself generally does not go to cafés for coffee and cake. In fact, in the turn before this utterance, SB50 says *I 'm not a coffee drinker*. Instead of excluding himself from the hypothetical example, he includes himself in it by creating ambiguity as to who is the referent. Telling a story vicariously, however, makes it less convincing, less appealing. The use of an impersonal *you* therefore makes the referent more equivocal, the example seems more immediate and compelling and thereby strengthens SB50's argument. SB50 throughout this exchange tries to align with their Italian conversation partner's stance on coffee and Starbucks. As a non-coffee drinker, however, his alignment with FL34's stance needs some sort of justification, which is given by creating referential ambiguity that includes the speaker in their hypothetical example.

Another "distancing" function of changing from exclusive *we* to impersonal *you* is visible in example (4.54) above, where speakers SB75 and HE01 talk about the introduction of tuition

fees in Finland. Even though this example is not introduced with *we have,* HE01 uses a similar way of describing the state of a situation (*we_#0 are just discussing tuition fees in Finland;* 01SB75HE01). HE01 first describes the general situation, telling her German conversation partner that the bench marking, i.e. research has shown this to have negative effects. She then proceeds to express her frustration over politicians who in spite of having this information are planning to go ahead with the introduction of tuition fees, saying *and you_#0 are just like what please listen to reason NO* (01SB75HE01). As explained above, in this example, the impersonal *you* refers to HE01 herself rather than a larger group of people, as she expressed her own thoughts and subjective opinion. HE01 makes it seem like this is a general public opinion rather than a subjective one, even though it clearly can only refer to the speaker. By shifting the responsibility for this statement and the subjective opinion to an indefinite other, quasi-diluting it, she softens and mitigates a potentially delicate stance which makes it easier for her conversation partner to agree and align.

SB33 in the following example employs a very similar strategy. Her Italian conversation partner asks her whether there are any dead languages in Germany, similar to Latin in Italy. SB33 replies that she cannot think of any as modern German developed out of *Old German*, (referring to Old High German). Throughout her answer, she switches back and forth between pronouns:

(4.62) FL31: do you_#1 have some dead language in Germany you_#3 know

SB33: UH I I ca n't really think of dead no it 's it 's I mean it was always German I mean of course there is the Old German which is in some part different from what **we_#0** speak now but **you_#0** ca n't I I I would n't classify it as an separate language I think it 's it 's like **you_#0** could compare it to the Old English Middle English and Modern English you_#3 know and that 's something that **we_#0** had in German as well and I think my mother uhm she gave me two books from her childhood and I tried to read them but they are written in uh Old German and so uh I I could n't even read ((heh))

FL31: ((thh))

SB33: what was standing there but uhm no I think **we_#0 we_#0** do n't really have like other languages apart from from German **we_#0** of course **we_#0** have **our_#0** dialects and **our_#0** varieties

(04SB33FL31)

SB33's answer is a little longer. She seems to still think about the formation of the explanation while she is already talking. There are break-offs (e.g. *no*), false starts (e.g. *it's it's* twice) and pragmatic markers (e.g. *I mean* twice, *I think* several times). At first, she states a general fact (using exclusive *we*), but when she switches to what she seems to consider more of a subjective statement, she first switches to the impersonal pronoun *you* and then interrupts herself and changes to first-person pronoun *I*. SB33 in this case clearly marks that this is her personal opinion, in the same way as pragmatic markers have been shown to be used in order to pre-empt possible criticism towards the validity of the statement. Obviously, language classification is not a matter of opinion, which is why in this instance SB33 is expressing that she is not necessarily sure whether her knowledge of the matter is correct. She then switches back to impersonal *you* in *you could compare it to* but prefaces it with *I think,* which further marks the knowledge she presents as somewhat uncertain, while simultaneously doing so in a more indirect, implied manner. In the last part of that statement, she then switches back to exclusive *we* for *that's something that we had* (speaking about Old High German), which is a well-known fact and might explain why she opts for the more self-assured style that clearly includes herself in the stance. The ensuing telling of a personal experience involving her family then continues using *we*, followed by a conclusion and the description of the state of the German language also with *we have.* This latter part follows the already established structure above. The middle part, where SB33 switches between pronouns, is an excellent example of trying to position herself and mitigate possible criticism, while also making her uncertain knowledge sound more generalised and less subjective.

In another much shorter example, the Finnish participant's rephrasing of the cost of a bottle of wine in Finland seems to indicate a similar subtle way of distancing herself from something subjective too. She starts out with a general description using we, but changes it to an assumption which is formulated in a more impersonal way:

(4.63) HE19: uh **we_#0** pay like for a good bottle **you_#0** could maybe get one for ten euros

(05SB93HE19)

This strategy is also successfully employed by SB50, who tells his Italian counterpart about how there is a German stereotype that confuses the culture of the German state of Bavaria with that of the whole of Germany:

(4.64) SB50: I mean most of most of the stereotypes about Germany is probably a stereotype about Bavarian people because uh Bavaria the the southwest of Germany there even for **us_#0** Germans for for **us_#0** other Germans they ’re still s s they ’re they ’re still a little bit weird and they talk in an accent that **we_#0** do n’t even understand

FL34: ((laughs))

SB50: and uh ((chuckles)) but but it ’s used to be that that uh or it it it went whenever however it did but when **you_#0** go to the STATES and and **you_#0** ask what do **you_#0** think a typical German GUY looks like and they say yeah he got his his you_#3 know his leather leather pants the lederhosen and and you_#3 know

(07SB50FL34)

SB50 clearly distances himself from that stereotype. He creates a stance of *us other Germans,* which he clearly distinguishes from *Bavarian people* who are *still a little bit weird* and who *us other Germans* cannot even properly understand, which is quite a delicate statement to make. He justifies this with a story, which, similar to the hypothetical example of going to a German café by the same speaker in example (4.61) above removes the vicarious quality of the story and gives it a more genuine, important character. In addition, the speaker seems less obviously subjective, as he tells the story as if it happened to him and therefore “justifies” his frustration over the false stereotype, that led him to make the delicate statement. He thereby makes it easier for the conversation partner to align with his attitude.

Other than the speaker distancing themselves from subjective opinions and attitudes, they can also distance themselves from a particular part of their statement which does not apply to them specifically. In the following two examples, Spanish ST01 from the region of Galicia tells his German conversation partner about two traditional Galician dishes, octopus (4.65) and filloas (4.66).

(4.65) ST01: **we_#0** do eat ocTOpus with potatoes **you_#0** put uh **you_#0** boil the t ocTOpus and then when uh well **you_#0** cut it in

(07SB51ST01)

(4.66) ST01: and well th **we_#0** have I do n't know well **we_#0** have for example in the kind o in DEsserts **we_#0** have filloas which is a special kind of crêpes
SB51: mhm
ST01: like the French crêpes but uh **you_#0** a **you_#0** add a s an additional INgredient with is uh pig 's blood ((ehh))

(07SB51ST01)

In both cases, the speaker switches from *we* in the general description to impersonal *you* in the part where he elaborates on how the dish is prepared. In this instance, the speaker indirectly excludes himself from the cooking process. Similar to the German café example above, this is likely done to not exclude the speaker fully from the reference, as it is part of their culture, even though they might not do it themselves. The ambiguous referent therefore makes the example more genuine and palpable.

Distancing themselves from part of a statement can, however, also occur with a different motivation, like in example (4.67), where the speaker switches from *we* to *you* and back again when describing the possible choices students in her degree have when it comes to the scheduling of individual classes:

(4.67) SB32: **we_#0** have a kind of of uhm courses **we_#0** have to do during studies so uhm uh but **we_#0** can choose WHEN to do them so if **you_#0** want to do them in SECond semester or in fifth semester or SIXTH semester that 's uhm that 's uhm what **we_#0** can choose and uhm YEAH **we_#0** have to for sure **we_#0** have to do exams which are usually end of JANUARY or February and uhm end of July and August

(01SB32FL06)

At first, SB32 gives a general description of being able to choose at which point in the degree to take a seminar and then she "distances" herself from some of the specific options, i.e. of doing the course in second, fifth or sixth semester. She thereby does not openly criticise the decision to take classes at that point in the degree of studies but does so in a very subtle way. While that does not necessarily affect her conversation partner who studies at a different university and can therefore not feel criticised by SB32's utterance, this strategy also makes SB32 appear less critical and amicable in general, as the criticism is veiled. SB32 therefore

decreases the commitment to the disagreement and softens the impact of her statement, which has a generally positive effect on rapport.

HE03 in the following example uses a similar strategy to accept a compliment in a humble manner, without disagreeing with the person either. SB106 compliments HE03's English, when HE03 explains that Finland usually uses subtitles rather than dubbing TV shows, which is why the Finnish are exposed to English to a higher degree in their day-to-day lives:

(4.68) SB106: so that 's why are you_#1 talking English so nice
HE03: oh well I guess that 's one of the reasons yeah ((heh)) **we_#0** 've also been travelling very much with my parents since I was like a very very small kid so I 've been very influenced there also during **our_#0** trips to the English language and it 's very nice and very useful when **you_#0** 're like very small kid that **you_#0** actually have to speak English and stuff
(08SB106HE03)

HE03 indirectly accepts the compliment, even though he hedges it, agreeing that Finnish TV seems to be one of the reasons, and offers an additional reason for his level of English, as if to justify himself. He tells SB106 about a personal experience, he and his family using English while travelling, and then as if to downplay this by slightly distancing himself from it, he switches to impersonal *you.* In generalising the experience, HE03 indirectly accepts the compliment, but does so without seeming boastful.

This section has been introduced with example (4.48), repeated below, to illustrate utterances where the change from exclusive *we* to impersonal *you* initially seemed to have no apparent function. In the example, speaker SB32 explains how certain module and degree choices affect an individual's course of study at her university in Germany (every language studied requires the students to go abroad to a country where that language is spoken).

(4.48) SB32: yeah **we_#0** CAN go abroad for a third language but uhm then **we_#0** have to uhm study more which is more expensive and yeah **you_#0** study läng uh longer than expected
(01SB32FL06; now including annotation of *you*)

Throughout the section we saw that there are three different meanings that impersonal *you* can take on: it can be "truly" generic and refer to a group, which includes the speaker, it can refer to a group with the speaker excluding themself from it, or it can stand for the speaker referencing only themself. In the case of example (4.48), the speaker excludes themself with impersonal *you* from the group of people who take the option of a third language and therefore prolong their studies. The structure is slightly different from the very frequently occurring *we have* followed by *and you*, *where you* or *that you*, as those cases mostly occur when describing a general state of a situation or a custom, which is then further explained in detail with the various forms of impersonal *you*. In the case of example (4.48), this is slightly different, as it is a generic description of how the system works followed by a hypothetical example (of actually taking the course and thereby prolonging her studies) that the speaker distances herself from. This is similar to example (4.60), where the Spanish speaker distances or removes herself from a hypothetical example that describes behaviour at different mealtimes she disagrees with. Well aware that her German conversation partner could potentially adhere to different mealtimes as a Central European, she veils the criticism and makes the example sound more general and generic, but in a polite, non-obvious way. Another hypothetical example is used by the German speaker in (4.61) who uses it to make a point in his and his conversation partner's jointly constructed argument against Starbucks and for independent cafés. Himself a non-coffee drinker, he uses the hypothetical description of a situation in which he includes himself as a justification for why he aligns with his conversation partner's stance. The ambiguity in reference that is inherent to impersonal *you* is thereby assisting him in making his example less hypothetical and more personal. In a similar utterance in example (4.64), the same speaker uses that strategy to lessen the severity of a potentially delicate or offensive statement he made by including himself in a hypothetical example that is supposed to justify his frustration which caused the statement. The speaker therefore seems less obviously subjective and critical and mitigates the potentially delicate utterance.

The ambiguity of impersonal *you* is also taken advantage of in other examples like (4.54) where the speaker includes herself in a larger group of people to make her subjective opinion sound more like one of the general public. They shift the responsibility for this statement and the subjective opinion to an indefinite other, which means that she softens and mitigates a potentially delicate utterance, and which makes it easier for her conversation partner to agree

and align with her. The same also occurs in examples like (4.62) and (4.63) where speakers display forms of uncertain knowledge and make assumptions.

When speakers distance themselves from a particular part of their statement, this usually seemed the case if it did not apply to them specifically, as in the examples of the preparation of traditional foods in (4.64) and (4.65), where the ambiguous referent makes the example more genuine and palpable. Speakers also distance themselves from parts of an utterance that they disagree with but without seeming too openly critical. As example (4.67) shows, where the speaker distances herself from specific course scheduling choices she enumerates, she decreases the commitment to her disagreement and softens the impact of her statement, which makes her seem less critical and more likable. This function of appearing more likable is also employed in the last example, (4.68), where the Finnish speaker accepts a compliment in a humble way by distancing himself from it, generalising his experience and downplaying his own skills.

4.8. Conclusion

This chapter has had a close look at how *we* and other first-person plural pronouns (as well as the switch between *we* and *you*) affect rapport in Skype conversations between unacquainted English as a Lingua Franca speakers. It addresses the three research questions in several ways. The first of these is concerned with the linguistic strategies and features used when managing rapport, which has already been answered in parts by chapter 2. This present chapter has gone into detail on how pronoun choices affect stance and ultimately rapport.

In comparison with extant rapport research, in ViMELF, inclusive *we* follows mostly what has been described previously. In the explicit context of positioning and rapport, inclusive *we* allows a speaker to draw their conversation partner into their stance and thereby create a common ground, which is an assertive way of managing rapport. Often, this happens in subtle ways during the parts where the speakers organise the conversation, when they speak about the task they are jointly working on. In these instances, working together and creating a joint stance means that they create a shared responsibility towards successfully completing the task. There are many examples where a speaker aligns very transparently and non-ambiguously with another speaker's stance or includes the other speaker in theirs. When a speaker includes their conversation partner in their stance in a direct, assertive way with an

utterance like *we're on the same page*, this openly points out similarities and thereby aligns two pre-existing stances. That action is, however, often in some way mitigated or hedged in order to not be too direct. It can become problematic if the conversation partner does not wish for stances to be aligned, does not consider it appropriate or feels like their opinion is misunderstood. If the speaker on the other hand knows the other's position because it had been mentioned before in conversation, hedging does not seem to be considered necessary. Mitigating the inclusion of the conversation partner into the speaker's stance and thereby lessening the impact or severity of the creation of a joint stance can increase rapport by averting a potentially delicate situation. If the conversation partner agrees and aligns, it further increases rapport between the speakers. Especially when the situation is potentially delicate, a mix of these functions than can be seen in the data.

Speakers in ViMELF do not usually switch between inclusive and exclusive forms of *we*. In the data there is a change from exclusive *we* to impersonal *you* that affects rapport, which is a frequent pattern in the corpus. A qualitative analysis has shown how the ViMELF speakers switch between personalised and depersonalised stances by changing from *we* to *you* in their utterances. They take advantage of impersonal *you*'s ambiguity, either including or excluding themselves from a reference. If speaker exclude themselves from the group denoted by *you*, it is because they disagree with something that group says, does, or stands for; or because they simply do not consider themselves part of that group. In those cases, *we have* often introduces a general description of something, like a state, a situation or a custom and the second part of the utterance containing *you* is the part where they distance themselves from something specific or detailed, like a hypothetical example or an action, state, etc. they disagree with. When speakers include themselves in a group, this can have two functions. If they include themselves in a group they would normally not belong to, it can make their example more personal, more convincing or compelling in the case of for instance a hypothetical example when they are making a point. On the other hand, they can make their utterance more generic and seemingly objective if they broaden and soften a subjective stance to include more people. Thus, in several ways, switching from exclusive *we* to impersonal *you* allows speakers to manage rapport by repositioning themselves, making them appear less problematic or critical and more knowledgeable or amicable, and enabling their conversation partner to align and agree with them more easily.

This chapter has also addressed research questions two and three. Regarding the appropriation of corpus linguistic methods to research pragmatic features, in general, it can be said that the annotation framework I developed for this chapter is useful in this sense. The individual sets (degree of solidarity, context and kind of *you*) are exhaustive in their classification for the specific dataset and can be identified by the programs and tools I use for further data analysis like AntConc, Excel and SpanExtract. For the following chapters, this means that I continue to apply these methods and further develop them where appropriate. For example, the analysis of pragmatic markers in chapter 5 builds on the annotation system for pronouns and is added to the transcript cumulatively. The analysis of laughter in chapter 6 uses SpanExtract and Excel to great effect. All of this together enables the analysis of co-occurrences of these features in chapter 7.

This chapter has also shown that the data is shaped in several ways by the context in which it occurs. The degree of solidarity of each of the first-person plural pronouns reflects the kind of conversations that form ViMELF: about two thirds of all the instances are exclusive. The speakers are unacquainted and therefore have less common ground upon which they could immediately draw to build rapport with their conversation partner. They therefore base their self-presentation and identification on topics of like language, food, traditions and other characteristics of their culture, as well as about their universities, classes, degrees, and their lives as university students, i.e. the most frequently spoken about topics in the context of *we* and more specifically exclusive *we*. Not surprisingly, inclusive *we* does not occur in the context of disclosing private, personal information, because the speakers do not know each other and therefore have no shared personal history they could possibly refer to with inclusive *we*.

In addition, it is possible to pinpoint places in the transcript where rapport is not necessarily built solely by the pronouns themselves but other means (like the content of the message). That is due to the fact that the inclusive first-person pronouns are used in rapport-relevant places, for example, and will therefore be of importance even if they are not the most salient linguistic feature responsible for rapport in this instance. Many of the qualitative examples above have included multiple strategies working together. In the context of this thesis I have pointed out laughter as well as pragmatic marker in those instances. These pragmatic features are investigated more closely in the following chapters.

Chapter 5: Pragmatic markers

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the effect of first and second-person plural pronouns on stance and rapport management. The present chapter moves up to a different linguistic level: from single words to collocations, in particular pragmatic markers. These are *pronoun + predicate* collocations which mark evidentiality and epistemic stance and are therefore also referred to as epistemic personalised stance markers (Kärkkäinen, 2003; 2007). As stated in chapter 2, they convey "the speaker's commitment to the truth of his or her message, the speaker's source of knowledge, and the speaker's certainty about his or her utterance" (Ohta, 1991: 225). The category I investigate further in this chapter is a set of *I + epistemic verb* constructions: *I think, I mean, I guess* and *I don't know* (see section 3.3.4.2 for my reasons for choosing these specific forms). I describe how the pragmatic markers are used by the unacquainted ELF speakers in ViMELF and compare them to extant research on native speaker use as well as the limited amount of non-native speaker findings available. Building on findings and tools from chapter 4, I investigate co-occurrences of pragmatic markers in detail, which had so far not received a great deal of attention in extant research. This chapter addresses each of the three main research questions by establishing how conversational positioning in ViMELF is affected by pragmatic markers, how the context (conversation setting, speaker background, etc.) affects the use of the markers and how corpus analytic methods can be appropriated to aid the analysis of this pragmatic feature.

5.2. Pronoun + epistemic verb collocations as pragmatic markers

This section focuses on three pragmatic markers, *I think, I mean* and *I guess.* I discuss each of them individually, focussing the analysis on how often the speakers in ViMELF use them and the function that these markers have in the corpus. I explained in 3.3.4.2 that *I don't know* is discussed in a separate section (5.3) due to its different form (negation) which results in the core meaning of *I don't know* (lack of knowledge) expressing almost the opposite of that of the group of pragmatic markers that is analysed in this section.

5.2.1. *I think*

The first pragmatic marker in this group of *pronoun + epistemic verb* collocations that I analyse is *I think*. It is the most frequently occurring pragmatic marker of this kind in ViMELF and the most widely researched marker of all of them.

5.2.1.1. Use of *I think* in ViMELF

I think occurs 674 times in ViMELF. Table 5.1 shows the distribution of *I think* across all conversations. In general, there are 5.92 occurrences of *I think* per 1000 words in ViMELF.

Table 5.1 – Frequencies of *I think* in ViMELF (absolute and relative as a proportion of occurrences per transcript per 1000 words)

I think			
	word count transcript	absolute frequency	relative frequency
01SB32FL06	5256	21	4.00
01SB36FL10	5162	27	5.23
01SB75HE01	6830	28	4.10
01SB78HE04	5572	38	6.82
02SB80HE06	5733	43	7.50
04SB25SF01	5906	17	2.88
04SB33FL31	6440	35	5.43
04SB69ST05	4456	56	12.57
05SB70ST07	4569	46	10.07
05SB93HE19	7225	69	9.55
06SB73ST14	5251	39	7.43
07SB17SF10	6847	24	3.51
07SB49FL33	4591	21	4.57
07SB50FL34	7257	9	1.24
07SB51ST01	5126	24	4.68
07SB53ST03	4793	40	8.35
08SB05SF05	5881	37	6.29
08SB106HE03	6342	53	8.36
10SB03SF09	3732	10	2.68
10SB07SF07	6917	37	5.35
Total	113886	674	5.92

When splitting this into separate conversations, however, the numbers vary significantly. In conversation 04SB69ST05, there are 12.57 occurrences of *I think* per 1000 words of

conversation, while in 07SB50FL34 there are only 1.24 instances per 1000 words of conversation. Compared to the average of all ViMELF conversations, *I think* is significantly overused in 04SB69ST05 and 05SB93HE19 ($p < 0.001$, accounting for the individual word count of each transcript), while it is significantly underused in 04SB25SF01 and 07SB50FL34 ($p > 0.001$, accounting for the individual word count of each transcript).

In a similar way to the first-person plural pronouns in the previous chapter, I establish a tag set which differentiated between *I think* as a pragmatic marker (_#2 as in *I think_#2*) and a non-pragmatic marker (_#3 as in *I think_#3*). All non-pragmatic marker instances such as the ones where *I think* is in the main clause and expresses a process of cogitation like in *I think about* or as a verbal routine in *I think so* have been filtered out. While the latter is a very transparent case of stance-marking though showing agreement, it does not show the structure of a pragmatic marker, either in complement clause or comment clause constructions (cf. e.g. Kärkkäinen, 2003; Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen, 2009; Baumgarten and House, 2010). To determine how many instances of *I think* as a pragmatic marker there are in ViMELF, I identified instances of *I think so* and other main clause constructions. As a limitation and in order to not make any assumptions, I only included cases where the participants explicitly say *I think*, i.e. when both the pronoun and verb were uttered. There are 28 cases of *I think so* in the data, spread relatively evenly across conversations, see the following utterance, for example:

(5.1) SB73: yeah **I think_#3 so**

(06SB73ST14)

There are only three other instances where *I think* is not used as a pragmatic marker. In the following example (5.2), German speaker SB51 does not seem to properly understand her Spanish conversation partner's description of a typical dish and asks for clarification. She is probably confused about the way he pronounces the word *octopus* (with a stress on the second syllable, hence the capital letters[35]):

[35] As mentioned in previous chapters, stress and loudness are indicated by capitalisation. This feature is not removed by any of the conversion programs. In this example, speaker ST01 stresses the word *octopus* on the second instead of the first syllable. This non-standard pronunciation is marked by capitalising the stressed syllable. SB51 in the next turn then stresses the word normally but pronounces the second and third syllables more loudly, which are both again capitalised. In turn five, ST01 then uses the standard stress/pronunciation.

(5.2) ST01: we_#0 do eat ocTOpus with potatoes you put uh you boil the t ocTOpus and then when uh well you cut it in
SB51: ocTOPUS is that **what I think_#3**
ST01: mh
SB51: is that **what I think_#3**
ST01: yeah octopus yes uh
SB51: yeah
ST01: the the animal
SB51: the animal from the sea ((laughs))

(07SB51ST01)

SB51 asks her conversation partner *ocTOPUS is that what I think* (it is) and repeats her question, which is then affirmed by ST01 and clarified further by both speakers. Similarly, in conversation 05SB70ST07, the Spanish speaker says *this is what I think*, which is another construction with *what* that does not function as a pragmatic marker.

That means that, in total, there are 31 cases of non-pragmatic uses of *I think* in the data, or 4.6 per cent of all instances of *I think*. The remaining 95.4 per cent, 643 occurrences, are pragmatic markers, as can be seen in Table 5.2. It shows the absolute and relative frequencies of *I think* in each conversation of ViMELF, with the relative frequencies showing the proportion of occurrences of *I think* in each conversation in relation to the word count of each individual transcript (per 1000 words). The highest number of pragmatic uses is in conversation 04SB69ST05, with 12.12 instances per 1000 words of the individual transcript and the lowest is 07SB50FL34 with 1.24 occurrences.

These numbers mirror the results of the general frequencies of all occurrences of *I think* as reported above, because the proportion of non-pragmatic uses is so low that is has relatively little influence on the overall distribution. There are three conversations which do not have any instances of non-pragmatic uses of *I think* at all. The highest number of occurrences of non-pragmatic *I think* per 1000 words is in 06SB73ST14 with 0.95, and the lowest non-zero value is in 10SB07SF07 with 0.14, even though several conversations show results barely above that relative frequency.

Table 5.2 – Frequencies of *I think* as a pragmatic marker and in its non-pragmatic meaning in ViMELF (absolute and relative as a proportion of occurrences per transcript per 1000 words)

I think	absolute		relative	
	pragmatic	non-pragmatic	pragmatic	non-pragmatic
01SB32FL06	19	2	3.61	0.38
01SB36FL10	25	2	4.84	0.39
01SB75HE01	28	0	4.10	0.00
01SB78HE04	37	1	6.64	0.18
02SB80HE06	42	1	7.33	0.17
04SB25SF01	17	0	2.88	0.00
04SB33FL31	33	2	5.12	0.31
04SB69ST05	54	2	12.12	0.45
05SB70ST07	43	3	9.41	0.66
05SB93HE19	67	2	9.27	0.28
06SB73ST14	34	5	6.47	0.95
07SB17SF10	23	1	3.36	0.15
07SB49FL33	20	1	4.36	0.22
07SB50FL34	9	0	1.24	0.00
07SB51ST01	21	3	4.10	0.59
07SB53ST03	39	1	8.14	0.21
08SB05SF05	36	1	6.12	0.17
08SB106HE03	51	2	8.04	0.32
10SB03SF09	9	1	2.41	0.27
10SB07SF07	36	1	5.20	0.14
Total	643	31	5.65	0.27

I annotate the speaker for each occurrence of *I think*, pragmatic and non-pragmatic, in order to see how individual speakers differ in their use. 21 speakers do not use the non-pragmatic version of *I think* at all, while all use the pragmatic marker to some extent, with the numbers varying highly between the individual speakers. On average, speakers use 5.92 instances of *I think* per 1000 words, with 5.65 occurrences of pragmatic *I think* and 0.27 of the non-pragmatic one. ST05 stands out significantly due to her overuse of the pragmatic marker, 16.39 per 1000 words of that speaker and no use of non-pragmatic *I think*. The lowest number of occurrences of pragmatic *I think* by a single speaker is SB50 who only uses 0.25 *I think* per 1000 words. Individual variability between the speakers is quite high, but for a number of conversations, there seems to be a moderate level of accommodation between them. This is analysed further in section 5.5 below.

5.2.1.2. Functions of *I think* in ViMELF

As a pragmatic marker, *I think* can occur anywhere in an utterance. The structures and pragmatic and interactional functions of *I think* have been described in previous literature, with the most exhaustive study so far done in Kärkkäinen (2003). She distinguishes between pre-positioned and post-positioned instances of *I think,* based on where they are in an intonation unit and whether *I think* refers to the preceding or following discourse (noun phrase, clause or parts thereof). As ViMELF transcripts are available both with segmentations into turns and intonation units, it is possible in this analysis to corroborate Kärkkäinen's (2003) categorisation of *I think* in spoken discourse. Pre-positioned *I think* initiates instances where the speaker introduces a personal perspective and a way of committing to as well as signalling involvement with a topic. In the following, SB36 makes the point that it is necessary to go abroad and come in contact with a language in its natural environment in order to fully learn it.

(5.3) SB36: I mean if you if you JUSt uhm if you just study it in an in in university at an academic context you you do n't REAlly you do n't REAlly uh learn the language at uh
FL10: yes
SB36: at the highest level basically
FL10: yeah **I think_#2** it 's true especially for speaking

(01SB36FL10)

FL10 agrees with his conversation partner in the second turn and in the fourth turn then contributes his personal perspective by stressing how this in his opinion affects particularly the oral skills of a language learner. He uses the *I think* to introduce his part of the argument, adding to the original one with his own perspective. This use of *I think* at the beginning of an utterance or clause occurs very often in the data. Complete topic changes are rarely introduced this way, cf. the following example where FL33 changes the topic, not only with *I think* but with a combination of markers:

(5.4) FL33: anyway **I think_#2** i I do n't kn we_#1 have reached our_#1 half an hour

(07SB49FL33)

The speaker combines the pragmatic markers *I think* and *I don't know* (even though the latter one is interrupted), as well as a clear marker for topic changes, the adverb *anyway*. *I think* is

strictly speaking not necessary in this context, as either of the other two markers used perform the same function, but their combination intensifies the meaning as they support and add to each other. Slight topic shifts are also frequently realised with *I think* in combination with other markers in the ViMELF. In example (5.5), ST03 and SB53 chat about different diets, in particular vegetarianism. ST03 explains her dietary choices and says that vegan replacements for animal products are rather expensive in Spain, which leads to the following exchange:

(5.5) ST03: but yeah
SB53: yeah **I think_#2** food in general is pretty cheap in Germany
(07SB53ST03)

ST03's *but yeah* opens the floor to SB53, who takes the floor, agreeing with ST03 (*yeah*), but then shifts the topic to general food prices in Germany. In other cases, mid-statement yet still pre-positioned to the stretch of discourse it concerns, *I think* is used by ViMELF speakers as described in earlier literature as a means of on-line planning:

(5.6) SB36: whe did you when did you STArt learning English did you have it in school or did you really learn it at university
FL10: well uhm I started in **I think_#2** elementary school
(01SB36FL10)

Instances like in (5.6) occur very frequently in ViMELF. The speaker uses *I think* as a hedge before uttering a particular phrase or clause, which is in the example above also the information that the conversation partner, SB36, specifically asks for in line one. SB36 prompts his conversation partner to pay close attention to the specific part of the utterance that they inquire about. This commits the conversation partner to the truth, i.e. it makes them account for the epistemic value of their utterance. Those instances can also spread across several utterances, as in (5.7) below, where SB36 prompts FL10 to talk about the length of their stay abroad during their studies. This time, the prompt is not in the form of a question but an openly phrased statement that requires a yes or no answer with the possibility to elaborate:

(5.7) SB36: and would n't have a problem with living there permanently so but you guys you do n't HAVE to uh spend a semester abroad in your studies
FL10: NO uh we_#0 do n't but there 's a lot of uh I do n't know about Italy

SB36: yeah

FL10: but there 's a lot of schools in like uh England […] for instance where you HAVE to spend **I think_#2** one year abroad

(01SB36FL10)

Those instances do not necessarily have to be prompted though. There are numerous examples where the speakers use *I think* during on-line planning when they are not prompted by their conversation partner to focus on that part of their utterance, as in (5.8). The conversation partners are both in the third year of their studies, which for SB36, the German speaker, is the last year of his bachelor's degree. His Italian counterpart, FL10, in the example below talks about how he is also in his last year of studies but has the possibility to continue for another two years (which corresponds to a master's degree). This additional time on the degree would focus on either translation studies or interpreting:

(5.8) FL10: yeah it 's yeah that 's same for me pretty much unless I decide to do the third there 's two other years

SB36: yeah

FL10: like if you want uhm one is on **I think_#2** interpretation

(01SB36FL10)

Note that in the example above FL10 uses the obsolete form of interpreting, *interpretation*. The pragmatic marker *I think* occurs without a prompt by SB36, who merely speaks about finishing his studies at the time. In this instance, FL10 uses *I think* in its hedging, on-line planning function while searching for the word.

A third function of *I think* is to indicate the completion of a particular stretch of discourse or topic and the expectation for the conversation partner to speak, i.e. seeking recipient uptake. As Kärkkäinen (2003) points out, the scope of this pragmatic marker varies widely between an individual noun phrase and a sequence of utterances. In the following example, FL06 uses *I think* twice, at the end of the first clause and to conclude the whole turn.

(5.9) FL06: ah yeah here is more or less the same **I think_#2** but uh yeah here we_#0 have uh a really fixed uh table so uhm yes can you so we_#0 uh we_#0 're forced to do some courses and we_#0 ca n't uh we_#0 HAVE uh we_#0 have no freedom at all **I think_#2**

SB32: ((heh))

FL06: ((hehe))

SB32: no we_#0 can choose this uhm

(01SB32FL06)

SB32 initially does not take the floor, both chuckle, thereby giving each other the chance to take the floor then SB32 replies. This use of *I think* contributes to rapport on an interactional level, by organising discourse and giving the interaction a structure that is understood without the speakers having to use more explicit signals.

As a marker of epistemic stance, *I think* is a significant tool for rapport management. Kärkkäinen (2003: 172) points out repeatedly that *I think* can epistemically encode anything from absolute certainty to absolute uncertainty, while there is not necessarily a strong link between its structure (in pre- or post-position) and its epistemic value. This multifunctionality has also been discussed in detail by Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen (2009: 228), who offer several philosophical and linguistic approaches to interpreting this multifunctionality. Where on the scale between certainty and uncertainty *I think* places a stretch of discourse is not always clear in Kärkkäinen's data. I intended to corroborate Kärkkäinen's (2003) claim that the level of certainty of the pragmatic maker *I think* could not always be clearly determined by annotating each instance of *I think* according to its epistemic encoding. In a trial, I attempted to annotate additional functions of the pragmatic marker regarding its level of certainty[36]. If the speaker committed to their utterance, I chose "increase certainty". This included cases where the speaker made a clear, certain statement about something, like *I think A is B.* If they, however, guessed, I chose "decreasing certainty", because they reduced the commitment to or responsibility for the utterance's epistemic value. Another way of doing this was by softening a statement which could be conceived of as too opinionated or harsh. The categories were intentionally kept quite broad to see whether they would fit the majority of cases. I annotated several conversations and then checked the annotations a second time, to see whether my judgements would still hold up after having tagged a greater number of instances. This was, however, not the case. The consistency varied highly across conversations and it was difficult to determine the epistemic value of some markers. Consider

[36] I added additional tags to the annotation *I think_#2* with either a plus symbol for increased certainty and a minus symbol for decreased certainty, i.e. *I think_#2+* or *I think_#2-*.

(5.10), for example. The Italian speaker FL06 asks SB32 who is studying Italian whether she considers Italian grammar to be difficult, which SB32 answers in the following way:

(5.10) FL06: ((ehh)) yeah so do you think uh do you think uh Italian grammar is difficult
SB32: it 's mh yeah it 's it 's okay uhm **I think_#2** it 's okay so I **I** uhm **think_#2** French is much more difficult than Italian also with the pronunciation and
FL06: yeah pronunciation is shit ((chuckles))

(01SB32FL06)

The yes/no question from the Italian speaker is answered in a somewhat non-committal way by SB32 at first. From this lexical version of the transcript, it is not immediately clear whether the first *I think* is post- or pre-positioned regarding the surrounding *it's okay*, even though prosodically the pre-position would be more logical. After checking the pragmatic transcript, this could be confirmed. The speaker starts their utterance with *it's* three times in *it's […] it's it's okay*, inserts a hesitation marker and then repeats the utterance by introducing it with *I think.* This could both be interpreted as doubling down on the statement *it's okay* as well as a sign of uncertainty about the evaluation, where SB32 softens the statement by marking its subjectivity. Choosing which of the two opposing readings is the correct one is almost impossible. This is the strength of the pragmatic markers. Their ambiguity makes them a strong rapport feature. In the second part of the utterance, SB32 strengthens his commitment to the first part, by saying that French is more difficult than Italian, which is why the second *I think* seems to show relative certainty and assertiveness, as the speaker is decreasing ambiguity in their statement.

In other examples, it is unclear what epistemic function the pragmatic marker *I think* has at all. In example (5.11), the structural function of *I think* is clear; SB32's conversation partner asks her about the weather in Germany, to which SB32 replies telling him about the rain and cold in Germany. FL06 responds by telling her about the low temperatures in Italy. SB32 then offers an estimate of the temperature in Germany, using *I think* to make a point of her own and add to the topic:

(5.11) SB32: ((LAUGHS)) **I think_#2** it 's around eight degrees seven to eight degrees here

(01SB32FL06)

On an epistemic level, the speaker marks the utterance as subjective, even though using *I think* in this example is technically not necessary to mark uncertainty about the truth of the statement. SB32 additionally uses *around* when describing the temperature, indicating that it is an estimate, not an absolute statement. This is interesting in as far as it is strictly speaking not essential to be so careful as to make even more certain that the conversation partner understands the subjectivity of the statement, especially since they are unlikely to end the conversation and go and check whether the information was accurate. In addition, they would probably be even more unlikely to be offended if their estimate was off by five degrees. It is therefore likely that the epistemic function oh *I think* is secondary to its discourse organisational function.

This seems to explain a number of occurrences like example (5.12) below, which includes the first turn of example (5.9) plus one prior turn. The conversation partners speak about course requirements and their ability to influence course scheduling:

(5.12) SB32: yeah but we_#0 have we_#0 do n't have to uhm wr uhm to do exams in all classes there are also kind of uhm SEMINARS we_#0 have to uhm write term papers for or do presentations

FL06: ah yeah here is more or less the same **I think_#2** but uh yeah here we_#0 have uh a really fixed uh table so uhm yes can you so we_#0 uh we_#0 're forced to do some courses and we_#0 ca n't uh we_#0 HAVE uh we_#0 have no freedom at all **I think_#2**

(01SB32FL06)

I think is used twice by FL06 in post-position, once at the beginning and once at the end. In the first instance, the speaker agrees with the previous speaker regarding the course requirements and assessments, saying that it was fairly similar for them. The statement is already qualified by *more or less*, meaning that it is a rough comparison, not every detail is expected to be accurate. The *I think* marks subjectivity and also stresses the uncertainty. The latter instance also marks the speaker's subjectivity, but it is not clear whether it is meant to indicate certainty about the assessment or uncertainty about the validity of the assessment. Rather, it fulfils the function of organising discourse by indicating turn completion and recipient up-take, with the epistemic function simply expressing subjectivity in general.

In other instances, *I think* is used to mark subjectivity as a means of supporting the other speaker. In example (5.13), The Italian speaker FL10 tells his German conversation partner SB36 about his ability to speak Italian, Russian and Finnish. Over the course of an exchange about how hard certain languages are to learn, it seems like the German conversation partner assumes that FL10 also speaks German, maybe due to confusion with FL10's fellow students. This leads to an extensive stretch of rapport management by both speakers:

(5.13) SB36: yeah I guess and German as well is n't German like super difficult to learn as well ((heh)) you really do n't make it easy on yourself ((chuckling))
FL10: what uh excuse me
SB36: is n't uh German like known as pretty difficult as well I 've heard it 's like super tough to learn German
FL10: German uh I do n't study German
SB36: no of of of course ((chuckling)) right yeah alright of course
FL10: okay
SB36: ((laughs)) yeah
FL10: yeah but **I think_#2** it 's pretty difficult too
SB36: yeah but do n't do it […] ((heh)) it 's terrible ((chuckling))

(01SB36FL10)

This misunderstanding is unwillingly initiated by SB36 saying *you don't make it easy on yourself*, to which FL10 answers, signalling non-understanding and confusion. SB36 tries to explain the point he was trying to make, i.e. that German was also a difficult language to learn and that that was why he thought FL10 was being very strict with himself for learning this on top of learning languages like Russian and Finnish, which he considers to be difficult. FL10 then answers that he does not actually speak German. When SB36 realises his mistake, he struggles a little in turn five, trying to agree and mitigate his mistake. In turns 6 and 7, the exchange is almost briefly suspended, where both signal turn-yielding, until FL10 says *yeah but I think_#2 it 's pretty difficult too*. By stating his own opinion on the German language, clearly marking its subjectivity with *I think*, he takes up the point of SB36 but does not further discuss the misunderstanding. FL10 is effectively helping out his conversation partner, as he realises SB36 messed up, so that the speaker who created the misunderstanding does not have to do the repair himself. FL10 clearly marks his own stance on the topic as if it

had been a normal topic proposal and thereby does away with the awkwardness of the situation, relieving and mitigating it.

I think mostly seems to follow the structures and pragmatic and interactional functions described in previous literature like Kärkkäinen (2003). The above examples show that my initial attempt to annotate the data had to be unsuccessful, due to many instances of the pragmatic marker *I think* not expressing a particular form of certainty, but rather a general state of subjectivity, especially in cases where discourse organisation seems to be the predominant function. The more general annotation that distinguishes between pragmatic marker use of *I think* (_#2) and its use in the non-pragmatic meaning (_#3), however, is useful for the analysis of co-occurrences in section 5.6 below, as it allows for the automatic exclusion of the non-pragmatic markers from the analysis. I therefore decided to use this method for further annotations of the remaining pragmatic markers, which also exist in a pragmatic and a non-pragmatic version.

In addition, the annotation scheme follows the form of the annotations of the pronouns in the previous chapter and can be seamlessly added those annotations. Like the non-pragmatic uses of the *I* + epistemic verb collocations, the system discards any markers that are not of interest to the co-occurrence analysis I chapter 7. These are instances of *we* that can be classified as "other", which together with the non-pragmatic uses are not further considered. The system is therefore useful for the later analyses and enables an easier identification of all markers.

5.2.2. *I mean*

I mean is the second most frequently occurring pragmatic marker in this group. It has received less attention in research surrounding rapport than *I think*, and it is structurally and functionally slightly different to *I think and I guess* as described in chapter 2.

5.2.2.1. Use of *I mean* in ViMELF

As described above in section 5.2, I identify all instances of *I mean* in ViMELF in AntConc, which I then annotate in the same way as the occurrences of *I think* above. The analysis differentiates between *I mean* as a pragmatic marker (marked _#2) and *I mean* in its non-pragmatic form (_#3) in the sense of "to intend (a remark, allusion, etc.) to have a particular reference" (OED Online, 2018). There are 234 occurrences of *I mean* in the corpus (2.05

instances per 1000 words) of which only three instances are non-pragmatic. The number of instances per conversation varies considerably between individual conversations. Table 5.3 shows the distribution of occurrences of *I mean* in ViMELF, split into the individual conversations.

Table 5.3 – Frequencies of *I mean* in ViMELF (absolute and relative as a proportion of occurrences per transcript per 1000 words)

I mean	word count transcript	absolute frequency	relative frequency
01SB32FL06	5256	5	0.95
01SB36FL10	5162	25	4.84
01SB75HE01	6830	4	0.59
01SB78HE04	5572	0	0.00
02SB80HE06	5733	5	0.87
04SB25SF01	5906	10	1.69
04SB33FL31	6440	29	4.50
04SB69ST05	4456	1	0.22
05SB70ST07	4569	8	1.75
05SB93HE19	7225	20	2.77
06SB73ST14	5251	1	0.19
07SB17SF10	6847	22	3.21
07SB49FL33	4591	17	3.70
07SB50FL34	7257	26	3.58
07SB51ST01	5126	4	0.78
07SB53ST03	4793	3	0.63
08SB05SF05	5881	7	1.19
08SB106HE03	6342	2	0.32
10SB03SF09	3732	4	1.07
10SB07SF07	6917	41	5.93
Total	113886	234	2.05

Apart from 01SB78HE04, which has no occurrences of *I mean* at all, 06SB73ST14 accounts for the second lowest relative amount of the pragmatic marker with 0.19 instances per 1000 words of transcript. In addition, there is a significant overuse of *I mean* in three conversations (01SB36FL10, 04SB33FL31 and 10SB07SF07, $p < 0.001$, accounting for the individual word count of each transcript), compared to the average of all ViMELF conversations. Another three conversations (04SB69ST05, 06SB73ST14 and 08SB106HE03) show a significant underuse of the pragmatic marker ($p < 0.001$, accounting for the individual word

count of each transcript) compared to the average of all ViMELF conversations. This shows that the use per conversation varies quite highly. It also means that future researchers working with relatively few ELF conversations when investigating *I mean* will have to be aware of the fact that their findings might be skewed by the kind of conversations they are investigating.

The annotations also reveal how many instances are used per speaker (not pictured in table). The three non-pragmatic instances are used by three different speakers, and only 29 out of 40 speakers used use the pragmatic marker version of *I mean* at all. Eight speakers used neither of the two versions. Individual values vary considerably, with the highest one, 11.85 occurrences of pragmatic *I mean* per 1000 words uttered by that speaker (by SF07), being considerably higher than the average of 2.05 instances of *I mean* per 1000 words. Note that the conversation of that speaker, 10SB07SF07, has the highest relative frequency of *I mean* out of all conversations. This further supports the argument that research into this marker has to consider that individual speaker variation is relatively high.

5.2.2.2. Functions of *I mean* in ViMELF

In one of the three occurrences of non-pragmatic marker *I mean*, the speaker SB106 makes a point, which is taken up by their conversation partner, to which SB106 replies in agreement with the following statement:

(5.14) SB106: yeah that 's what I **mean_#3** […]

(08SB106HE03)

In this example, *I mean* clearly belongs to the complement clause *what I mean* and is not an independent pragmatic marker. There are two other instances in the data where the speakers correct a misunderstanding with their conversation partner and introduce the clarification with *no I mean*, i.e. the non-pragmatic form. The other 231 instances are pragmatic markers and fulfil the functions of *I mean* described in extant literature (see chapter 2). Speakers who are careful about the delivery and reception of their utterance use *I mean* as a qualifier to make a particular point and to commit to it, like in example (5.15). FL33 speaks about moving house a number of times during her life, always being in a different place. She speaks about some problems she encountered while doing so, but then ends her story in the following way:

(5.15) FL33: I really like it actually I **mean_#2** it 's experiences you know

(07SB49FL33)

FL33 first assesses her experience and then commits to it by adding an argument for her positive assessment, which she introduces with *I mean*. Similar to that, speakers also use the marker in the corpus to commit to a statement. In (5.16), FL34 is speaking for a longer stretch of time about his opinion on beer, saying that beer is not supposed to taste sweet but rather to quench thirst, which sweet drinks in his opinion cannot do, and which is why he disagrees with mixing beer with coke, for example. This longer explanation, intermitted with his conversation partner's agreement, ends in FL34 making this statement:

(5.16) FL34: I **mean_#2** if I want something sweet I would just drink coke

(07SB50FL34)

The speaker repeats elements from previous statements and brings them together in a new way by making this statement only about sweet drinks, in reference to the prior discourse. With that, he summarises his thoughts while also making a point and committing to his statement.

Similarly, in (5.17) FL34 uses *I mean* to commit to the point he is making. He is speaking about the translation and mediation master's degrees at his university in Italy and the criteria for being granted access to these degrees, when he says the following:

(5.17) FL34: and but you have a you know they have a very strict admission test I **mean_#2** it 's like very strict like

(07SB50FL34)

This utterance is following a statement by FL34 about how difficult some admissions tests at university are even for undergraduate degrees. In this statement about the master's degrees, he uses *I mean* to repeat what he said and thereby stressing the severity of the content.

Another salient function of *I mean* is its ability to contribute both to reducing and increasing the ambiguity of a statement. In the following example, SF07 introduces her clarification for what exactly is meant by *that* with *I mean*:

(5.18) SF07: yeah uh that seems smart I **mean_#2** bypassing the spam filter ((laughing))
(10SB07SF07)

The length both of the explanation and of the chunk of discourse that requires further clarification in the opinion of the speaker can vary. In extract (5.19), for example, SB53 uses *I mean* similarly to SF07 in (5.18) above to introduce a larger chunk specifying *that many Spanish places*:

(5.19) SB53: but uhm I do n't think we_#0 have that many Spanish places around **I mean_#2** there are some TApas bars or something like that but Spanish food is not really popular in Germany at all
(07SB53ST03)

As a contrast, a speaker can also introduce a level of imprecision into an utterance to increase its ambiguity. It is important here to consider that speakers can express a degree of imprecision that affects the reception of their utterance by avoiding taking a stance, which is probably what Fox Tree and Schrock (2002) refer to with their statement (see chapter 2), but have not explained any further. In (5.20), German speaker SB17 is worried that the talk might not be recorded properly and Bulgarian SF10 tries to calm her down by telling her that even if the program were not recording their conversation, she would also have a recording which she could share with her. This is what happened to SF10 during a prior conversation with one of SB17's classmates.

(5.20) SF10: so do n't worry ((chuckling))
SB17: yeah **I mean_#2** uhm yes I 've I so far I 've only had one talk
(07SB17SF10)

SB17 initially agrees, but then uses *I mean* almost as a hedge to avoid committing to that stance, followed by an explanation for the cause of her worries (the lack of experience with the recordings). While she acknowledges her conversation partner's point, she also expresses that this does not change her feelings towards the issue. It seems like SB17 does not want to disagree with her conversation partner, especially after SF10 has attempted to calm and support her. At the same time, however, it seems like she cannot outright align with her partner's stance either, because it would contradict her actual feelings. SB17 is not directly contradicting SF10, while also accounting for her own worries. Her avoiding taking a clear

stance introduces a level of ambiguity into the situation, which she uses effectively to manage rapport.

Above, we have seen several examples where speakers employ *I mean* with the intent to create a joint stance or align with that of their partner, especially in cases where they agree, where they add to the topic by making a point of their own, where they clarify the meaning of their statements to be more precise and make things clearer. On the other hand, it can also help speakers avoid taking a stance, especially a contradicting one, when they are unsure of the reception of it. Particularly in fragile, delicate situations like a first contact*, I mean* therefore provides a useful tool for speakers.

5.2.3. *I guess*

The least frequent pragmatic marker of this group is *I guess*. *I guess* in its non-pragmatic meaning denotes "form[ing] an approximate judgement of (size, amount, number, distance, etc.) without actual measurement or calculation", estimating (OED, 2019). Similar to *I think*, as a pragmatic marker, it can offer a means for moderating a statement in the opposite way, by referring to something with an increased level of certainty.

5.2.3.1. Use of *I guess* in ViMELF

In ViMELF, there are 139 occurrences of *I guess* in total, about 1.22 instances per 1000 words. Table 5.4 shows how differently these occurrences are distributed across individual conversations in ViMELF. The highest number of *I guess* occurs in 01SB36FL10 with 3.87 per 1000 words, followed by 06SB73ST14 with 2.21 and 07SB51ST01 with 1.95 per 1000 words with already much lower frequencies. There are two conversations, 04SB33FL31 and 04SB69ST05, with no instance at all and 07SB50FL34 accounts for the lowest relative frequency of 0.14 occurrences per 1000 words of the transcript. While *I guess* is significantly overrepresented in 01SB36FL10 ($p < 0.001$) in relation to the word count of the conversation and compared to the average of all conversations, it is significantly underrepresented in 07SB50FL34 ($p < 0.001$).

After manually annotating the data by going through each individual transcript and distinguishing between pragmatic and non-pragmatic uses, the results show that there are 133 occurrences of pragmatic *I guess* and only six non-pragmatic uses of *I guess*.

Table 5.4 – Frequencies of *I guess* in ViMELF (absolute and relative as a proportion of occurrences per transcript per 1000 words)

I guess	word count transcript	absolute frequency	relative frequency
01SB32FL06	5256	7	1.33
01SB36FL10	5162	20	3.87
01SB75HE01	6830	2	0.29
01SB78HE04	5572	7	1.26
02SB80HE06	5733	10	1.74
04SB25SF01	5906	10	1.69
04SB33FL31	6440	0	0.00
04SB69ST05	4456	0	0.00
05SB70ST07	4569	4	0.88
05SB93HE19	7225	5	0.69
06SB73ST14	5251	12	2.29
07SB17SF10	6847	12	1.75
07SB49FL33	4591	7	1.52
07SB50FL34	7257	1	0.14
07SB51ST01	5126	10	1.95
07SB53ST03	4793	7	1.46
08SB05SF05	5881	4	0.68
08SB106HE03	6342	11	1.73
10SB03SF09	3732	2	0.54
10SB07SF07	6917	8	1.16
Total	113886	139	1.22

These non-pragmatic uses are instances where the speakers use *I guess so*, which in its form and function is similar to *I think so*, as well as syntactically bound non-pragmatic forms of *I guess*. Conversations 01SB36FL10 and 02SB80HE06 showed two occurrences each and conversations 08SB106HE03 and 07SB50FL34 one each. Note that in the latter conversation, this non-pragmatic occurrence is the only one in the whole conversation overall (by German SB50), which is to say that it is unique in that there are no pragmatic instances. There are five speakers who use a non-pragmatic version, while fourteen speakers do not use the pragmatic marker at all. In total, thirteen speakers do not use either form. The highest number of occurrences are 5.23 pragmatic markers per 1000 words by SB36. This leads to the much higher than average number of occurrences that the conversation has (3.87 per 1000 words in

01SB36FL10, see above), even though his conversation partner FL10 has a lower than average use of pragmatic *I guess*.

5.2.3.2. Functions of *I guess* in ViMELF

Structurally, *I guess* is relatively flexible, similar to *I think*. It can occur as a pre-positioned marker (cf. (5.21) and (5.22)) and as a post-positioned marker (5.23). In the following example, SB80 is asked by his conversation partner whether he has ever learnt about politeness theory in one of his lectures.

(5.21) SB80: **I guess_#2** we_#0 DID uh at at one point ((laughing))

(02SB80HE06)

SB80 replies that he cannot remember it very well anymore. He introduces the reply with *I guess* and ending it on a laughed and hedged *at one point*, signalling uncertainty and in a way attempting to avoid a definitive answer.

Pre-positioned *I guess* does not need to be located at the beginning of the utterance, similar to the examples of *I think* above. In the following example, the speaker uses the pragmatic marker in an explanation of the German education system to indicate uncertainty about the validity of the particular information he is giving:

(5.22) SB78: yeah so we_#0 ’ve got **I guess_#2** three different secondary schools […]

(01SB78HE04)

SB78 uses the marker immediately before the piece of information that he is unsure about, i.e. how many different secondary school types there are. In post-position, *I guess* similar to the other pragmatic markers qualifies a preceding stretch of discourse. In (5.23), for example, SB75 is speaking about the German city of Munich, saying that her brother studies there and she therefore has a closer connection to the city and somewhat of an insight into how it is to live there. Her conversation partner replies saying she has been there before, but only as a tourist. When asked by SB75 whether she likes Munich, she says yes but notes that she does not know what living in the city would be like, which is then followed up by SB75:

(5.23) SB75: yeah definitely THAT ’s a difference **I guess_#2** but yeah it ’s it ’s a nice place and he also loves his studies so

(01SB75HE01)

I guess in this instance qualifies the agreement and SB75's addition to the assessment. Whether it indicates certainty or uncertainty is not directly clear, as SB75 could either try to use *I guess* here in an assertive manner to stress her agreement, or as a way of weakening the alignment with her conversation partner's stance by agreeing, but then qualifying the statement with uncertainty. Additionally, *I guess* seems to indicate a change of topic, which occurs immediately after SB75 summarises it by repeating the point she makes earlier with *it's a nice place*.

Similar to *I think* and the examples above, *I guess* is used to indicate approximation, but where it is strictly speaking not necessary as there are other markers around it that have the same function:

(5.24) SB32: and then I **I GUESS_#2** like three weeks ago I have an interview UHM with an translation agency in England and I uh I do n't know we_#0 **I guess_#2** we_#0 tried like THREE TIMES to do a VIDEO call but uhm the GUY from the agency could n't hear me and I could n't hear him so yeah we_#0 did n't do ((hehe))

(01SB32FL06)

In this case, both *like* (twice) and *I don't know* function as indicators of uncertainty, which means that *I guess* contributes to the degree of (un)certainty expressed. As the examples above show, *I guess* derived from its non-pragmatic meaning generally denotes a higher degree of uncertainty than *I think*. It is also used more specifically by speakers to signal belief and subjectivity. See (5.25), for example, where the conversation participants chat about a German soap opera and daily soaps, focussing on how the particular setup makes it easy for viewers to follow them even in irregular intervals, with HE03 summing up this part of the topic in the following way:

(5.25) HE03: yeah it 's it 's kind of typical **I guess_#2** uh yeah we_#0 actually we_#0 have uhm some actually German uh like drama uh shows on TV as well

(08SB106HE03)

His evaluation is qualified with the *I guess* in combination with the *kind of*. Together, the two features soften the utterance and mark its subjectivity and allow for a smooth topic transition.

However, in its quality of assuming, the pragmatic marker can also express commitment to a stance and signal assuredness. See (5.26), for example, where SB73 asks her conversation partner about Christmas in Spain, having previously talked about the German tradition of advent calendars, which is unfamiliar to ST14. ST14 answers that due to globalisation she expected all European countries to have similar Christmas traditions and then follows this up with:

(5.26) ST14: no but but we_#0 do n't have any well **I guess_#2** we_#0 do set up uh nativities do you know what that is

(06SB73ST14)

ST14 is presumably talking about any typical national customs or traditions when referring to *we_#0 don't have any*. She then, however, introduces nativities, asking whether SB73 knows what nativity scenes are. ST14 uses *I guess* to qualify her statement, but the *I guess* is pre-positioned to refer to the statement about nativities. Quite obviously, ST14 knows that they are putting up nativities, which means that she is not really guessing, but she rather uses it to gently correct herself, introduce a new point and commit to this, while abandoning and mitigating the seemingly assured statement she made before she interrupts herself with the correction.

Speakers do not necessarily commit or avoid committing to a stance by themselves, but they also use *I guess* to signal alignment and even affiliation with another speaker's stance. See (5.27), for example, where SB17 takes up the argument by her conversation partner, who is talking about her experience of moving away from the family and living by herself.

(5.27) SF10: and I at the beginning I was n't very used to that it it was not good ((thh))
SB17: and **I guess_#2**

(07SB17SF10)

SB17 does not use any words denoting agreement, but rather accepts SF10's opinion by adding her own one to it with *and I guess*, indicating the introduction of a subjective statement in line with SF10's stance. While she shows alignment, she is also trying to make a point herself.

Similar actions in other examples are usually done with different means though, e.g. by saying *yeah I guess*. In (5.28), the conversation partners are speaking about the different languages FL10 is learning. FL10 considers Russian to be a difficult but also a great language to learn. I discussed a larger stretch of this example in (5.13), while focussing on *I think*. SB36 in the following excerpt agrees with his conversation partner FL10, but uses *I guess* to transition to a point of his own, the difficulty of the German language that he thinks FL10 is also learning. As has been discussed above, this is a misunderstanding on the part of SB36.

(5.28) SB36: yeah **I guess_#2** and German as well is n't German like super difficult to learn as well ((heh)) you really do n't make it easy on yourself ((chuckling))

(01SB36FL10)

The prompt topic switch is probably due to SB36 not having (or at least not displaying) much knowledge of Russian. It seems like he tries to switch the topic to something more familiar, the German language. However, this turns out to lead to the confused exchange in need of rapport management discussed above. In another exchange between the same speakers, SB36 asks whether FL10 did not record their conversation:

(5.29) FL10: no if you could send YOURS **I think_#2** it 's pretty much the same thing
SB36: yeah **I guess_#2** well I hope the the file is n't too big like if it 's like I do n't know two hundred megabytes I ca n't send per email **I guess_#2**
FL10: mhm

(01SB36FL10)

This exchange is relatively short, but it is full of rapport management strategies. FL10 admits to not doing an essential part of the task they are involved in. Technically, this is not his fault. At the start of the conversation the speakers establish that the recording program is not working properly for FL10 and they cannot find a way to fix it. FL10 additionally implies that SB36 could send his recording, which would not make a difference, as they were recording the same call. SB36 agrees and somewhat aligns with FL10, but then goes into an excuse for why this might not work, thereby not fully accepting FL10's proposal and leaving it somewhat open. SB36 clearly is not convinced of the proposal, but denying it would be impolite and threaten rapport. Due to its subjective quality, similar to *I think*, the second *I guess* also opens the floor to the other speaker to express their opinion. In this case, FL10 does not take the floor and only backchannels with *mhm*, leaving SB36 with the

responsibility to continue his answer and explanation. Note how FL10 introduces his assured statement with *I think*, while SB36 chooses the in this direct comparison more uncertain sounding *I guess.* SB36's answer is the dis-preferred one for FL10, who needs to receive the recording file and hand it in to his professor. The dis-preferred answer is, however, preceded by agreement and hedged further with *I hope* and *I don't know* which makes it more difficult for FL10 to take offense or criticise SB36, who is displaying a high level of uncertainty while remaining as polite as possible. The two speakers resolve the exchange in the next turns, when SB36 amidst more hedging agrees to collaborate and attempt to send FL10 the file. This shows that *I guess* is structurally and functionally very similar to *I think*.

5.3. *I don't know*

The last pragmatic and epistemic maker under investigation in this chapter is *I don't know*. It is slightly different to the other pragmatic markers above, as it is a negated form. By its very definition, *I don't know* expresses uncertainty and it is structurally more independent and has slightly different functions compared to the other markers.

5.3.1. Use of *I don't know* in ViMELF

There are 425 instances of *I don't know* in ViMELF in total. Per conversation, the amounts vary considerably (see Table 5.5). The transcript with the most instances is the longest transcript, 07SB50FL34, but in relation to the transcript's word count, the conversation has not got the highest frequency per 1000 words (only 5.79). Rather, the conversation with the highest frequency of *I don't know* is 04SB69ST05 with 7.41 instances per 1000 words. 07SB17SF10 is the one with the lowest number of *I don't know* per 1000 words. Both conversations respectively significantly over- and underuse *I don't know* ($p < 0.001$) in relation to the word count of the conversation and compared to the average of all conversations.

Not unlike the other pragmatic markers, *I don't know* has a pragmatic and a non-pragmatic meaning. In its non-pragmatic form, it denotes the lack of knowledge, while its pragmatic functions vary. In order to differentiate between the two forms, I manually annotate the pragmatic marker with the same tagging scheme I used for the other markers: _#2 for pragmatic forms and _#3 for non-pragmatic forms, i.e. *I don't know_#2* and *I don't know_#3*.

To distinguish between the two forms, I use several techniques to tell them apart from each other.

Table 5.5 – Frequencies of *I don't know* in ViMELF (absolute and relative as a proportion of occurrences per transcript per 1000 words)

I don't know	word count transcript	absolute frequency	relative frequency
01SB32FL06	5256	34	6.47
01SB36FL10	5162	35	6.78
01SB75HE01	6830	16	2.34
01SB78HE04	5572	30	5.38
02SB80HE06	5733	31	5.41
04SB25SF01	5906	19	3.22
04SB33FL31	6440	17	2.64
04SB69ST05	4456	33	7.41
05SB70ST07	4569	10	2.19
05SB93HE19	7225	12	1.66
06SB73ST14	5251	19	3.62
07SB17SF10	6847	8	1.17
07SB49FL33	4591	30	6.53
07SB50FL34	7257	42	5.79
07SB51ST01	5126	18	3.51
07SB53ST03	4793	22	4.59
08SB05SF05	5881	10	1.70
08SB106HE03	6342	12	1.89
10SB03SF09	3732	9	2.41
10SB07SF07	6917	18	2.60
Total	113886	425	3.73

First, I make sure that there are no instances such as *I uh think*, where the pragmatic marker is interrupted with a hesitation marker and would otherwise not have shown in my search. There are no such instances in the data. There are, though, several instances of other kinds of interruptions to the non-pragmatic form, such as *I don't really know*, which occurs six times, twice *I really don't know* and three instances of *I don't even know*. These are altered by adverbs and therefore non-grammaticalized. I then proceed to annotate all occurrences of *I*

don't know[37] in ViMELF. Syntax as well as the context are the two most essential factors in the decision-making. For example, if the speaker is asked a question, in most cases, the answer will be the non-pragmatic form of *I don't know*. If the marker is syntactically bound, as in *I don't know how*, the marker is also considered non-pragmatic. Close reading is often necessary, as example (5.30) shows. Only relying on the syntax, it seems like the following *I don't know* could be a non-pragmatic marker, seeing as the word *where* follows it. When reading the example, however, it becomes clear that the *I don't know* is independent from the question following it.

(5.30) SF01: but yes of again uh I have friends who have bought dogs from like uh **I do n't know_#2** where where do you buy a dog from […]

(04SB25SF01)

It is sometimes necessary to have a look at the pragmatic transcript which included prosodic annotation. There, quicker and slower speech served as an indication, among others, as Scheibman (2000) states that a fully stressed *don't* often indicates the occurrence is a non-pragmatic one. In cases where the transcript was not enough, I listen to the recording to determine the stress and length of pronunciation in *don't*. As an example, the following instance could be either pragmatic or non-pragmatic.

(5.31) SB93: so maybe your your ten euro bottle would be a five euro bottle here **I do n't know_#3** I have no idea

(05SB93HE19)

Even though it initially looks like a pragmatic marker, I tended towards tagging it with _#3 as a non-pragmatic marker, as the speaker stresses their lack of knowledge by adding *I have no idea*. The pragmatic transcript also points towards this categorisation, but I nevertheless listened to the recording to confirm the annotation. In instances where I relied on this last step for categorisation, I had a colleague confirm my annotation.

[37] The data displays *I don't know* as *I do n't know*, as this is the output of the conversion program used to transform the data from pragmatic transcripts with prosodic etc. annotation to a pseudo-xml one, see chapter 3. For the purpose of readability, I will continue using *I don't know* in the text but cite the examples as they occur in the data.

Table 5.6 shows the distribution of pragmatic (_#2) and non-pragmatic (_#3) instances of *I don't know* with absolute and relative frequencies: 249 pragmatic ones and 176 non-pragmatic ones, which means that there are generally more pragmatic uses of *I don't know* than non-pragmatic ones. Compared to the other pragmatic markers, *I don't know* has a much higher frequency of non-pragmatic marker forms. The distribution across the conversations varies to a high degree: conversations like 01SB36FL10 and 04SB69ST05 have 6.2 and 4.94 instances per 1000 words in relation to the individual transcript's word count, while 05SB93HE19 only has 0.42 per 1000. If you compare the conversations to each other, there is no correlation between high or low values in one category compared to the other.

Table 5.6 – Frequencies of *I don't know* as a pragmatic marker and in its non-pragmatic meaning in ViMELF (absolute and relative as a proportion of occurrences per transcript per 1000 words)

I don't know	absolute		relative (per transcript)	
	_#2	_#3	_#2	_#3
01SB32FL06	24	10	4.57	1.90
01SB36FL10	32	3	6.20	0.58
01SB75HE01	9	7	1.32	1.02
01SB78HE04	12	18	2.15	3.23
02SB80HE06	20	11	3.49	1.92
04SB25SF01	14	5	2.37	0.85
04SB33FL31	11	6	1.71	0.93
04SB69ST05	22	11	4.94	2.47
05SB70ST07	8	2	1.75	0.44
05SB93HE19	3	9	0.42	1.25
06SB73ST14	3	16	0.57	3.05
07SB17SF10	5	3	0.73	0.44
07SB49FL33	13	17	2.83	3.70
07SB50FL34	21	21	2.89	2.89
07SB51ST01	8	10	1.56	1.95
07SB53ST03	15	7	3.13	1.46
08SB05SF05	5	5	0.85	0.85
08SB106HE03	7	5	1.10	0.79
10SB03SF09	8	1	2.14	0.27
10SB07SF07	9	9	1.30	1.30
Total	249	176	2.19	1.55

When splitting the two categories into individual speakers and applying relative frequencies according to the word count of the individual speaker, the highest relative frequency of *I don't know* in total is used by SB69 (per 1000 words uttered by the speaker) with 10.34 (and an absolute frequency of 24). The lowest relative frequency by a speaker is SB17 with 0.23 per 1000 words and only one instance in total. Two speakers (HE19 and SB05) do not use the pragmatic marker at all. This shows that individual speakers vary significantly in how they use the pragmatic marker.

When splitting the numbers according to state nationalities, the Italian sub-corpus has the highest number of instances per 1000 words spoken with 4.39, whereas the others all have a much lower frequency: 1.78 (Finnish sub-corpus), 1.83 (German), 2.07 (Bulgarian) and 2.34 (Spanish) occurrences per 1000 words respectively. The average of all these conversations is 2.19 instances per 1000 words in ViMELF, as can be seen in Table 5.6 above. The pragmatic form of *I don't know* is significantly overrepresented in that part compared to the whole of the corpus ($p < 0.001$).

5.3.2. Functions of *I don't know* in ViMELF

Beyond its non-pragmatic, non-grammaticalized meaning of lack of knowledge, *I don't know* is used as a tool to verbalise and overcome on-line planning difficulties, similar to pre-positioned *I think* in an independent intonation unit (see above). This seems to be often used by ViMELF speakers when they introduce an example for a statement they are making; as such, it can refer to a stretch of discourse that varies in length. Consider (5.32), for example, where Spanish ST03 is speaking about the availability of vegetarian food in Spain and in this particular case about tapas.

(5.32) ST03: […][38] it 's very normal here in Santiago de Compostela it 's quite normal to go for a beer and then with the beer they give you some like **I do n't know_#2** a bit of tortilla or […] something like that and they ask you if you want like a vegetarian tapa or NOT

(07SB53ST03)

[38] Whenever ellipses in squared parentheses appear in a transcript, I have omitted parts of the transcript because they are not essential for the example.

The pragmatic marker is in this case used to hedge the example for a specific kind of tapa, referring to *a bit of tortilla or […] something like that*. It is a way for the speaker to mark the subjectivity of their statement in so far as they seem to relativize the example by not outright committing to it, but rather using both the pragmatic marker and the addition *or something like that.* FL31 in excerpt (5.33) uses *I don't know* similarly when telling her conversation partner about her visit to Berlin:

(5.33) FL31: ((chuckles)) it because you have like a a part of the city was just really cool and touristic and like **I do n't know_#2** the parliament and things like that and it 's really nice and then you go to the other part of Berlin and it 's sad and grey

(04SB33FL31)

FL31 describes the two sides of Berlin as she perceives them, one being *sad and grey* and the other one *really cool and touristic*. She gives an example for the latter, her preferred part: *the parliament and things like that.* Like in the previous excerpt, the speaker uses two ways to avoid committing to her example, one being the pragmatic marker and the other one the addition *things like that*. In both cases, the speaker is introducing a level of vagueness into their statement, which highlights the subjectivity of the statement and thereby makes the speaker less accountable for its accuracy. This and the fact that they save time by not having to provide more examples can make the conversation much more fluent, especially for non-native speakers. Conversational flow is according to Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990) one of the features that establishes the essential rapport element 'coordination' (see chapter 2). Something similar also occurs in the following example. FL10 asks his conversation partner how many hours SB36 spends on his studies per week, which prompts the following answer by SB36:

(5.34) SB36: I 'm at university actually present at university for only like ten hours a week or so or maybe no twelve hours […] so I 'm mostly […] you know study at in the library and at home it 's maybe oh God
FL10: yes
SB36: uh **I do n't know_#2** forty hours maybe **I do n't know_#2**
FL10: oh yeah
SB36: I have n't really COUnted it or something **I do n't know_#2**
FL10: yeah yeah yeah

SB36: yeah

FL10: we_#0 do like about twenty hours uh a week at university

(01SB36FL10)

There are three instances of pragmatic *I don't know* in the excerpt. The first one in turn three seems to be a planning tool just as in the two examples above, with it referring to the approximate number of hours SB36 spends per week on his studies. The speaker introduces and follows this up with *maybe* rather than a phrase like *things/something like that* as above, but either marker introduces a level of uncertainty or vagueness. Notice also how SB36 uses another pragmatic marker, the evidential *you know*, when introducing the argument that most of their time is not spent in class but studying independently in the library or at home (which makes it harder to keep track of the total number of hours spent studying). The evidential implies the conversation partner in SB36's stance. The second instance of *I don't know* seems to signal uncertainty and non-commitment to the specific information given and increase the tentativeness of the statement. This is then further increased by the next turn where SB36 makes clear that the statement might not be accurate as he never actually measured the time specifically. The third instance in turn five functions as an end point to the statement by SB36, opening the floor to their conversation partner. FL10 back-channels, with three *yeah*s, but does not take the floor. SB36 then again signals turn completion with his *yeah*, which is then understood by FL10, who gives an estimate of the number of hours he spends studying at university. In this example, it seems like SB36 is trying to justify the number of hours he spends on studies-related tasks. This could potentially relate to the desire to seem committed to his studies and like an interested student. The increased number of markers SB36 is using seems to indicate that he is attempting to reduce the commitment to a precise number and keep his answer vaguer by mitigating the situation with signs of subjectivity and uncertainty. This enables the speaker to reduce or mitigate possible social repercussions from their statement in relation to their conversation partner.

I don't know as a pragmatic marker can also signal uncertainty as well as non-commitment to a statement or its content by showing neutrality rather than the avoidance displayed in (5.34). In (5.35), speakers HE04 and SB78 discuss Arnold Schwarzenegger's strong Austrian German accent, which he still retains even after decades of living in the US:

(5.35) HE04: yeah ((laughing)) .H but maybe he ’s so proud of it ((laughing)) he does n’t wanna change ((chuckling)) or
SB78: ((hehe)) maybe yeah maybe
HE04: yeah **I do n’t know_#2**

(01SB78HE04)

Functionally, the pragmatic marker in turn three is a device for yielding the turn in the first instance. However, the marker is also post-positioned and amends the previous statement by mirroring SB78’s vague agreement and mitigation behaviour (using *maybe* twice and chuckling). HE04 seems unsure about her conversation partner’s reception and signals an increased level of neutrality towards her previously taken stance. Similarly, SB53 in the following excerpt is showing neutrality towards the statement of his conversation partner after he describes his grocery shopping behaviour.

(5.36) SB53: ((chuckles)) well I do n’t always do a shopping list sometimes I just p end up going to the grocery store and and just er to get inspiration what I will have
ST03: ((ehh)) okay you improVISE
SB53: **I do n’t know_#2** yeah

(07SB53ST03)

ST03’s assessment or summary of SB53’s shopping behaviour seems to somewhat displease SB53 who previously described himself as a conscientious or responsible shopper. The conversations partner’s (correct) translation of SB53’s description of his behaviour as improvisation seems at odds with that, which is why the conversation partner mitigates his answer and agreement. This occurs in a soft manner though, as SB53 only uses *I don’t know* and then agrees with *yeah*.

Another form of mitigation occurs in (5.37), where the conversation partners talk about Japanese, which German student SB36 is studying and finding it a great experience. FL10 answers that Chinese *is much more difficult* than English in his opinion, with which SB36 seems to have an issue to a certain extent:

(5.37) FL10: yeah I think_#2 CHInese is much more difficult
SB36: uh mh **I do n't know_#2**
FL10: **I do n't know_#2** yeah
SB36: ((heh))
FL10: depends ((chuckling)) but
SB36: maybe
FL10: yeah so y but you 've said you study so English of course

(01SB36FL10)

SB36 expresses his appreciation for Chinese and seems to question FL10's assessment. It seems like SB36 is attempting to appear neutral to FL10's statement and avoid commenting on it by using *I don't know* in its mitigating function. FL10 then appears to soften his comment with the same function of *I don't know,* while also opening the floor to SB36 and thereby giving the discourse a clear structure. SB36 chuckles and FL10 further qualifies and thereby weakens his previous stance by saying [it] *depends* while chuckling, to which SB36 then finally somewhat commits by saying *maybe*. Both speakers are actively managing rapport. SB36 is attempting not to openly correct or criticise his conversation partner's opinion with which he seems to disagree. FL10 on the other hand notices SB36's mitigation and attempts to qualify his statement twice and give his conversation partner room to express his own opinion.

In cases like these, *I don't know* can function as a planning device, structure discourse and show neutrality or avoidance towards the following discourse and soften it. As such, the pragmatic marker does the opposite of indicating subjectivity by allowing the speaker to take a step back and not commit to a stance. Speakers not only mitigate with *I don't know* when they cannot agree with the conversation partner, they also use it in less problematic situations when they want to indicate neutrality.

(5.38) SF09: uhm what do you want to know ((ehh))
SB03: **I do n't know_#2** what is your favourite subject or what are you studying in first place

(10SB03SF09)

In (5.38), SF09 asks her conversation partner what she would like to know about her. SB03, put on the spot, hedges her reply with *I don't know,* displaying a degree of uncertainty

towards what would be the most appropriate question to ask her conversation partner in order to start the interaction off. She then chooses a question which based on the student identity they have in common is a relatively neutral, standard question to ask and even generalises it further to one of the first questions a person would be expected to be asked when meeting someone. *I don't know* therefore serves as a planning tool, but also helps SB03 to display relative neutrality towards the question. Displaying neutrality and vagueness through language during a first encounter can increase the fluency of the conversation as a speaker does not need to worry as much about the accuracy and relative appropriateness of their statements.

5.3.3. *I don't know* in non-native speaker data

Baumgarten and House (2010) say that ELF speakers use mostly the non-pragmaticalised function of *I don't know* in their data. In addition, they cannot find evidence in their non-native speaker data for anything but "the less grammaticalized–pragmaticalized forms" (Baumgarten and House, 2010: 1198), which means that they were unable to identify other pragmatic functions of *I don't know* in ELF data as reported in native speaker data, i.e. to mitigate possible social repercussions from a statement, for example. This means that according to Baumgarten and House (2010), *I don't know* used by ELF speakers is limited to its non-pragmatic form as a marker of insufficient knowledge and as a pragmatic marker for on-line planning difficulties, which they qualify as hearer-oriented functions.

With regards to their first statements, there are 2.19 instances of pragmatic *I don't know* per 1000 words in ViMELF in comparison to 1.55 instances per 1000 words of the non-grammaticalized-pragmaticalised form, i.e. 1.4 times as many pragmatic marker versions. This is not directly opposite to Baumgarten and House's study, since ViMELF speakers still use a considerable amount of non-pragmatic *I don't know*, but it is salient.

Secondly, the examples discussed in the previous section, specifically examples (5.36), (5.37) and (5.38) above show how speakers use *I don't know* in situations where they mitigate a statement by displaying neutrality or vagueness either when they disagree with the conversation partner or are uncertain about taking a stance on their own. In addition, ViMELF speakers also use the pragmatic marker as a discourse organisational marker in order to open the floor to another speaker, see (5.34) and (5.37), for example, and particularly often to bridge between one part and another of their utterance, which Baumgarten and House

(2010) cannot identify at all in their data. In many ViMELF instances at the beginning of a turn, when the speaker is talking and the conversation partner backchannels, the speaker uses *I don't know* and then repeats their point, adds to it or sums is up like in examples above, showing that the speaker is sensitive to the recipient and their reaction. While it probably also functions as a planning tool in many of these instances, these occurrences also carry more grammaticalized-pragmaticalised functions. This means that non-native speakers are using *I don't know* as a pragmatic marker with the same functions that native speakers have been described to do. While this shows clearly that ViMELF speakers are able to use more than only "the less grammaticalized–pragmaticalized forms" (Baumgarten and House, 2010: 1198), I do not determine which specific functions are used in every instance, i.e. make observations about the definite distribution of the pragmatic functions. Determining a specific category for every single occurrence in order to make observations about numbers and distribution would involve too much guesswork, especially since many instances are not as clear-cut as the examples above and/or contain multiple functions. It can be noted though that it is difficult to identify examples in the analysis of individual instances where the speakers qualified not their own statement but the statement of the other speaker with *I don't know* as in (5.36) and (5.37) due to their rare occurrence. This might mean that the ViMELF speakers are still not as likely to use *I don't know* in order to mitigate disagreement as native speakers seem to be in Baumgarten and House (2010).

Baumgarten and House (2010) also state that *I don't know* never occurs turn- or utterance final with a pragmatic meaning, but only with a non-pragmatic one in their data. In order to test this with the easiest means possible in a larger corpus, I collaborated with a computer programmer to develop an Excel macro[39] that can be applied to a concordancer output like AntConc in Excel (see section 3.3.5.3). It filters the occurrences of *I don't know* and checks whether there is a speaker marker (or any other transcribed feature) either to the left or the right of the node in the extracted span (9L or 9R) and therefore at the beginning or end of a turn. This enables me to only analyse occurrences where pragmatic *I don't know* indeed occurs at the end of a turn. There are 44 instances of turn-final pragmatic *I don't know* and seven additional instances where the pragmatic marker occurs independently in a turn and is therefore both at the beginning and end of a turn. This includes instances that are followed by

[39]Microsoft Office Excel Macro (VBA Project) in Appendix VI.

laughter but excludes instances like *I don't know yeah.* In comparison, there are only 21 instances in ViMELF, where a non-pragmatic *I don't know* occurs at the end of a turn. In this case too, there are seven instances occurring in an independent turn, including cases followed by laughter or interrogative words like *why*, but excluding longer phrases. This shows that ELF speakers do indeed use the pragmatic marker *I don't know* at the end of a turn, even if the previous study could not confirm this. As Baumgarten and House (2010) do not specify what their definition of "turn-final" in- or excludes, I cannot make a definitive comparison between their and my data, however, using my definition, ViMELF speakers use more pragmatic than non-pragmatic *I don't know* at the end of turns.

The diverging findings may be due to a combination of several reasons, such as the conversation topics discussed, which might influence which form of *I don't know* is used, as well as different conditions of the setting of the conversation, as ViMELF speakers are unacquainted and might use different rapport management strategies than the ELF speakers in these situations. Note also, that there are only two conversations in Baumgarten and House's study, which means that their conversations can hardly be considered representative with regards to the generalised claims they are making.

5.4. Comparative use of pragmatic markers according to nationalities

There are significant differences between the use of individual pragmatic markers depending on the nationality of the speakers. *I think*, in relation to all words uttered in the national sub-corpus, is significantly overused ($p < 0.001$) by the Spanish participants (8.96 instances per 1000 words in the sub-corpus) and significantly underused by the Bulgarians (3.36 per 1000 words in the sub-corpus). *I mean* is significantly overrepresented in the Bulgarian and the Italian sub-corpus (4.43 and 3.68 per 1000 words, respectively, $p < 0.001$) and significantly underrepresented in the Finnish sub-corpus (0.18 per 1000 words). *I guess* alone seems relatively normally distributed across the sub-corpora, with no statistically significant over- or underrepresentation and also generally very low numbers. The highest number of instances are used by the Bulgarians (1.57 per 1000 words), the lowest by the Spanish and the Italians (with 0.63 and 0.63 instances per 1000 words, respectively). *I know* is again significantly overrepresented in the Italian sub-corpus (4.39 instances per 1000 words, $p < 0.001$), but is normally distributed across the other four sub-corpora, with the smallest number occurring in the Finnish sub-corpus (1.78 per 1000 words). Adding all pragmatic markers together,

however, there is no significantly different distribution between the nationalities. The Italian sub-corpus shows slightly raised numbers (13.09 pragmatic markers per 1000 words), but the result is statistically not very significant considering the small sample size ($p = 0.042$).

This means that the Italian speakers as a whole significantly overuse *I mean* and *I know* and are within a normal distribution for *I think* and *I guess*. The Bulgarian speakers significantly overuse one feature (*I mean*) and underuse another (*I think*). The Spanish participants in comparison significantly overuse *I think* and somewhat underuse *I mean*. The Finnish only very significantly underuse *I mean*, while the German sub-corpus is overall normally distributed. I would guess that this is the case because there were four times the number of speakers and the larger sample size very likely gave a more accurate representation of the population, which seems to indicate that the diverse linguistic backgrounds of European languages do not seem to affect the use of pragmatic markers. The smaller sub-corpora a more susceptible to idiosyncrasies by individual speakers and might skew the data. It is therefore necessary to analyse how individual speakers use the pragmatic markers, in order to investigate in how far those speakers deviate from the overall numbers.

5.5. Comparative use of pragmatic markers of individual speakers

A comparison of the usage of all pragmatic markers (i.e. excluding non-pragmatic usage) by each individual speaker shows that the individual numbers vary significantly. *I think* is very significantly overused by ST05 (16.39 instances per 1000 words by this speaker, $p < 0.001$) and by HE19 (12.68 instances per 1000 words by this speaker, $p < 0.001$) in comparison to the overall use of *I think* by all speakers in the corpus. SB36 and SB50 on the other hand significantly underuse *I think* in relation to the other speakers (1.85 and 0.25 per 1000 words by the speaker, respectively, and $p < 0.001$). *I mean* is significantly overused by FL10 (6.80 per 1000), SB33 (6.42) and SF07 (11.85, all $p < 0.001$). Eleven speakers did not use *I mean* at all and there was no very significant underuse of this marker by any other speaker apart from these instances (with $p > 0.001$). *I guess* likewise is not used by fourteen out of the forty speakers and there is also no very significant underuse of this marker other than these (with $p < 0.001$). It is only significantly overused by SB36, with 5.23 instances per 1000 words by this speaker ($p < 0.001$) and its use is otherwise relatively uniform across the different speakers. *I don't know* is significantly overused ($p < 0.001$) by FL06 with 8.1 occurrences per 1000 words, SB69 with 7.76 per 1000 words, and SB36 with 7.69. Two speakers do not use it

at all and SB17 significantly underuses it with only 0.23 occurrences per 1000 words. There are numerous other cases where the usage was statistically significant within a confidence interval of 0.01 and 0.05, but as the numbers are relatively low, I chose to only report cases within a 99.9% confidence range.

Looking at individual speakers, there seems to be no correlation between the usage of individual categories. Participants had very high numbers for one marker but very low ones for another and there seems to be no pattern in usage or linear correlation that can be detected. FL06 overuses *I don't know* significantly, but he does not use *I mean* or *I guess* at all and lies within the normal distribution with his use of *I think*. Five other speakers (ST05, SB05, SB106, HE01, and HE04) do not use *I mean* or *I guess* at all either and have varying seemingly random levels of use of the other markers. Within a 99.9% confidence interval, only sixteen speakers out of the forty in total stayed within the normal distribution of the pragmatic markers and the use of these pragmatic markers seems to be highly idiosyncratic from this data.

Within each nationality, there is also not much uniformity. The fact that *I think* is overused in the Spanish sub-corpus seems to be mostly due to speaker ST05, who very significantly overuses the pragmatic marker, even though ST03 also slightly overuses it. The same holds true for *I mean* in the Bulgarian sub-corpus, where SF07 significantly drives up the statistics, while all other speakers' uses lie within a normal distribution. The sample size of these sub-corpora is so small that significant overuses in the national dataset can be caused by one speaker alone. All significant underuses in the individual sub-corpora seem to be caused by a generally low usage across the speakers as in the case of *I think* in the Bulgarian part or several speakers not using the feature at all, like *I mean* in the Finnish part. For anyone interested in how ELF speakers use pragmatic markers, this means that a much larger sample size is necessary to determine these questions.

I then split the annotated speaker data into individual conversations, where there seems to be no correlation between the conversation partners within a conversation. Only three conversations stand somewhat out from this (01SB32FL06, 01SB36FL10 and 04SB69ST05). However, this cannot be considered of major importance considering that seventeen other conversations showed no correlation or perceivable pattern.

5.6. Co-occurrences of pragmatic markers and their influence on rapport management

As there is evidence that multiple pragmatic markers occurring together in an utterance increase its subjectivity, tentativeness and ambiguity, I analyse instances where these pragmatic markers co-occur. In combination with other pragmatic markers, *I don't know* has been shown to increase the tentativeness and ambiguity of a statement, which occurs particularly often in situations where the speakers struggle to explain something. I have already discussed some instances above like in (5.24) and (5.34), where there are multiple markers at work. This section aims to show through a qualitative analysis how rapport is managed by ViMELF speakers when multiple pragmatic markers are used. I first focus on co-occurrences with *I don't know* and then discuss co-occurrences of all four pragmatic markers, meaning instances where two or more markers occur within two consecutive turns. According to a plot analysis in AntConc, across the corpus there are no significant concentrations of one or more markers in a particular point of the conversations, i.e. at the beginning or end, for example. This means that the pragmatic markers used by the ELF speakers are not more or less likely to occur in any place in the conversation.

SpanExtract allows for an easy identification of instances in the corpus where at least two pragmatic markers occur within one turn of one other. There are 250 instances in the corpus where pragmatic markers occur within that span, with the majority of them including two pragmatic markers. The numbers vary highly across conversations. There are several instances where there are multiple consecutive turns with pragmatic markers. These are counted as separate cases. Many occurrences seem to be instances where the speakers are struggling with an explanation they are trying to give, often using *I think* twice. In these instances, the pragmatic markers are used as planning tools, to introduce a point they are making and to indicate a level of uncertainty. Their influence on rapport management has been described in detail above. The data shows several instances which demonstrate how co-occurrences of pragmatic markers influence rapport management between the ViMELF speakers. See (5.39), for example, where FL10 changes topics and asks SB36 what is the most boring part of university to him.

(5.39) FL10: like **I do n't know_#2** ((chuckling))
SB36: the most boring thing **I do n't know_#2** mh **I guess_#2** just uh phh sitting in the lecture hall and just doing nothing but listening to whoever is

standing in front of there and […] teaching and just **I do n't know_#2** just sitting there and not actively doing anything **I guess_#2**

FL10: yeah **I think_#2** it 's the same for me like when you have those lessons where uh th that are not much productive

SB36: yeah

(01SB36FL10)

FL10 uses *I don't know* to open the floor to SB36, who repeats part of FL10's questions and follows it up with two pragmatic markers as well as other hesitation markers (*mh* and *uh phh*). This, as well as the on-line planning *I don't know* in the middle of the turn, indicates increased levels of uncertainty by SB36 as to what to specifically answer. At the end of his turn, SB36 closes the turn with *I guess* and thereby opens the floor again to his conversation partner. FL10 takes the turn and introduces his agreement with SB36's point, adding to it with *I think*. The example shows how the non-native speakers productively use several pragmatic markers for clear conversation organisation. This is especially important in situations where unacquainted speakers have still not established a habitual way of organising the discourse with their conversation partner and their conversational fluency is not guaranteed. The clear organisation allows them to manage rapport effectively.

ViMELF speakers do not only use these markers to organise discourse more efficiently and smoothly in the sense of the above example, but also when there is potential disagreement between them. In (5.40), German SB53 and Spanish ST03 discuss the importance of food in their culture and ST03 launches into a description of her eating routine.

(5.40) SB53: **I do n't know_#2** yeah

ST03: okay ((ehh)) well **I think_#2** for me food is really important and I normally plan ev the whole week for I normally try to because I have really few time for cooking so yeah I really feel the need to plan and to eat healthy and that stuff and well **I guess_#2 I guess_#2** you were wondering that it was uh three in the afternoon and I was about to have lunch […] I do n't know_#3 if it 's that weird for you

SB53: no not at all I like to eat very late usually

(07SB53ST03)

ST03 introduces her opinion and point of the argument with *I think* and speaks about scheduling cooking and meals due to her limited time availability. Her assumption that SB53 might find her lunch times surprising alludes to the stereotypes about German and Spanish mealtimes, with Germans eating distinctively early and the Spanish very late. She prefaces the stereotype with a double *I guess*, seemingly aware of its potential conflict, and even follows it up with *I don't know if it's that weird for you*. This shows a degree of uncertainty she displays towards her statement, leaving a cautious space for disagreement. SB53 simply replies very matter-of-factly, positioning himself as an exception to that stereotype and describing his general meal scheduling habits, without seeming bothered at all.

While ST03 in (5.40) above introduces a stereotype with caution and tentativeness, example (5.41) shows a slightly more abrupt way of introducing a cultural stereotype. The Italian speaker FL06 seems to change topic rather unexpectedly and asks his conversation partner SB32 when she usually has dinner. SB32 seems to be initially confused by the question, having previously spoken about her Italian schoolteacher and replies that she does not follow a specific schedule as she lives alone. FL06 then tries to clarify his abrupt question:

(5.41) FL06: because yeah because I arranged this meeting at uh six p.m because uh we_#0 here in Italy we_#0 usually eat at uh eight p.m but uh well uh **I think_#2** that uh well you had dinner earlier than us_#0
SB32: mh ye uhm **I do n't know_#2 I mean_#2** I live alone so I can
FL06: yeah ((laughs))
SB32: eat WHENEVER I want to so I eat when I 'm hungry
FL06: yeah which is uh really good ((hehe))

(01SB32FL06)

FL06 tells SB32 that he just assumed that she would have dinner earlier since she is German. He prefaces the stereotype of Germans eating dinner early with *I think*, indicating subjectivity and an openness to debate the issue. This speaker's statement seems like a more certain manner of prefacing a stereotype than *I guess* and the added cautious phrase in the example above. SB32 does not overtly negate this stereotype, but her answer in full shows that she clearly rejects the notion for herself. Her answer is very measured. She seems to agree at first but interrupts herself in the middle of it (*mh ye-*), includes the hesitation marker *uhm*, mitigates her answer with *I don't know* and then introduces the disagreeing statement *I live alone so I can eat WHENEVER I want* with *I mean*. She is making sure that she brings her

point across, but she is careful with the content of the message and its epistemic value as she does not openly disagree with FL06. FL06 seems to be attentive to this and joins SB32 in mitigating the potentially delicate situation by agreeing with her point and chuckling.

A longer excerpt from example (5.29) shows a similar pattern. FL10 did not record the conversation due to technical difficulties and asks SB36 to send him his file so he could hand in a recording too and fulfil his task for the project.

(5.42) SB36: or
FL10: no if you could send YOURS **I think_#2** it 's pretty much the same thing
SB36: yeah **I guess_#2** well I hope the the file is n't too big like if it 's like **I do n't know_#2** two hundred megabytes I ca n't send per email **I guess_#2**
FL10: mhm
SB36: uhm well **I do n't know_#2** well I well let 's let 's let 's finish now and I 'll uh I 'm gonna check how big the file is and I send you an email like if it 's too big to send uh via email **I guess_#2** we_#1 'll figure it out some other way like I can upload it somewhere **I do n't know_#2**

(01SB36FL10)

Turns two to four have already been discussed in example (5.29) above. SB36 clearly is not convinced of FL10's proposal but denying it would be impolite and threaten rapport. The pragmatic markers in turn two indicate both uncertainty and tentativeness, but also serve as a device for yielding the floor to FL10 to express his opinion. FL10 does not take the floor and only backchannels with *mhm*, leaving SB36 with the responsibility to continue his answer and explanation. SB36 continues to hedge and mitigate his dis-preferred answer with hesitation and discourse markers *uhm* and *well* and the pragmatic marker *I don't know*, as well as several false starts and a repair. He still shows uncertainty about sending the file via email with *I guess*, but then commits to finding a solution, which he again mitigates with *I don't know*, while also yielding the floor again to FL10, who then agrees and tries to contribute to the solution. The higher number of pragmatic markers indicate the speaker's uncertainty and tentativeness throughout the exchange. As SB36 tries to mitigate a dis-preferred answer, FL10 does not come to his assistance like the two speakers in example (5.41) above. He rather leaves SB36 to argue this out with himself and only when SB36 has mitigated himself into agreement with FL10, FL10 agrees with him. This both shows a

somewhat polite and unsuccessful way to deliver a dis-preferred answer, as well as a less polite but successful rejection of such, as FL10 needed his partner to collaborate in order to hand in his recording.

Interestingly, the speakers in ViMELF do not necessarily let the situation become potentially problematic in the first place. They often pre-empt potential disagreement with pragmatic markers. In (5.43), German SB69 and Spanish ST05 discuss English and its status as a lingua franca, saying that ELF is important for communication when going on holidays or a business trip anywhere in the world, for example. SB69 then also mentions Spanish as another option of a language that has a similar status, which is met with an interrupted agreement and chuckled *really* by Spanish ST05. SB69 then replies the following:

(5.43) SB69: **I do n't know_#2** because uh **I think_#2** Spanish is much more common than German for example when you 're travelling around the world so **I think_#2** uh you as a Spanish woman you can **I do n't know_#2** you have Spanish as a so called second world language and you are able to speak English as a first world language **I think_#2** that 's quite good
ST05: yeah ((chuckling))
SB69: ((chuckles))
ST05: ((heh)) mh when
SB69: or what is you experience
ST05: yes when I was abroad I did n't realise well I realised that there were a lot of the Spaniards ((heh)) all around the world but
SB69: yeah
ST05: mh **I think_#2** that I could n't I could n't manage to speak in ONLY in Spanish around the world **I think_#2** English is definitely necessary too
(04SB69ST05)

SB69's first *I don't know* seems to be a qualification in form of a mitigation of her stance which is politely questioned by ST05 in her chuckled, surprised reaction. SB69 then delivers a justification for her argument, but aware of the potential disagreement, she subjectively marks her point by introducing it with *I think.* The speaker continues adding another point to her argument, which in this case is directly addressed to ST05 (*you as a Spanish woman*). She introduces the argument with *I think* and then interrupts herself in the middle of the

utterance with *I don't know* to further mark her uncertainty and the subjectivity of the statement. SB69's argument, that speaking both the first and, as she calls it, "second" most frequently spoken world languages English and Spanish is of great benefit to ST05, resuming her point with her own assessment, *I think that's quite good.* SB69 seems to mark this as a very subjective utterance and uncertain statement, as it could potentially irritate or displease ST05. So in addition, she marks her stance as positive and, in a way, benevolent towards ST05 and her identity. ST05 agrees and they chuckle together, but then SB69 interrupts ST05, who was about to speak, by specifically asking her about her opinion and experience. This is a deferential act, where SB69 seems to be mindful to not speak on ST05's behalf and simply pre-empt or assume the experience of her conversation partner. ST05 then indeed confirms that that is not really her experience, but first agrees and acknowledges the viewpoint of SB69 and only then gives her reasoning for why she cannot share the experience. In her explanation, she uses *I think* twice to mark it as subjective too. Both conversation partners display a very tactful way of ensuring the other person is given a voice and acknowledging their opinions and experiences. While also giving their own opinion, they are being mindful of each other and clearly mark the statement as subjective and in no way absolute or certain.

There are, however, also instances where the non-native speakers use co-occurrences of pragmatic markers without *I don't know.* In an example similar to (5.39) above, the speakers in (5.44) use the markers to organise discourse when speaking about students going abroad in order to learn a language more successfully.

(5.44) SB32: that 's not really easy
FL06: they all went to Germany because uh well learning the language without living there in this country it 's uh yeah especially if it 's German it 's uh it 's impossible **I think_#2** uh
SB32: yeah German is a very difficult language **I guess_#2** because ALSO YOU have you have y uhm different kind of syntax than English or French uh French and Italy UH Italian and Spanish so like you have in English you have this uhm FIXED structure of SUBJECT verb and object
FL06: object yeah

(01SB32FL06)

While this is a very small co-occurrence of two instances, FL06 closes his argument with *I think*, opening the floor to SB32. SB32 then uses this point to agree with FL06 and builds on his argument by introducing her subjective statement with *I guess.* The conversation partners use the pragmatic markers to build on one another's arguments. In this case, like in (5.39) above, there is not a potentially problematic situation whatsoever, but this is simply a well-organised, structured discourse, which creates rapport by keeping the fluidity of the discourse and constructively building an argument.

A larger sequence of co-occurring pragmatic markers shows a similar pattern. The conversation partners in example (5.45) speak about the status of English and the fact that the professors in their classes simply pre-define it as a lingua franca without really leaving much room for discussion.

(5.45) FL31: **I mean_#2** uhm so yeah uhm I 'm **I think_#2** I 'm I 'm okay with that ((thh))

SB33: ((hehe)) yeah **I mean_#2 I mean_#2** I **I think_#2** it 's it 's different uh or difficult to uhm evaluate m how English will develop uh how important it will be in the future **I mean_#2** the the of course it is pretty important right now

FL31: yeah

SB33: and uh **I mean_#2** basically everybody speaks it AS mh to quote my father ((ehh)) who said when I when I told him oh I wanna study English and he was like oh why why would you do that everybody speaks English already ((laughing))

(04SB33FL31)

The conversation partners both introduce their point with *I think* indicating subjectivity but by using *I mean* they also show their ambition to make a clear statement. SB33 gives FL31 the possibility to take the floor and contribute her opinion, but FL31 backchannels with agreement and lets SB33 go on with her argument, which she then continues with *I mean* again. As in example (5.44) above, both speakers use pragmatic markers to structure their interaction more efficiently, while also marking their statements with tentativeness and even the openness for dissenting opinions.

The same speakers also use the pragmatic markers *I mean* and *I think* to increase the tentativeness of their statement as in example (5.43) above. In (5.46), German SB33 tells Italian FL31 about his former Italian flatmates' English skills.

(5.46) SB33: they were really YEAH they were really really cool and uhm one of them spoke a pretty good English and the other one well he said he stud he he had some English lessons in school
FL31: mhm
SB33: UHM but he he always mixed up he and she for example
FL31: ((ehh))
SB33: so I never know what he was talking about ((laughing))
FL31: this this is this is kind of strange because we_#0 have genders genders yeah
SB33: uh huh
FL31: uh **I mean_#2** and I **I think_#2** it would be easier to uhm get it wrong because it does n't exist in Italian

(04SB33FL31)

FL31 listens to SB33's explanation, back-channels and chuckles, but then tells SB33 that mistaking genders for one another in English seems rather peculiar for an Italian speaker whose language includes genders for any kind of noun and who should therefore be quite familiar with the concept. FL31's point could come across as a way of "doubting" or minimalizing SB33's experience or opinion, however, which is why she seems to feel the need to clarify her point (*I mean*) with an inversion and to make sure it is understood as a subjective opinion (*I think*). She therefore makes sure the conversation partner is not offended in any way, by pre-emptively clarifying what she actually meant.

This section has showed that pragmatic markers which co-occur can, but do not necessarily have to include *I don't know*. Extant research states that in these instances, the tentativeness of an utterance is increased, which is the case for ViMELF speakers too. However, these co-occurrences do not only occur in these situations, but also in situations where the speakers simply use them to structure their discourse, to keep it fluid and to co-construct an effective argumentation.

5.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how speakers in ViMELF use pragmatic markers to indicate stance and thereby manage rapport. The chapter contributes to answering the main research questions of this thesis by highlighting how this linguistic feature affects positioning and rapport, how these functions are represented in the specific dataset and how the linguistic tools can be adapted to investigate this functionality. For that, I investigated two sets of pragmatic markers, (1) *I think, I mean* and *I guess* and (2) *I don't know* quantitatively and qualitatively regarding their form and functionality in the corpus. This often involves situations where the speakers try to mitigate potentially delicate situations, but also where they simply have a constructive, well organised discourse during the first interaction with each other and respect each other's stance.

ViMELF speakers use the first set of pragmatic markers (*I think, I mean* and *I guess*) to commit to a statement and avoid ambiguity, when introducing a subjective statement, for example. But using the markers does not only allow speakers to position themselves and indicate that this is their personal opinion, thought, or belief. The speakers also create a shared stance or invite their conversation partner to position themselves. The increase in the conversation partner's liberty in expressing their stance hence contributes to rapport. The same pragmatic markers as well as *I don't know* can also have the opposite function and increase the ambiguity of a statement by avoiding commitment to a stance. This vagueness allows the speaker to mitigate potentially delicate situations or reduce their responsibilities, effectively reducing the impact of their utterance and in many cases also increasing conversational flow.

I have investigated co-occurrences of the pragmatic markers, which had only been commented on in previous research in the context of *I don't know*. Where pragmatic markers appear in close proximity to one another, they often point to situations where the conversation partners manage rapport in a more nuanced way and are attentive to one another. This is especially true for co-occurrences with higher numbers of pragmatic markers, as occurrences of two markers together are often simply used as an on-line planning tool. In addition, there are co-occurrences with and without *I don't know* which can influence the discourse structure or increase the tentativeness of the statement to affect rapport. This is

important as is means that all pragmatic markers have to be considered in the co-occurrence analysis in chapter 7, not just *I don't know*.

With regards to the research context and the actual context of the data, *I think, I mean* and *I guess* in ViMELF are mostly used by the ELF speakers exactly as described in extant research about native speakers, even though there is not much research about *I guess* available. *I don't know* also follows extant research, but it deviates from claims made by Baumgarten and House (2010) about ELF speaker's use of *I don't know* as a pragmatic marker. Speakers in ViMELF seem to be much more pragmatically advanced than the ones in Baumgarten and House's data, making use of the full range of functions of pragmatic *I don't know.* The use of the pragmatic markers varies highly between speakers, with no linear correlation or other distinctive pattern apparent even when comparing conversation partners to each other or national sub-corpora. The fact that individual conversations do not seem to have correlating patterns means that the use of the pragmatic markers is very likely not dependent on the conversation partner's use of pragmatic markers, the topic or the kind of interaction either. Rather, it seems like speakers have their own, idiosyncratic ways of using the pragmatic markers in conversation.

A higher individual variability and their ambiguous functions makes it harder in general to find automatizing procedures for the analysis of pragmatic markers, which means that it seems like they will for now still have to be analysed within their concrete context. However, I have shown how SpanExtract and the Excel macro can be appropriated to analyse the pragmatic markers more effectively. The continuing development of SpanExtract is essential for the following chapters, since it lays the basis for analysing the co-occurrences of all three features in chapter 7. The findings in this and the previous chapter also have implications for the following two analyses in that they add to the understanding of the ambiguous nature of the pragmatic features and how that is effectively used by the speakers to manage rapport. This will be used as a basis for the analysis of laughter in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Laughter

6.1. Introduction

Chapters 2 and 3 established that laughter is an essential element of meaning construction and fulfils various functions in conversation. Laughter functions have been analysed independently from one another, but mostly fit in one singular framework proposed by Stewart (1997), which I have discussed in the previous chapters. This chapter investigates the impact of laughter on stance and rapport management in ViMELF, thereby addressing the first of the three main research questions. The aim of this analysis is also to establish how the contextual factors specific to ViMELF influence these findings and how the corpus linguistic methods that have been applied and developed in the previous two chapters can be further appropriated to analyse the third pragmatic feature, laughter. A quantitative analysis first describes how laughter is used in ViMELF conversations, by nationalities and according to individual speakers. I revisit the three 'domains' of laughter functions Stewart differentiates, *metalinguistic*, *evaluative* and *joking,* and assess how they are realised by the non-native speakers in ViMELF in a qualitative analysis. As the previous chapters have shown that co-occurrences of the pragmatic features are particular points of interest to rapport management, there is a detailed analysis of co-occurrences of laughter. The chapter therefore builds on the knowledge and linguistic tools that have come out of these chapters. Throughout the chapter I use the words "laughter" and "laughs" as a general term for all different annotations of laughter and only differentiate between the individual forms where there is a specific point to be made.

6.2. Laughter forms in ViMELF

This section focuses on how the different forms of laughter are used in ViMELF. Laughter in ViMELF follows a transcription guide, which has been described in section 3.3.4.3. There are nine specific types transcribed in the corpus which comprise different ways of laughing and chuckling. Table 3.2 in the same section shows the description of each individual type. In total, there are 2628 instances of laughter in ViMELF. The most used form of laughter is

((laughs)), standard laughter, with 450 instances in the corpus[40], closely followed by *((chuckling))* and *((heh))* with 434 and 432 instances respectively. The form *((thh))* occurs least often with only 76 instances in total. In general, chuckling, including chuckling while speaking (transcribed as *((chuckling))* following the words being chuckled in the data) and *((hehe))*, occurs more often than the three types of laughter (loud laughter, standard laughter and laughing while speaking) or the three monosyllabic laugh pulses (*((thh)), ((ehh))* and *((heh))*). There are 1083 instances of chuckling, 910 laugh pulses and 635 laughs. The table in Appendix IX shows the absolute and relative frequencies of the laughter types in detail. *((laughs)), ((chuckles)), ((chuckling)), ((hehe))* and *((heh))* are used in all conversations. The forms *((laughs))* and *((chuckles))* are mostly significantly underused: *((laughs))* in seven and *((chuckles))* in six conversations. There are only two conversations where *((laughs))* and one where *((chuckles))* is significantly overused.

An average conversation of 5694 words has about 131 instances of laughter, or about 23 instances of laughter per 1000 words. Many of the conversations, however, exceed or fail to meet these values by a large margin. There are five conversations where laughter is significantly underused compared to all other conversations. On the other hand, there are four conversations where it is significantly overused (compared to the overall corpus, $p < 0.001$). The conversations in general vary highly in their use of laughter. Similar to the instances of the pragmatic markers, it is essential to look more closely at the individual speakers and their use of laughter.

6.3. Variation across speakers and nationalities

When annotating the speakers using laughter in ViMELF, a slight abnormality appeared in the data: instead of 40 speakers, there were 41 who use laugher. As explained in section 3.2.2, this is due to the set-up of the conversations[41]. When participants had the Skype call at home, sometimes their housemate or partner would be around and comment on the ongoing interaction, join the conversation briefly, or talk to the participant about something else,

[40] There are 16 cases of loud laughter in ViMELF (transcribed as ((LAUGHS))). As mentioned in section 3.3.4.3, I do not generally differentiate between ((LAUGHS)) and ((laughs)) in the quantitative analysis.
[41] Rather than filming the interactions in a lab setting, the recordings were meant to be as natural as possible, without additional cameras and from the perspective that the conversation partner would have. The participants had the Skype calls at home or in public places like university, wherever was most convenient for them.

either in their own national language or in English. In this particular case, SB51 is talking to her conversation partner about the components of a typical English breakfast, as she seems to be thinking about missing items, inserting *what else* in her explanation. SB51's friend SBX51 then adds *baked beans* in order to help out SB51.

(6.1) SB51: it 's not bad **((laughs))** pretty good uhm what else potatoes for breakfast happens
SBX51: baked beans
SB51: already said that **((laughs))** just talking to a friend she 's sneaking in from time to time **((laughing))** **((laughs))** always curious and wants to check out how it 's going between us_#1[42] **((laughs))**
SBX51: **((laughs))**

(07SB51ST01)

SB51 tells her friend that she *already said that* before SBX51 was in the room, and laughingly tells her conversation partner about SBX51 *sneaking in*[to the room] *from time to time* to check how their conversation is going. SBX51 just laughs as a reply and the two conversation partners continue the topic of English breakfast. In this whole interaction, SBX51 only utters two words and laughs once. I decided to leave this laugh in the overall count above but left it out of the individual speaker and nationality analyses below.

Out of the forty actual participants in ViMELF, thirteen of them significantly underuse laughter and ten significantly overuse laughter in their speech, compared to the average of 23.08 instances per 1000 words of the general corpus ($p < 0.001$[43]). This means that the data is very uneven and laughter use varies highly between the speakers. It is of note that even though there are some very low numbers in speaker use of laughter, none of the speakers does not laugh or chuckle at all. SB05 shows the lowest use of laughter, with only roughly one instance per 1000 words, compared to SB73 with almost 60 instances per 1000 words of transcript. Looking in closer detail at the individual speakers of the conversations which have a significantly lower than average total number of laughs (01SB36FL10, 04SB25SF01, 05SB93HE19, and 08SB05SF05) both speakers show a significantly lower than average use

[42] Note that the examples from the data in this chapter contain annotations for pronouns and pragmatic markers introduced in the previous chapters.
[43] In this paragraph, the confidence interval is always $p < 0.001$.

of laughter. Only in conversation 08SB106HE03 speaker HE03's use is significantly lower, while SB106's use is lower than average but not significantly so. In the four conversations where laughter is significantly overused (01SB75HE01, 04SB33FL31, 06SB73ST14, and 07SB51ST01), both speakers overuse laughter significantly in comparison with the average of the corpus. Eleven conversations contain a relatively normal distribution of laughter. Out of these, there are six interactions where both speakers use an amount to laughter close to average, three where one conversation partner significantly underuses laughter, but their conversation partner's use is slightly higher than average (2 to 3.7 times as many instances) and the conversation as a whole remains within the normal distribution. In another one of those conversations, one speaker significantly overuses laughter, but their conversation partner remains within normal distribution. Only one conversation has one conversation partner overusing and the other one underusing laughter, with one of them using five times as much laughter as their conversation partner. In total, there are fourteen conversations where both speakers' usage of laughter is more or less similar. Only in one case the conversation partners deviated extremely from this. This means that, in most cases, unlike the plural pronouns and pragmatic markers in the earlier chapters, the speakers in ViMELF seem to co-ordinate their use of laughter to that of their conversation partner. This is in line with Sinha and Cassell's (2015) finding that speakers over the course of a conversation will accommodate laughter to each other, either through convergence or unidirectionally.

There are thirteen male and twenty-seven female participants in ViMELF. As a general trend, women in ViMELF overuse laughter more often than the men, who in turn underuse it more often and lie more often within normal distribution than the female participants. In detail, though, women are just as likely to over- as underuse laughter (i.e. extreme cases are equally as likely to occur). Comparing the male and female use of individual laughter forms, the male participants in the data are more likely to significantly underuse laughter or not use a form at all compared to the female participants (if a speaker uses laughter significantly more or less than the average of the corpus). The female participants are more likely to significantly overuse laughter compared to their male counterparts but, within their own group, they are generally still more likely to significantly underuse laughter or not use a specific type of laughter at all. This is because some women very significantly overuse laughter, which skews the overall data of the female participants (i.e. even though more women underuse laughter rather than overuse it, some so severely overuse it that it seems like the whole group overuses laughter compared to the male participants). This means that both groups are more likely to

use laughter less than what is the average of the conversations due to those outliers that overuse the pragmatic feature and thereby drive the average up considerably. This is, however, merely a trend in the data and cannot be generalised from this limited dataset.

6.4. Laughter functions in ViMELF

As mentioned in section 3.3.4.3, I did not tag the individual instances of laughter according to their function. This is due to a pilot study I conducted, which confirms that the individual instances of laughter can often not be tagged with one individual category, as there are multiple overlaps of functions and the domains cannot always clearly be allocated. In this chapter, the domains are not used as a clear divider between the different functions, but rather serve as a help for orientation. In many cases, laughter fulfils several functions at once, also across domains. Rather, then, the domains help understand the general context in which laughter is used and make the many different categories more accessible. This section will show how laughter is used in detail in ViMELF, assisted by separating the examples into sections according to the different domains. By showcasing some examples, it will become clear how the functions within a domain and sometimes even the domains themselves can overlap. While the domains are assisting the qualitative analysis, this section mainly shows supportive laughter in ViMELF that adds an additional meaning to what is said. The section discusses in detail how laughter changes the perception of what is said, affecting the conversation partner's relationship and therefore rapport.

6.4.1. The metalinguistic domain

As explained in chapter 2, Stewart's (1997) metalinguistic domain describes cases where laughter regulates speech. In ViMELF, this occurs in multiple forms. Extract (6.2), for example, where Finnish HE03 and German SB106 chat with each other about TV shows, presents a very basic and frequent function in ViMELF, using laughter to respond to the conversation partner or back-channel while they are talking.

(6.2) HE03: […] it 's it 's very nice like after a tough day that you can just sit down and watch The Big Bang Theory and I I really like Sheldon
SB106: **((hehe))**
HE03: like he 's he 's obviously my favourite guy because he you know he well he 's very special of course uhm his personality […]

(08SB106HE03)

The utterances of HE03 are shortened at the beginning and end because they are not essential to the example. HE03 gives a rather lengthy explanation about why he likes watching the TV show The Big Bang Theory and one of the characters in it (Sheldon). SB106 does not interrupt him but by means of the short chuckle *((hehe))* she back-channels, which shows her conversation partner that she is attentive to what continue without interrupting him. In another example, a German speaker tells his Finnish partner about teacher training in schools, to which HE04 replies in the following example that they have the same in Finland.

(6.3) HE04: AH YEAH we_#0 have the same yeah **((chuckling)) ((hehe))**
SB78: **((heh))**

(01SB78HE04)

SB78 replies to HE04 by giving a short "burst" of a chuckle. In this instance, SB78 uses chuckling as a backchannelling device to show understanding and encourage HE04 to talk more about her experience with teacher training, which she does in the following turns. Additionally, though, SB78 also seems to respond to her laughter with this chuckle, i.e. he is reactive to her. HE04's short utterance-final chuckle *((hehe))* can be interpreted as a turn-taking cue, indicating that this is the end of her contribution to the topic, which SB78, who has already described his experience, does not take but rather signals her to go on. While laughter is a discourse organising tool, similar to pragmatic markers in some instances, these examples show how interaction can be politely negotiated and how speakers can subtly give the other person the opportunity to express themselves and go into further detail. This sign of respect and attentiveness increases rapport between speakers.

In another example by the speakers from extract (6.3), laughter is again used as a turn-taking cue, but less successfully so. The conversation partners talk about how they got involved in the research project that led them to skyping one another, which in the case of HE04 is due to her academic writing teacher at university.

(6.4) HE04: uh I have a English class in academic writing where we_#0 I do n't know_#2 the teacher 's somehow involved **((heh))**
SB78: ah okay
HE04: so he just offered us_#0 this so we_#0 can get some extra points or uh be away instead or something like this **((heh))**

SB78: oh that 's nice we_#0 do n't

HE04: yeah what about you

(01SB78HE04)

During her explanation, HE04 chuckles briefly at the end of her first and second turn, indicating a possible instance of turn-yielding. It seems like HE04 tries to get her conversation partner to make a contribution to the topic twice with this cue, while he only backchannels and gives short answers. When SB78 does not react to the cues but only gives a short answer about not getting any extra course credits for doing the project, HE04 specifically asks him to contribute his story in her third turn. SB78, who uses laughter in the earlier example to perform the very same function, does not seem to be unaware of this function. It is far more likely that this is an instance of SB78 being respectful and giving his conversation partner the room to speak and fully develop her point, while also showing attention to what she is saying. This seeming discrepancy between HE04 politely inviting a change of turns and SB78 respectfully avoiding a contribution is simply resolved by HE04 moving to a less subtle turn-yielding cue and asking SB78 directly to contribute.

This domain shares functionality with the pragmatic markers. Both do not overtly influence rapport, but, as I explained in section 5.3.2, this adds to a subtler form of rapport management. Using the pragmatic features in this way allows the speakers to structure their discourse, to keep it fluid and to co-construct an effective exchange. This is especially important in conversations where the context can interrupt the conversational flow, such as when there are unacquainted or non-native speakers. In the case of ViMELF, both of these apply, which shows that this function of the pragmatic features, be it more subtle, is a very important one.

6.4.2. The evaluative domain

The evaluative domain describes a way of using laughter to encode a variety of attitudes towards the on-going interaction. The speakers in extract (6.5) use two different laughter functions pertaining to the evaluative domain, for example. This short exchange shows the two speakers being unhappy about the conversation topic they were assigned as a prompt.

(6.5) SB93: yeah do n't really like our_#1 topic **((ehh))**

HE19: YEAH I agree I agree **((hehe))**

(05SB93HE19)

SB93 states her dislike of the topic and HE19 agrees with her verbally and chuckles. This is a typical case for ViMELF, where laughter is used to reinforce the agreement with the conversation partner's point and even alignment with their stance. Note how the speaker does not only say *yeah*, but also repeats *I agree* before she uses laughter. While laughter can also occur alone at the beginning of an intonation unit to signal agreement without verbally saying so, the majority of cases in ViMELF is accompanied with some form of verbal confirmation. In these cases, the laughter also seems like a response to laughter by the conversation partner in the previous turn. In example (6.5), the first speaker SB93's chuckle at the end of her intonation unit can be interpreted in two ways or be a mixture of the two. Similar to examples discussed in the above section, this could be a simple turn-taking cue for the other speaker. It can, however, also be seen as an attitude towards the speaker's own utterance, trying to mitigate the negative attitude she displays towards the topic their interaction is supposed to be built on. The chuckle marks the statement as potentially non-serious (but not funny, cf. chapter 2), i.e. SB93 is indicating that this statement should not be taken too seriously. This is especially important in order not to offend her conversation partner. HE19's subsequent chuckle therefore shows understanding and alignment with SB93's stance, supporting her even more so than the verbal agreement would have done by itself. This instance also shows that multiple domains can be at work at once when there is laughter, which has already been discussed in the context of the pilot study in chapter 3.

An overlap between the metalinguistic and the evaluative domain can also be seen in the following example, where the same speakers as in (6.5) above talk about lectures that were recorded and put online. SB93 explains the advantages of not having to attend classes at university and rather watching the lecture recording at home.

(6.6) SB93: so it was quite comfortable maybe you could have tea and you could EAT
HE19: YEAH **((chuckling))**

(05SB93HE19)

While SB93 explains the advantages, her conversation partner HE19 back-channels in a chuckling voice and agrees with her. At the same time, she also expresses amusement about SB93 mentioning how comfortable having a tea and eating something would be during supposed course work. Unlike the example above, the chuckling speaker HE19 does not modify or evaluate her own statement with the chuckle but the one of her conversation

partner, reframing it to a non-serious remark. She signals her partner that she is not taking this statement too seriously and displays positive emotions towards the idea of getting that comfortable during an online lecture. Displaying positivity and acceptance of the statement show respect to the speaker and build rapport on a very detailed level.

In example (6.7), the participants discuss the topic of language learning. They talk about Arnold Schwarzenegger's Austrian German accent when he speaks English. SB78 tries to use him as an example to show that it does not really matter how old a person is; they will still be able to learn a language, but they might not care too much about their accent or know how to correct it. This prompts the following reaction from his conversation partner HE04:

(6.7) HE04: yeah **((laughing))** .H but maybe he 's so proud of it **((laughing))** he does n't wanna change **((chuckling))** or
SB78: **((hehe))** maybe yeah maybe

(01SB78HE04)

HE04 agrees with a laughing voice and then tries to offer the alternative explanation that Schwarzenegger might also care so much about his rather strong accent that he is proud and does not want to change it, which she clearly finds amusing, laughing and chuckling while speaking. SB78 back-channels chuckling but remains rather non-committal by saying *maybe yeah maybe* rather than agreeing. This seems to be a mitigation where SB78 does not want to disagree with HE04 or insist on sticking to the serious point he was trying to make, but rather only seemingly agrees and responds to the chuckling in a manner as we have seen in the examples above. This discrepancy between the laughter which can encode actual agreement and alignment and the speaker's generally non-committal answer creates an ambiguity that the speaker uses in order to manage rapport in a subtle manner.

The same speakers are also a good example for sharing positive and negative emotions with their conversation partner. In the following example, German SB78 mentions in passing to Finnish HE04 that he took Finnish language courses, which seems to surprise her considerably as she exclaims:

(6.8) HE04: in FINNISH
SB78: yeah yeah yeah in Finnish **((heh))**
HE04: WHY

SB78: but but it ’s I do n’t know_#2 I was curious **((heh))**
HE04: **((laughs))**

(01SB78HE04)

HE04 loudly asks *in FINNISH*, seemingly surprised by SB78’s revelation. SB78 confirms this with a triple *yeah* and chuckles slightly at the end of the utterance. This instance could have many different functions, both metalinguistic as well as evaluative ones. It could either be a turn-taking cue, or a sign of joy and amusement about the surprised reaction by HE04, or a combination of them. HE04 continues to be “shocked”, asking *WHY* with a considerable stress, which shows her excitement about this. The excitement encodes a certain amount of praise. SB78 starts replying in a way that looks like an attenuation and interrupts himself with the pragmatic marker *I don’t know*. The previous chapter describes how *I don’t know* is used as a filler and to introduce vagueness into the speaker’s stance. In this specific example, SB78 seems somewhat hesitant to accept this praise, almost as if he were slightly embarrassed. He explains that he took the course out of curiosity and again chuckles at the end of his turn. It is unclear whether this is out of embarrassment or a hesitant acceptance of HE04’s indirect praise, or even a metalinguistic comment. HE04 laughs in answer, which shows her remaining amused and light-hearted towards the topic. She does not let SB78 be embarrassed by the compliment which is implied by the surprise she initially shows. Laughter in this case helps both SB78 to mitigate and HE04 to encourage and support him. In a similar instance, the speakers discuss SB78 going back to school as a teacher after finishing his studies a year from then.

(6.9) SB78: so I ’ve I ’ve got one year left and then
HE04: okay
SB78: then it ’s getting serious **((hehe))**
HE04: yeah getting back to school **((chuckling)) ((hehe))**

(01SB78HE04)

SB78 chuckles after declaring it would get serious for him in a year’s time, which in turn makes the statement less serious. The chuckle seems to mask a slight nervousness and concern about this new chapter in his life. HE04 replies chuckling, again supporting him in joining this non-seriousness stance while finishing SB78’s thought and chuckling again. HE04 shows sympathy with SB78 and takes the light-hearted attitude that SB78 offers towards them without dismissing his concerns.

While the above examples have in common that the conversation partners support the speakers who are nervous about something, for example, the following extract requires the partner to manage rapport due to the speaker over-stepping boundaries. German speaker SB73 explains her Spanish conversation partner ST14 what Plätzchen, German Christmas biscuits, are. ST14 replies that she does not know them but compares the item explained to her to English customs, which SB73 confirms, also mentioning customs in the American culture.

(6.10) ST14: mhm right we_#0 do n't though I I 've never I 've never done anything like this in Spain
SB73: yeah you should try it it 's really good **((hehe))**
ST14: okay **((ehh))**
SB73: I 'll send you some recipes **((laughs))**
ST14: **((hehe))**

(06SB73ST14)

ST14 says that they do not have them in Spain, or at the very least that she has never made Christmas biscuits like that. SB73 replies that in that case she should try them because of how good they are and chuckles. ST14 accepts this with *okay* and chuckles briefly. This chuckle can be seen both as an answer to SB73's chuckle, as well as an ambiguous mitigation tactic where it appears like ST14 is convinced by SB73 without that really being the case. While the next instances of laughter seem fairly similar, there is potentially more to them. SB73 appears to be making an offer to ST14, sending her recipes since she suggested she try some biscuits. The phrasing, however, means that SB73 is assertively taking the decision to do so without asking her conversation partner whether she is okay with that. This is mitigated slightly by introducing non-seriousness into the utterance through laughter. This seems to be met with a non-committal chuckle by ST14, who does neither accept nor refuse the "offer" or thank SB73 for deciding to do so. This could be her way of introducing ambiguity by appearing to agree through the chuckle without this really being the case. It is, however, also possible that this is due to ST14 not fully understanding what SB73 would send her, since SB73 mispronounces the word *recipes*, making it sound like a rhyme with the third person singular of 'recite', recites. This lack in understanding could also explain why she neither

accepts nor rejects the offer, but rather mitigates this potential gap in their conversation by chuckling and making the other speaker taking the turn again.

6.4.3. The joking domain

The joking domain (in the supportive category, see chapter 2) generally links to social functions: gaining acceptance, creating and confirming in-group identities, and displaying intimacy can be the (pleasant) consequence of humorous remarks like jokes, wordplay, and narratives. Extract (6.9) above shows an example of a humorous comment that eliminates the tension of the situation. SB78 is speaking about going into teaching after his studies and seems somewhat nervous or concerned about the imminent change in his life. While he is talking about moving on in life, HE04 jokes about him going back to school at the same time, an apparent paradox, which creates laughter and light-heartedness.

The participants also use slightly self-deprecating humour in reaction to compliments, as in the following case, where the conversation partners discuss each other's name and whether they are traditionally German or Bulgarian.

(6.11) SB07: is your name a typical Bulgarian name
SF07: oh yeah **((heh))** it 's pretty generic I mean_#2 every fourth guy is probably called SF07name **((laughing))**
SB07: **((ehh))**

(10SB07SF07)

The exchange occurs towards the beginning of the conversation, where the participants are slowly getting acquainted with one another. SB07 asks SF07 whether his name is traditionally Bulgarian. SF07 confirms that, chuckles and then says that the name is so *generic* that *every fourth guy* [in Bulgaria] *is probably called* that in a laughing manner. This is a humorous over-exaggeration which has a slightly self-deprecating quality to it, making SF07 less "unique" or special. SF07 clearly marks it as a joke through his laughter and SB07 chuckles in response to it, showing understanding and amusement. This is a cheery way of introducing themselves to one another, with humour and laughter taking the tension out of this first interaction between strangers.

In another instance, German SB73 and Spanish ST14 talk about Christmas traditions, such as the Christmas tree. They reveal that both have artificial trees at home, which surprises ST14, who says the following:

(6.12) ST14: but I thought well she 's from Germany so she 's got like all those pine trees and cool stuff so she might as well go again and cut it **((ehh))**
SB73: **((chuckles))**
ST14: WOODS
SB73: **((chuckles))**

(06SB73ST14)

ST14 teases SB73, saying that, being German, she expected her to have a real tree, implying that the German fauna offers a lot of options for Christmas trees. ST14 adds that she expected her conversation partner to go outside and cut down the tree herself and chuckles. This is clearly marked as joking and is a cheery, non-offensive tease of German stereotypes and traditions, also aided by using the label *cool stuff*. SB73 seems to share the amusement and shows this by chuckling continuously. Teasing her in such a way creates a bond between them, commenting indirectly on them following similar customs even though traditionally they would expect them to be different.

Laughter can also help mitigating unusual situations. In extract (6.13), SB93 is sitting in her university's cafeteria for the Skype call. She struggles to hear her partner and set up the conversation as originally intended. She announces that, as she cannot hear HE19 through her headphones, she would stop using them and switch to the computer's internal loudspeaker instead.

(6.13) SB93: can you say something
HE19: uh YEAH can you hear me now
SB93: I CAN hear you but everybody else as well but
HE19: **((laughs))**

(05SB93HE19)

SB93 asks HE19 to say something to check whether she can now hear her conversation partner. HE19 as a response asks whether SB93 could hear her, who replies that she does, but that due to using the loudspeaker, so could everybody else in her surroundings as well. HE19 is seemingly amused by this and laughs. This humorous comment by SB93 transforms a

stressful situation of failing to set up the conversation properly for the research project into a positive situation. The laughter relieves possible tensions, especially by HE19, who is waiting for SB93 to finish the set-up and also serves as a signal that this is not taken seriously and will not affect their relationship, hence improving rapport.

As this section has demonstrated, rapport does not have to be created only through laughing at somebody's humorous comment but can also be created by a combination of alignment, a non-serious framing of the interaction, and the display of positive emotions. Most of the examples discusses contain more than one instance of laughter. Co-occurring laughter therefore needs to be more closely investigated.

6.5. Co-occurrences of laughter in ViMELF

This section discusses co-occurrences of laughter in ViMELF with reference to the functions of laughter established in the sections above. Co-occurrences of laughter are defined as instances in the data, where laughter follows another instance of laughter either in the same turn, the following turn by another speaker, or in the next turn by the original speaker (i.e. within two consecutive turns). Each laughter instance is counted as a new case[44]. I extracted these instances with SpanExtract and analysed them manually. There are 317 turns where laughter co-occurs in a single turn, with 701 co-occurring instances (i.e. sometimes there are more than two instances per turn). An extension of the span across three consecutive turns increases the number of turns where laughter co-occurs to 1364 turns and 3774 instances of laughter. This high number is due to the fact that many turns of laughter following other turns containing laughter and some are therefore counted twice or thrice (see footnote). This very large number, however, also indicates that, in ViMELF, laughter is not a feature that is often used in isolation. Below, I have selected several instances where laughter co-occurrences can be found in several consecutive turns and I have expanded the data context in order to give a complete account of how laughter co-occurrences can point to rapport-relevant instances in the data. The data is presented with numbered lines for easier orientation, as the extracts are longer than any others in this thesis.

[44] This means that if one turn has two instances of laughter and the consecutive turn another instance, then the software would return the same turns twice: once for the first two instances in line one and once for the second and third instance in lines one and two. The second laugh in turn one is therefore counted twice.

During their conversation, HE01 and SB75 speak about their future and discover that both women would like to live and work in London. Right before extract (6.14), HE01 complains about the fact that she would like to work on projects with a bigger scope than her present one and mentions urban development as her possible future occupation. She finishes her troubles talk, summing up that she likes her studies and work and chuckles, upon which the following exchange occurs.

(6.14)

SB75: **((heh))** I 'm looking forward to seeing your name on a big label somewhere in the city **((laughs))**
HE01: **((laughs))** yeah yeah of course of course
SB75: .H then I can say I had a Skype talk with THIS woman **((laughs))** […]
HE01: **((laughs))**
SB75: .H and maybe I send our_#1 file then **((chuckles))**
HE01: yeah **((laughs))**
SB75: **((chuckles))**
HE01: yeah yeah and then uh uh during our_#1 coffee in London we_#1 will both be just like oh lo hello I I saw your name in the paper
SB75: **((laughs))**
HE01: oh yeah I saw yours t as well **((heh))**
SB75: **((laughs))** I hope so **((hehe))** if you REAlly move to London promise me to call me again **((chuckles))**
HE01: of course of course
SB75: maybe you do n't forget that 'd be cool **((hehe))**
HE01: yeah **((chuckling))** can I call you even if I 'm just VIsiting there **((ehh))**
SB75: you can call me whenever YOU want **((laughs))**
HE01: **((laughs))**
SB75: definitely yeah

(01SB75HE01)

There are 18 instances of laughter in this extract. In line 1, SB75 replies to the chuckle by issuing a short laugh pulse, which simultaneously shows understanding for HE01's position and serves as a topic termination or topic-ending indicator, making the pulse both evaluative and metalinguistic. SB75 takes up HE01's cue and changes the topic to a former topic: their plans for moving to the UK. This is where the actual laughter sequence begins. Referring back to their prior conversation, SB75 comments on HE01's chances of becoming famous through her work and herself, SB75, recognising HE01's name in London in a public space one day in the future. Her laughter reveals that SB75 is in fact reframing the situation into a non-serious, half imaginary conception of their future. SB75 continues her imagining of their future by saying that if HE01 became famous, she would release the file of their Skype conversation to the public to prove that she knows *THIS woman*. Their shared laughter in lines 2 and 3, as well as in lines 4 and 5 reinforce this new frame. The laughter in lines 7 and 8 could be interpreted as another turn-taking cue or a signal for topic termination. More seriously then, HE01 refers back to their agreement on meeting up for a cup of coffee in London from earlier in the conversation, a proposal by SB78. But this is immediately followed by another comment on both their imaginary future fame. It is unclear why HE01 says *I saw your name in the paper*, since SB78 is planning to become a teacher or do her PhD in London. HE01 is potentially including SB78 in the stance of future fame. While HE01 does not laugh this time, SB75 displays non-seriousness, still adhering to the previously introduced playfulness and non-seriousness. Her second laughter in line 13, *((hehe))* is a metalinguistic topic-ending indicator, but also shows agreement and alignment with HE01, especially in saying *I hope so*. This, as well as stress on *REALLY* followed by *promise me* in the same line indicates that she is shifting to a more serious stance. SB75's direct, bold request for a performative speech act introduces a potentially delicate point. HE01's reaction to this request is expected to be either bold acceptance or a rejection. This is somewhat softened and mitigated with the chuckle SB75 introduces at the end of her turn. It renders SB75's utterance as unproblematic, which gives HE01 the option of taking the request up as something non-serious, even though SB75's direct request reveals her real intentions. HE01 consequently accepts the request. By saying it would be great if HE01 really contacted her implies that SB75 still needs further serious assertions, but she mitigates this again by chuckling in line 16. HE01 backchannels chuckling, possibly agreeing and aligning with SB75. HE01's follow-up question on whether she could contact SB75 even without living in London and the (mitigating) chuckle in line 17 are very similar to SB75's request in line 13 and 14, but it is formulated more carefully. By asking for SB75's permission to do so, HE01

implies that it might be inconvenient or otherwise unwelcome for her to contact SB75 again. Still, HE01 treats the inquiry as unproblematic if declined. This politer way of asking is met by SB75 with a determined, joyful acceptance, followed by shared laughter in lines 18, signalling alignment and displaying positive emotions, and 19, showing relief.

Evaluative and metalinguistic supportive laughter functions occur most often in this extract, which means that the rapport orientation of the conversation partners in this situation is rapport enhancement and maintenance. Throughout the short excerpt, it is noticeable that neither speaker wants to be too direct, possibly impolite, and seriously propose or agree on a meeting. Every time a new proposal is made, it is accompanied or followed by laughter, which allows for an ambiguous interpretation of the proposal (realistic or unrealistic). This means that laughing about something lets the speaker either treat what has been said as real and serious and react to it accordingly ("definitely" in line 20), or to see it as something non-serious (i.e. something not worth considering as "realistic"). The conversation partner would therefore not necessarily have to confirm or approve the speaker's viewpoint and the statement. The speakers create ambiguity by allowing for a possibly non-serious interpretation of the interaction without them having to affirm their stance. They successfully mitigate any possible escalation point, treating direct requests as something less serious and unproblematic, without the sequential implications they might otherwise have. By leaving the conversation partner the option to interpret the direct request and the slightly less direct inquiry as something non-serious, both women show politeness in their ambiguity. The laughter reduces and weakens as the verbal agreement (*yeah yeah* in line 9, *I hope so* in line 13, *of course* in line 15, etc.) becomes stronger, i.e. more serious. Gradually moving from a playful, non-serious to a more serious stance in this situation is a polite way of dealing with proposals and thereby contributing to rapport. Their seemingly genuine, mutual decision to keep in contact after a thirty-minute conversation with a stranger is a sign of successful rapport management that even leads to an emerging affiliation of the two young women.

In example (6.15), German SB07 and Bulgarian SF07 discuss their assigned topic prompt, which for them is the future of English as a lingua franca. Participants in ViMELF are neither expected nor explicitly told to stick to only that topic. It seems that SF07 and SB07 do not know what to add to their arguments after a few minutes and try to come up with a new topic. SB07 proposes the next assigned topic on the list, which they would not have needed to

include, and SF07 asks which one it is. As SF07 neither accepts nor declines the proposal, but asks for further information, SB07 reads the topic out loud for her conversation partner:

(6.15)

SB07: yes one voice or many Europe and it ’s rule in uh and it ’s ROLE in the future
SF07: uh that ’s politically oriented and that ’s my worst to talk about
SB07: oh okay **((laughing))**
SF07: **((laughs))**
SB07: **((laughs))** okay **((laughing))** then we_#1 skip that **((laughing))** **((laughs))** .H because uh my second subject is political science so I ’m kind of interested in talking about Europe and **((laughing))** .H uh d do n’t bother **((laughs))** .H it ’s okay
SF07: okay thank you **((laughing))**
SB07: **((laughs))** uhm and uhm what uh did you do at the weekend what uhm did you have to
SF07: uh okay that ’s easier **((heh))** to answer
SB07: **((laughs))** .H I guess_#2 it ’s much easier than Europe **((laughs))**
SF07: **((ehh))** yeah

(10SB07SF07)

The example features 14 instances of laughter in eight consecutive turns. The exchange begins with both participants looking for a new topic, which indicates an unnatural flow of conversation, a dysfunction, prior to the excerpt. The Bulgarian speaker clearly and seriously states his dislike for politics right before his counterpart tells him that politics is in fact her second university degree. Upon hearing the topic, SF07 describes the topic as *critically oriented*, which is his *worst*. This indicates that he is not good at or at the very least interested in the critical evaluation of such highly political and controversial topics as Europe and the role and power of individual states within the European Union. Although SF07 expresses his aversion to the proposed topic, he does not decline the proposal itself. SB07’s laughed *oh okay* in line 4 could be a sign of understanding, i.e. have a metalinguistic function. This means it could signal her perception of the complaint or aversion. But her next turn in lines 6 to 9 leads to the assumption that she is indeed using evaluative coping laughter. This would allow SB07 to mitigate an escalation point, which SF07 has so far been unaware of: SB07’s

second subject is Political Sciences, which is in its very essence what SF07 has just rejected. SF07 can of course not be aware of this fact and does not know that he created this delicate situation. Therefore, the laughed speech by SB07 in line 4 could also be interpreted as a mitigation attempt to avoid a possible disagreement. When SF07 joins in with the laughter, perhaps under the assumption that SB07 understands his issues with political criticism, SB07 answers with more laughter and decides to skip the topic, still laughing. She then, however, explains to SF07 her second course of studies, telling him that she is indeed very interested in the topic. She even adds that she does not see this incident as problematic (*don't bother* and *it's okay*). This is accompanied by more coping laughter from her. SF07's laughter in line 10 seems to indicate that he is finally aware of the delicate situation and uses it as remedy for his faux pas. This exit strategy is taken up by SB07, reinforcing the mitigation process. She then proposes another, lighter topic, asking about SF07's weekend. SF07's relief at the successful transition shows in his utterance in line 13 when he says *uh okay that's easier ((heh)) to answer*. This evaluative laughter is then answered by SB07 in line 14, whose following remark *I guess it's much easier than Europe* nevertheless shows that she still silently disagrees with SF07's attitude but does not want to openly criticise him, which would continue the disagreement. Therefore, she rather comments on the comparison between the complexity and the difficulty of the two topics, which allows her to agree with SF07, thereby aligning with his stance. In this example, laughter is mostly used to mitigate a delicate and somewhat embarrassing situation. The mitigation is seemingly successful, as they then simply change their conversation topic.

(6.16) is an exchange between a German and an Italian speaker. They talk about Irish stereotypes, such as their linguistic behaviour and drinking. The following exchange occurs towards the middle of the conversation, right after SB33 asks FL31 whether she also finds the Irish as (*REALLY really*) hard to understand as she does. FL31 agrees and adds the following.

(6.16)

1 FL31: a a and they speak so fast
2 SB33: **((heh))**
3 FL31: it 's **((hehe))**
4 SB33: **((heh))**
5 FL31: it **((heh))** oh my God but they 're actually nice and they 're funny
6 SB33: yeah my m

7 FL31: and they ’re drunk all the time but you know they ’re funny **((hehe))**
8 SB33: **((laughs))** that ’s such a stereotype the drunk Irishman **((laughing))**
9 FL31: I know but it ’s true **((laughs))**
10 SB33: **((LAUGHS))**
11 FL31: what can you do oh well
12 SB33: so they they drink whiskey all the time do n’t they **((chuckling))**
13 FL31: YEAH and you you
14 SB33: **((heh))**
15 FL31: uhm at like six p.m
16 SB33: uh
17 FL31: and they get out of off the office and they go straight to the pub
18 SB33: **((thh))**
19 FL31: drinking Guinness it ’s uh **((heh))** oh God
20 SB33: **((laughs))**

(04SB33FL31)

There are 14 instances of laughter in this example. The Italian insists on the stereotype of drunk Irish people being true. The German speaker initially disagrees, but the persistence of the Italian speaker leads to them using laughter to answer ambiguously without (dis)agreeing verbally and thereby mitigating the delicate situation. The exchange starts with both participants complaining about the accent and velocity of Irish speakers, as this interferes with their comprehension of spoken Irish English. SB33’s laugh turn in line 2 functions in an evaluative way and signals that the complaint is to take light-heartedly. She takes a non-serious stance. This is reinforced by FL31 in line 3 by means of laughter and also verbally in line 5. Both speakers chuckle together. The verbal reinforcement reframes the situation back to a more serious one. As SB33 agrees to FL31’s assessment of Irish speakers’ kind and *funny* nature, FL31 continues with another Irish stereotype. She doesn’t notice SB33’s serious attempt to follow up on the linguistic behaviour of the Irish in line 6 (*yeah my m*)[45]. FL31 delivers her impression of Irish drinking habits (*they’re drunk all the time*, line 7) and makes a somewhat deprecating remark with *but you know they’re funny***,** which she follows with a chuckle, indicating amusement. This is interpreted by SB33 as a non-serious remark

[45] SB33 takes this up again after this whole sequence by telling a humorous story about a friend who had trouble with the Irish accent.

(line 8) as she laughs. SB33's following laughed comment, *that's such a stereotype the drunk Irishman*, continues the non-serious stance she is taking and mitigates her indirect disagreement. Although FL31 agrees with SB33, she insists that the stereotype is in fact true and not just a common misconception. Her insistence might hint at the possibility that she also took SB33's remark as a masked disagreement. The decisive nature of her utterance is softened through the use of laughter, leading SB33 to jokingly challenge FL31 by combining the stereotype of drinking with the one of whiskey, asking her to comment on that. This could probably be an example of tease, which is reinforced by laughter in line 14. Of course, there is also the possibility that SB33 simply continues the non-serious evaluation of the exchange and does in fact ask FL31 a question without wanting to tease her. FL31 then explains, without laughter, that it is quite normal for Irish people to go out and have a beer (Guinness, another stereotype) right after work. She only laughs after her explanation to display amusement about this habit. This laughter seems to be shared by SB33, which could indicate a possible alignment with FL31's stance.

The exchange is a good example for an interaction that can be interpreted ambiguously. Especially SB33's laughter could either indicate her amusement at FL31's fixation on Irish stereotypes and an attempt to mitigate a serious discussion of this contestable topic or an alignment with FL31's amusement at the stereotypes. As SB33 never openly teases nor ridicules FL31 verbally or nonverbally, she supports the creation of an in-group identity (FL31 and SB33 versus "the Irish stereotype"), successfully managing rapport.

Example (6.17) features an exchange between German SB73 and Spanish ST14 who speak about the ways of celebrating their culture and traditions. The following question about German perceptions of Spanish behaviour does not arise out of the immediately preceding discourse but refers back to an earlier topic from their conversation:

(6.17)

ST14: uhm I really really want you to be honest do you guys think in Germany do you guys think Spanish people are party people

SB73: party people uhm I think_#3 so **((laughs))**

ST14: you do **((chuckling))**

SB73: **((laughs))** well I do not know these -much Spanish people **((chuckles))** […] but uhm yeah I think_#3 so

ST14: **((ehh))**

SB73: **((hehe))** maybe it 's just uhm a stereotype because of uhm you have uhm MallORCA the party yeah

ST14: **((laughs))** that 's right

SB73: yeah but I think_#2 most people there are from Germany **((laughing))** so **((hehe))** there are a lot of visitors from Germany and ENGLAnd and so on yeah

ST14: mh and German people party a lot too and I 've seen it **((thh))**

SB73: yeah **((ehh))**

ST14: I 've seen it **((chuckling))** so we_#1 're not that different **((thh))**

SB73: in Spain **((hehe))** so **((chuckles))** cool

(06SB73ST14)

The example features 15 instances of laughter. SF14 starts this exchange by asking her German conversation partner whether Germans have a stereotype about Spanish people being particularly keen on parties. SB73 hedges slightly by repeating the phrase *party people* and using a filler, but then confirms that such a stereotype exists. This and the laughter that follows indicate that this is a somewhat dispreferred answer, a fact that SB73 seems to realise. SF14's request in line 1, *I really really want you to be honest*, appears to influence SB73's perception of the question as serious, which has consequences on her answer. By confirming the stereotype's existence, SB73 creates a delicate situation between the two speakers, which she tries to mitigate with laughter. ST14's chuckled follow-up question *you do* in line 4 creates an even stronger assumption of that SB73 has given a dispreferred answer, although it might also be attributed to SB73's insecure answer and ST14's desire to know the truth. While ST14's chuckling seems like she is taking a non-serious stance, her manner clearly shows that she is considering this a more serious matter. This ambiguity makes her insistence on the topic seem less "aggressive" or problematic. As ST14 still expects an answer, SB73 laughs again in her

attempt to mitigate the delicate situation and hedges and delays a definite answer. She explains that she does not know a lot of Spanish people, implying that her perception might not be correct and only dependent on a few individuals. SB73 is clearly cautious and seems to be hesitant to agree, as if she were attempting not to affront her Spanish conversation partner with this cliché. SB73 then finally confirms the stereotype. This mitigation strategy is again met by a short chuckle from ST14 in line 7, who still does not give any indication to her opinion on the matter and trough the metalinguistic use of laughter signals and "invites" SB73 to continue. SB73 tries to de-escalate further and questions the stereotype, which is for the first time in this exchange met by an evaluative laughter from ST14, who agrees in line 10. When SB73 then reverses the stereotype, which suddenly aims at German and English people (lines 11 to 13) who are responsible for Mallorca parties and the like, which form part of the stereotype, ST14 aligns with her, saying that Germans also party a lot and chuckles. SB73 agrees and chuckles, the delicate situation appears to be successfully mitigated by the German speaker. ST14 finally offers her assessment of the exchange in line 16, *so we're not that different*, which in turn allows the participants to see the topic as concluded. Both therefore produce metalinguistic laughter, which functions as topic termination cue.

The interaction and especially the possible delicacy of this situation is kept ambiguous, as the delicate point is continually dragged onwards due to ST14's reluctance to let SB73 give a non-serious, slightly ambiguous but dis-preferred answer. Instead of letting SB73 state her opinion and discussing that, ST14 insists on getting an honest, clearly stated answer. SB73 is unsuccessful in attempting to mitigate by creating a non-serious situation with laughter. SB73 tries to mitigate and rephrase her answer, taking it almost completely back and reversing it. Only then is ST14 satisfied and they continue with another topic. This is an example of a failed attempt to mitigate a situation with laughter. The German speaker tries to mitigate, stall, and evade the question with laughter, but then answers honestly by affirming. The Spanish speaker challenges this opinion and, in the ensuing chat, rapport can only be maintained by verbal means.

ViMELF mostly includes supportive functions of laughter. Even though the participants are strangers, they used laughter from all three domains to tease another speaker, which the examples above have shown. Similar to the function of pragmatic markers explained in the previous chapter, metalinguistic laughter is used to structure a conversation. It contributes to rapport management in that it is a subtle way of maintaining the flow of an interaction. It also

allows speakers to continue giving the floor to the conversation partner, for example, thereby "forcing" them to take a stance whereas they markedly do not position themselves. These gentler manipulations of interaction often allow a speaker to mitigate delicate points or steer the other speaker subtly into a specific direction. The evaluative laughter described above fulfils multiple functions in conversations between unacquainted non-native speakers, who manage rapport sometimes more or less successfully with laughter. The examples above show that speakers not only use it to agree and align with each other, but also for more serious, delicate or problematic situations during their interaction. They make use of that very function, knowing that laughter indicates agreement and alignment or at the very least positive feelings towards what is said. In case where someone cannot or does not want to commit to agreeing or aligning with their partner's stance, they laugh or chuckle and create an ambiguous situation, where their laughter might mean actual agreement or masked disagreement. They offer a possibly non-serious interpretation of the interaction without having to affirm stance. It then depends on the partner to interpret the ambiguous laugh or chuckle.

The ViMELF speakers also use laughter for reframing a situation or a stance. In a delicate or serious situation, like a disagreement, laughter can help to change the frame from serious to non-serious, even playful. Laughter then mitigates, even downplays the damage and possible conflict. The participants use laughter to manage delicate situations, especially in situations of anxiety and any kind of salient incident or accident, like committing a minor transgression, a *faux pas*, or displaying one's own shortcomings. In cases of self-deprecation as (6.11) above, similar to what Partington (2006) describes, the speakers invite the interlocutors to show sympathy, while simultaneously shifting the frame to a non-serious one, in which it becomes clear that the speaker takes whatever he or she has said in a somewhat light-hearted manner. This also features in troubles talk by ViMELF speakers. Those complaining seem to use laughter as a means of rectification for talking about their troubles, as this is a dis-preferred option in interaction, much like disagreeing with somebody. Laughter lessens the severity of the complaint. Presumably since the ViMELF participants are strangers to each other, the severity of the troubles-talk in the analysed examples does not reach a critical limit. Therefore, observed examples do not include any instances of the speaker not inviting their conversation partner to share their laughter or reacting negatively for them doing so, as has been described in earlier research.

6.6. Conclusion

This chapter has described the use of laughter in ViMELF. Addressing research questions one and two, the chapter shows how laughter is spread across conversations and national sub-corpora, but also takes into account individual speakers. Laughter in general varies significantly across the conversations, and while some include very little laughter, none of them contains no laughter at all. Similar to native speakers, the speakers seem to co-ordinate their use of laughter to that of their conversation partner, supporting the notion that laughter seems to be reciprocal unlike plural pronouns and pragmatic markers in the earlier chapters. All three of them, however, show that the non-native speakers use the features with the same range of functions as non-native speakers do in similar conditions. Of particular interest is also the metalinguistic or discursive function that both pragmatic markers and laughter have and its relationship to rapport. To my knowledge, a comparison between the two has so far not been made in this respect.

I have shown how an instance of laughter does not necessarily have only one function but can very often encode a mixture of functions during an interaction. Speakers in ViMELF both take a stance and avoid taking a stance with laughter. Due to its flexibility, they both openly align with a conversation partner's stance as well as use exactly that very function when they do not want to take a stance, knowing that their laughter can be interpreted ambiguously by the conversation partner. By leaving the other speaker the option to interpret an utterance like a direct request, a proposal, an opinion or a complaint as something non-serious, the conversation partners show politeness in their ambiguity. Through evaluation and conversational structuring and in some instances humour, laughter can transform a problematic or delicate situation into a neutral or positive one.

The contribution to the third main research question is nuanced. The meaning of a laugh or chuckle for the interaction depends ultimately on how the conversation partners choose to interpret it. Examples with many co-occurrences are instances of constant stance (re)negotiations. An instance that might be meant as a turn-taking cue can be ignored by the other speaker or be interpreted as a marker of non-seriousness from the evaluative rather than the metalinguistic domain. Sometimes, speakers might choose to ignore certain cues in order to appear polite and respectful by adhering to another set of politeness norms in that situation. These observations suggest that the individual instances of laughter cannot be as easily categorised and tagged as pragmatic markers and pronouns. While it is possible to approach the

data quantitatively, the inability to meaningfully annotate laughter means that a qualitative analysis is strictly necessary. This is also a consequence of what has been established in the previous chapters: a quantitative analysis can only yield so much superficial information – it is indispensable to look at the detailed instances of the exchange. It is, however, easy to locate co-occurrences of laughter with programs such as SpanExtract. Section 6.5 has shown that instances where laughter co-occurs more frequently are rapport-relevant, similar to what the previous chapter has shown to be the case for co-occurrences of pragmatic markers. This has implications for the analysis of all features together, i.e. co-occurrences of pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter. This chapter and the previous two chapters have shown several examples where markers for all three co-occur. SpanExtract has proven itself useful for isolating these instances, which would otherwise be difficult to identify and analyse. This prompts the question of how the program can be adapted to accommodate an analysis of this scale and how other programs can be used to aid this analysis. The following chapter explores these questions.

Chapter 7: Co-occurrences of features

7.1. Introduction

Co-occurrence is one of the central concepts in corpus linguistics. I have explored in the previous chapters how it can be used to explore the meaning-making linguistic processes behind rapport. I focussed the analyses on one linguistic strategy and three linguistic features that are used by speakers to realise this strategy. While discussing the individual features, I highlighted how these features often seem to occur together in examples that show rapport-relevant instances. Co-occurrences of the individual features have also already been extensively discussed in those analyses, often comprising a delicate instance of some form where more intensive and nuanced rapport management seems to be considered necessary by the speakers. Unlike the previous chapters, this present one does not build on extant research, but on the findings of those three chapters, integrating them into an analysis of the co-occurrence of inclusive and exclusive *we*, the pragmatic markers and laughter. The present chapter constitutes a more systematic approach to co-occurrence as it brings those individual studies together in a quantitative and qualitative analysis that asks how the features co-occur and what the co-occurrences mean for rapport. Its qualitative and quantitative methods and tools are designed to be systematic and replicable. As such, it directly addresses the rapport research gaps concluded in chapter 2.

First, there is a general overview of the features in the corpus, drawing on the data presented in earlier chapters. The subsequent quantitative analysis of co-occurrences answers the question whether there are noticeable patterns or meaningful trends in the corpus, while the qualitative analysis details how the interaction of the features allows a speaker to manage rapport successfully. Both the qualitative and quantitative analyses compare two kinds of co-occurrence: those where the features appear within the same turn, uttered by a single speaker, and co-occurrences between different speakers, i.e. in several turns, as was the case in many of the laughter examples in chapter 6. This analysis brings forward essential points for the study of pragmatic features and their effect on rapport in the context of ViMELF, concluding the contributions to research questions one and two of this thesis. More importantly, though, it centralises and expands findings from the previous chapters with regards to research question three, in that it showcases how corpus linguistic methods can be appropriated to study pragmatic phenomena in large corpora.

7.2. Overview of all speakers, conversations, nationalities and features

In order to consider how the pragmatic features co-occur in the corpus, it is important to establish a baseline and consider the overall use of the features investigated, which means all inclusive and exclusive forms of *we*, all pragmatic markers, and all forms of laughter. I chose to exclude the three other first-person plural pronouns *our, ours* and *us* due to the findings of chapter 4, which demonstrated that they show no significant difference to *we*[46] and occur infrequently. In total, there are 971 occurrences of inclusive and exclusive *we*, 1258 pragmatic markers and 2628 instances of laughter; 4857 of these pragmatic features in total. Grouping all three rapport-relevant features together, there are 42.65 instances per 1000 words of conversation. This means that an average conversation of 5694.3 words comprises 242.69 instances of inclusive and exclusive *we,* pragmatic markers and laughter. The individual numbers per conversation are highly dependent on laughter, as there is almost three times as much laughter as there are instances of inclusive and exclusive *we* in the data. While I normed the number of instances per conversation (according to the word count of each transcript), I did not weight them according to each feature[47], since in the case of co-occurrences, it is not necessary to do so. If one conversation has many instances of laughter, there is also a higher chance of co-occurrences, particularly since the previous chapter has established that laughter seldomly occurs alone.

Across the conversations, the use of these features is very varied, and within individual conversations the use of the features also differs considerably. Conversation 08SB05SF05, for example, has a very high relative frequency of the pronoun *we*, but extremely low frequencies for pragmatic markers and laughter. Conversation 01SB36FL10, on the other hand, significantly overuses pragmatic markers, but significantly underuses inclusive and exclusive *we* and laughter ($p<0.001$). There are no very salient patterns of speakers' overall use of pragmatic markers based on their gender, nationality or the mode of communication (audio only or video and audio). All numbers depend highly on the use of laughter in a conversation. This also seems to be the reason why speakers within a conversation use overall similar numbers of those pragmatic features. Since this overview does not yield any significant

[46] To be absolutely certain of this choice, I repeated the analysis with all first-person plural pronouns and looked at co-occurrences of the first-person plural pronouns with the other features. While this might have resulted in a few more examples from the data for investiagtion, the analysis is clearer and more feasible with fewer features.
[47] In ViMELF, laughter occurs on average three times more often in a conversation than pronouns. Some conversations, though, show very different proportions to those.

findings on patterns of feature use, it is necessary to look at the data in a different way and focus on the actual co-occurrences of features.

7.3. Quantitative analysis of co-occurrences

To identify which of these features co-occur with one another and how often they do so, I extracted all turns containing at least two of the features analysed in the previous chapters with SpanExtract. The collection of all these turns can be understood as a kind of sub-corpus which contains all the turns within the search span that have two or more investigated features. This shows how often any of the individual types of *we*, the pragmatic markers or laughter occur within the span of one turn and how likely they are to co-occur with each other in the dataset. There are 902 turns with more than one feature occurring in them. 2265 out of the total 4857 analysed features co-occur with at least one other in the corpus. On average, a turn that contains co-occurrences (of the 902 mentioned above) therefore comprises 2.51 features (that co-occur). A plot analysis in AntConc shows that the co-occurrences are distributed across the conversations in no specific pattern (i.e. in what seems to be random distribution) and do not occur at a specific point in the conversation (i.e. more towards the beginning or end).

Looking at one turn at a time does, however, not include examples like those longer ones in the laughter chapter, where there are multiple consecutive turns containing an instance of laughter each. I established in that chapter how these are also examples for co-occurrences. I therefore extend the analysis to three turns, including the original turn, the turn by the conversation partner, and the second turn of the original speaker, i.e.

Speaker A's first turn
Speaker B's first turn
Speaker A's second turn

and all the features within these three turns. This is repeated for every turn, which means that a single turn (such as speaker A's second turn, for example) could appear up to three times in the count, if the turn itself and both its previous turns include a feature (i.e. all three turns in the example above). The decision to choose a span of three turns for the quantitative analysis rather than any other length is based on careful consideration of qualitative and quantitative data and experimentation with SpanExtract. A length of only two turns would not have been able to capture some co-occurrences of the pragmatic features in the data, especially those

instances where a speaker's turn is interrupted by back-channelling from their conversation partner. In those cases, the speaker's turn is technically still ongoing, even though it appears interrupted in the transcript. Choosing more than three turns returned too many instances where the use of the features did not seem to have any connection, which would have weakened the analysis. The flexibility of the software would allow for other settings where the data necessitates this, but for the present analysis three consecutive turns seems to be the optimal choice for a second search span.

As a first step, I calculate the percentage of the frequency of an individual feature in the corpus in general compared to its frequency within turns where at least two features co-occur with each other. Table 7.1 shows the absolute frequency of each individual feature in ViMELF, followed by two separate co-occurrence analyses. The first one relates to co-occurrences within a single turn (i.e. *I think* and *((laughs))* within one turn, for example). The second analysis looks at three consecutive turns. Both analyses show the absolute frequency of each feature within the turns with co-occurrences and the proportion this constitutes of all instances of that feature within the general corpus. The first line of this table relates to exclusive *we*.

Table 7.1 – Frequencies of pragmatic features co-occurring within one and across three turns and their percentage of the absolute frequency of that feature in ViMELF

Co-occurrences of features within the span of					
		One turn		**Three turns**	
	absol. freq. in corpus	absol. freq. co-occ.ing	% of absol. freq.	absol. freq. co-occ.ing	% of absol. freq.
we_#0	748	518	69.25	1112	148.7
we_#1	223	167	74.89	398	178.5
think_#2	643	317	49.3	870	135.3
mean_#2	233	111	47.64	319	136.9
guess_#2	133	62	46.62	191	143.6
know_#2	249	134	53.82	374	150.2
((laughs))	450	164	36.44	876	194.7
((laughing))	185	103	55.68	331	178.9
((chuckles))	276	76	27.54	466	168.8
((chuckling))	434	232	53.46	719	165.7
((hehe))	373	115	30.83	617	165.4
((thh))	76	23	30.26	123	161.8
((ehh))	402	106	26.37	639	159.0
((heh))	432	137	31.71	691	160.0

The first results column (and the second column in total) shows that exclusive *we* occurs 748 times in total in the corpus. The second results column demonstrates that exclusive *we* occurs 518 times in the total 902 turns where any of the three pragmatic features co-occur. That means that only 230 instances occur in isolation, that is to say without any of the other pragmatic features occurring in the same turn. The third column simply shows the proportion that this second column constitutes of the first column, i.e. how many percent of the total number of exclusive *we* co-occur with the other features. In ViMELF, 69.25% of all instances of exclusive *we* co-occur with the other pragmatic features (or 30.75%). The fourth and fifth results columns show the same frequencies but for the "sub-corpus" of three consecutive turns (see above) instead of just one turn. These two columns are explained in more detail below. The percentages of the two forms of *we*, inclusive and exclusive, are highest among the analysed rapport features, with about 75% and 69% respectively. This is followed by the pragmatic marker *I don't know* and the two laughter types *((laughing))* and *((chuckling))*, with each around 55%. The other pragmatic markers slightly less than fifty per cent, with only 37% to 26% of all instances of the remaining laughter types co-occurring with any of the pragmatic features or each other. A large proportion of the first-person plural pronouns (more than two thirds of each) occurs within the same turn as some of the other features, whereas only about a third of most laughter types do so. This means that laughter more often than not occurs independent of the other features (i.e. not in the same turn).

When extending the span to three turns (see above), a different image emerges. There are 2431 turns where either of the two following turns contains another feature. In those turns, 7726 out of the total 4857 analysed features co-occur with at least one other in the corpus. This seemingly impossible number exists due to features counting twice if they occur within two search spans, i.e. even though there are fewer features in total, if they are counted twice or thrice, the number of features that co-occur can be higher than the total number of features in the corpus[48]. On average, that makes 3.18 features per set of three turns containing co-occurrences. As the last column in Table 7.1 depicts, the percentages are higher than 100%, which is again due to features counting more than once (see footnote 48). When comparing

[48] This is where the concept of the "sub-corpus" of turns with co-occurrences is helpful (see above). In ViMELF, each feature is counted once. In the sub-corpus of co-occurrences within three turns, a turn can be repeated twice and therefore occur three times in total in the sub-corpus (see example above). In this case, each feature in that turn would also be counted up to three times. Therefore, there is a higher number of features co-occurring in that sub-corpus than in ViMELF, where everything just counts once.

these numbers to those of co-occurrences within the span of a single turn, there is a clear shift in the weight for the representation of the groups of features. Laughter is in proportion much more prominent in the three turns than in the single turns before. This shows that laughter most often co-occurs with other features across the span of three turns and therefore co-occurs across the boundaries of turns, which means that it is used co-operatively or interactionally. As the previous chapter shows, it co-occurs particularly often in that way with other instances of laughter.

Inclusive *we* retains its high relative frequency within these turns. Of note here is also the lower proportion of pragmatic markers in the co-occurrences, which means that they are not as often co-occurring with other features across the boundaries of turns, but rather within a single turn. Probably the biggest difference can be observed in *((laughs))* that in single turns only co-occurs with other features in about 36% of the cases and rises to 194% across the three turns, often as a separate turn as a response.

These observations show that the features behave differently depending on where they occur in a conversation. While the analysis above shows how often the features co-occur, it does not give any information about which features co-occur with one another and hot often they do so. As a second step, therefore, I calculate the conditional probabilities of the features co-occurring with one another, which allows for exactly that kind of analysis.

7.3.1. Conditional probabilities of co-occurrences within one turn

Conditional probabilities are a useful method for identifying patterns in data. In the context of this analysis, calculating the conditional probabilities of co-occurrences shows how likely it is for one feature to occur, given that another feature is present in the same span of turns. They essentially give an even closer insight into the data distribution and patterns of the features. From the sub-corpus of turns with co-occurring features, I calculate the conditional probabilities of each feature. This step in the analysis uses the same parameters as those in the first step above. For a detailed observation of the conditional probabilities, see Appendix X.A. All the numbers are indicators for the probability of one feature occurring given that another one occurs within the same turn. They are based on how often two individual features co-occur and weighed according to how often one of the features occurs in general in a corpus. The different weighing is necessary since one feature occurs more often than another. If between

two features one occurs very often and the other occurs much less, then the probability of the higher frequency feature co-occurring with the lower frequency feature is lower (i.e. it is more surprising for them to co-occur this way) than vice versa. Compare *I think* and *I don't know* as pragmatic markers, for example. *I think* occurs 643 times in the overall corpus, but *I don't know* only 249 times. These two features co-occur 28 times within one turn. When you compare the probability of *I think* occurring given that *I don't know* is also occurring in that same turn, the probability is higher ((28/249=) 0.112) compared to that of *I don't know* occurring given that *I think* is occurring in the same turn ((28/643=) 0.044). This is because there are many more pragmatic instances of *I think* than *I don't know*, meaning *I think* is more likely to occur given *I don't know* is in the same turn.

Another similar example is that in a single turn, the chance of a pronoun occurring given that laughter occurs in that turn is significantly lower than vice versa. This is because there is more laughter in the corpus in general, but proportionally in the single turns it does not co-occur with other features as often as pronouns and even pragmatic markers (see section 7.3 and Table 7.1 above). Therefore, when a pronoun occurs in a turn and that pronoun has a higher chance of co-occurring with another feature, then it is also more likely for laughter or a pragmatic marker to be in that same turn. Conversely, since laughter has a lower chance of co-occurring with another feature in a single turn, it is less likely for pronouns to occur given that laughter is in that turn already.

In single turns, laughter and pragmatic markers are more likely to occur given that pronouns occur in that same turn. The same is also true for laughter occurring given that pragmatic markers occur. In general, the conditional probabilities for the analysed features in a single turn are comparatively low, while the conditional probabilities for co-occurrences across three turns are relatively higher. This is of course due to a higher number of co-occurrences in this sub-corpus in general. There are several salient features in the co-occurrences across one turn, but not all of these conditional probabilities reveal much about the data type. There is, for example, a high probability of *((laughs))* occurring in a turn given that *((laughing))* occurs. In reverse, the probability is much lower. This is again the case due to *((laughs))* occurring more often in the general corpus. The fact that these two features would co-occur is not extremely surprising, since a person who is already laughing while speaking is relatively likely to also add a laugh separate from speech to their utterance.

A more salient co-occurrence is the considerably higher likelihood of exclusive *we* occurring when any pragmatic marker occurs in the same turn compared to that of inclusive *we*. Accounting for how much more often exclusive *we* occurs in the general corpus, the probability of all pragmatic markers but *I think* co-occurring with the two pronouns is about the same. The likelihood of *I think* occurring in the context of inclusive *we* is much higher. Looking at some examples more closely, exclusive *we* and *I think* within the same turn are mainly used to describe how something is done in the person's country, family, etc., whereas inclusive *we* and *I think* occur in utterances where they deliberate about the conversation itself. This is in line with the findings on the plural pronouns in chapter 4, but it also seems to show that when the speakers negotiate the general interaction, they are clearly marking stance, as example (7.1) shows. SB49 and her conversation partner FL33 talk about their assigned conversation topic relating to food, particularly the participants' food preferences and eating habits. FL33 remarks that talking for half an hour about food might be challenging, since she has not eaten yet and is hungry, which prompts SB49's following answer.

(7.1) SB49: **I think_#2 we_#1** do n't have to talk the whole time about food it 's just to start the conversation **((laughing))**

(07SB49FL33)

It seems like FL33 is expressing a concern about the conversation right at its start. As mentioned in previous chapters, the assigned topics were only meant as a way for the participants to ease into the conversation with a stranger and they were allowed to freely deviate from the topic. SB49 stresses this in order to "assuage" FL33 and remove any negative feelings or concerns about the conversation. In addition, she marks the utterance as her own, subjective opinion. This all occurs in a rather non-serious manner, since SB49 is laughing during the turn. SB49 gives FL33 a way out of her discomfort and includes both of them into the stance she creates where they, as partners, do not have to take the project's instructions too seriously for the sake of having a pleasurable conversation. Both partners seem to be aware that this is somewhat of a non-serious issue. SB49 though shows that she is taking FL33's comfort seriously while also signalling understanding of the non-seriousness quality of the complaint in general. She builds rapport through her ambiguous positioning. This shows how *I think* and inclusive *we*, in combination with laughter, work together when speakers position themselves and negotiate their interaction.

In general, the pragmatic marker that is most likely to co-occur with other pragmatic markers is *I think*. Additionally, *I don't know* and *I guess* show a higher than average probability for co-occurring. In those cases, *I guess* usually follows *I don't know*, but not always immediately. If *I don't know* connects two points of an argument, for example, *I guess* could either occur immediately as in (7.2), introducing the second point, or at the end of the point or turn to sum it up, frame it and give the turn to the conversation partner as in (7.3). The speakers mostly structure their discourse in these cases, which contributes to the conversational flow.

(7.2) SB36: uh well **I do n't know_#2 I guess_#2** I 'm in my I 'm in my very last year at the moment so I it 's uhm I 'm writing my bachelor's thesis at the moment so uh phh

(01SB36FL10)

(7.3) ST01: well **I do n't know_#2** not not very elaborated things **I guess_#2 ((chuckling))**

(07SB51ST01)

I think also has the highest probability of co-occurring with laughter. Not all of these instances are necessarily meaningful, as some turns are rather long and the two features do not necessarily always have a connection with each other. However, many of the turns are instances where speakers express a controversial opinion or introduce a delicate point and need to mitigate, for example. Example (7.1) above includes such a case. The other pragmatic markers work similarly in connection with laughter. See extract (7.4), for example, where SB07 replies to her conversation partner SF07, who asked her whether she *score[s] well in academia*.

(7.4) SB07: uhm well **((chuckles))** that 's a good question **I guess_#2 ((chuckling)) ((hehe))** well I 'm kind of s satisfied with my score but uh well it COULD be better **I mean_#2 ((chuckles))**

(10SB07SF07)

The example contains two pragmatic markers and four instances (or three types) of laughter. This comes from a chat about going abroad. SF07 reveals that in order to qualify for his department's Erasmus programme, he would need a higher grade point average than he currently has. They discuss different academic requirements and the grading system in Germany and Bulgaria. SB07 is then very bluntly asked about her grades and initially hedges

her reply, since this is a relatively delicate question coming from a stranger. This is somewhat softened by SF07 revealing his grades to SB07 first, but it is nonetheless a very personal question. SB07 hedges with a filler, a discourse marker, a chuckle, the chuckled assertion *that's a good question* (which has no meaning in this context and purely serves as a hedge) qualified by the chuckled pragmatic marker *I guess* and another chuckle and discourse marker before she answers. Her answer is quite ambiguous, saying that she is satisfied with her grades, but that they could be better. She follows this up with another pragmatic marker, *I mean*, and a chuckle. This whole turn is SB07's attempt to mitigate a dis-preferred answer to what is a relatively delicate question in the first place. As SF07 told her that his grades are not the best, SB07 could be perceived as excessively self-confident in this first conversation for answering that she was happy with her grades. Her choice of words (*satisfied* instead of *happy*) and the stress on the fact that the grades *COULD be better* already taper this notion, as do the many hedging and mitigation devices she uses. The chuckling signals a generally non-serious stance, in order to position her answer. *I mean* and the last chuckle are used at the end of the turn to ambiguously sum up her statement and yield the floor to SF07. In this way, SB07 manages rapport as she avoids refusing to answer a personal question, which could be interpreted as rude, and she mitigates giving a dis-preferred answer with the help of the pragmatic features.

Comparing laughter and pronouns, exclusive *we* is very slightly more likely to occur than inclusive *we* given that laughter occurs in the same turn. Similar to the case of the pragmatic markers, however, when accounting for how many fewer instances of inclusive *we* there are in the overall corpus, inclusive *we* is more likely to co-occur with them. Those are instances where there is a lot of salient rapport management, either in the case of the participants establishing a joint stance and creating a non-serious situation around it, or the participants carefully co-ordinating their interaction and using laughter to mitigate, soften the directness, or to manage turn-taking.

In many instances, however, there is not necessarily a directly causal relationship between single features co-occurring; they are strictly speaking not dependent on one another, meaning that one feature does not appear because another one has appeared, the relationship is more accumulative as they occur around each other to support rapport and positioning and therefore co-occur in rapport-relevant instances in the conversation.

7.3.2. Conditional probabilities of co-occurrences across three turns

In a third step, I compared the conditional probabilities of co-occurrences from the previous section to that of the sub-corpus of three consecutive turns with co-occurring features (see Appendix X.B). The overall picture looks very similar to that of the single turns, since all single turns would also be included in the three turn calculations. This means that any changes to the overall proportions between the conditional probabilities will stem from co-occurrences across at least two turns between speakers. Even though the conditional probabilities are generally much higher, in most cases they have similar proportions between the different co-occurrences. The section above shows that in single turns, laughter and pragmatic markers are more likely to occur given that pronouns occur in that same turn and laughter is also more likely to occur given that pragmatic markers occur. In the co-occurrences across three turns, however, while the above still holds true, laughter is much more likely to co-occur with other forms of laughter. This phenomenon is discussed further blow in the section.

Another small but significant difference is that between the two pronouns: inclusive *we* occurs across three turns more often with itself than exclusive *we*. This is the opposite in the single turn analysis. Unfortunately, the reason for this lies not in the speakers jointly building a stance by continuing to use inclusive *we* with each other; this is only very rarely the case. More often, it is the repetition of the pronoun due to a false start or an interruption by the other speaker as in (7.5) and the pronoun occurring around many other features as in (7.6), which leads to these turns being represented multiple times in the three turn data.

(7.5) SB33: yeah yeah I can imagine WELL **I mean_#2** a if at least AFTER our_#1 call one of us_#1 was able to record it then **we_#1** can intercha
FL31: yeah
SB33: uh exchange it **((hehe))** so **we_#1** do n't have to do it again

(04SB33FL31)

(7.6) SB49: okay good **((thh))** okay then I just have a little longer **I think_#2** that 's fine too **((chuckling))**
FL33: what were **we_#1** talking about though uhm
SB49: I forgot **((thh))**

(07SB49FL33)

There are of course a few instances where both speakers use inclusive *we* to negotiate stance. Consider extract (7.7), for example. The extract occurs towards the end of the conversation, where the speakers initiate the closing sequence of their conversation.

(7.7) SB05: yeah for sure
SF05: yeah
SB05: it 's the same for me
SF05: okay
SB05: **I think_#2**
SF05: well yeah
SB05: well **I think_#2** I have to go now
SF05: yeah **I think_#2 I think_#2 we_#1** talked enough because i it
SB05: yeah **we_#1** talked about forty minutes
SF05: yeah in in the instructions they say meet for around forty or forty-five minutes so yeah **we_#1 we_#1 we_#1** did it **((heh))**

(08SB05SF05)

SB05's statement follows several turns where the speakers seem at a loss for another topic to discuss, and use several turn-yielding devices, including a longer pause, *yeah*, *well*, *okay* and the pragmatic marker *I think*. As SB05 states *well I think I have to go now,* SF05 agrees and accepts SB05's prompt. After this somewhat awkward and delicate situation, it seems like SF05 needs to justify her decision to end the conversation with *we talked enough* in order to mitigate the situation and manage rapport. SB05 agrees with his conversation partner and adds to the justification, thereby joining SF05 in mitigating the situation. SB05 mentions the length of their conversations, and SF05 agrees again and compares it to the initial recording instructions of the project. She then continues to manage rapport by concluding *we did it*. This signals a form of accomplishment, which they both achieve together, and builds on the joint stance SF05 constructs in her initial mitigation attempt with *we talked enough*. This is further strengthened by SB05 taking up the stance in his addition to the argument, *we talked about forty minutes*. The short chuckle at the end of SF05's last turn in the example could have the function of post-modifying the remark about the joint accomplishment as non-serious and also yield the turn. This is an example for a successful mitigation of a delicate situation. The speakers afterwards exchange pleasantries, vow to remain in contact and wish each other a nice Christmas break before saying goodbye. Similar to earlier examples over the previous three

chapters, it is not the pronouns alone which affect stance in this extract, but the pronouns rather contribute to the general rapport management in the situation.

The most salient and meaningful difference between the two sets (i.e. co-occurrences within one or three consecutive turns) is the co-occurrence of different types of laughter. These are proportionally much higher than they are in the single turns. This supports the findings from the previous chapter on laughter in ViMELF. Laughter occurs rarely in isolation and is mostly followed by more instances of laughter, which does not seem to be the case with the pronouns or the pragmatic markers. Example (7.8) shows this quite well. The conversation participants have talked for half an hour at this point[49]. Unlike the speakers in example (7.7) above, SB49 asks FL33 whether she is okay with continuing their conversation a little longer and FL33 agrees. The following short exchange is the answer to their agreeing to continue their conversation.

(7.8) SB49: okay good **((thh))** okay then I just have a little longer **I think_#2** that 's fine too **((chuckling))**
FL33: what were **we_#1** talking about though uhm
SB49: I forgot **((thh))**

(07SB49FL33)

SB49 assess the joint agreement and chuckles in response to it. She refers to having *a little longer* than half an hour of conversation in her utterance, deciding that that is not against the set project norms. She prefaces this assessment with a subjective *I think*, which introduces both a level of certainty and uncertainty into her statement. This could be due to her not being absolutely sure whether it is okay for her to continue the conversation, but she clearly does not want to end the conversation at this point. Seemingly to mitigate this delicate point, she chuckles her speech. This short deviation from the previous topic makes them lose the thread, which FL33 comments upon with *what were we talking about though*. SB49 agrees with her by stating that she forgot too and chuckles again, aligning with FL33 and further mitigating the abrupt interruption of their interaction. These laughs all occur in the context of the interruption of the pervious interaction and show SB49 both reacting to the continuing delicate situation

[49] This is an approximate value they were given by the project organisers for the minimal length of the conversation in order to keep the conversations comparable in size (even though there are no strict rules or guidelines).

and also her conversation partner. Therefore, the laughter in turn three is still meaningful in the context of the earlier instances of laughter in turn one. Examples like this are manifold in the three turn sub-corpus.

As mentioned above, though, in many instances, there is also not necessarily a causal relationship between individual features co-occurring. They occur around each other to support rapport and conversational positioning and therefore co-occur in rapport-relevant instances during the interaction. The exception to this is laughter, where one feature can be prompted by another one of that kind. If there is one instance, more are expected to follow.

7.3.3. Co-occurrences in individual conversations and between speakers

The comparison of the frequency of co-occurrences in a single turn according to individuals, conversations and nationalities shows that there is a high degree of uniformity within individual conversations and between the different nationalities. All national sub-corpora have about the same number of co-occurrences, with the German sub-corpus showing a slightly lower and the Finnish sub-corpus a slightly higher number, see Table 7.2 below. While there are considerable differences between individual speakers, SB33 is responsible for 50 instances of co-occurrence within a single turn and SB03 for only two of them, which shows the great discrepancy between individual speakers.

Table 7.2 – Absolute frequency of co-occurrences of the features within a single turn according to the national sub-corpora

Co-occurrences according to national sub-corpus	
Sub-corpus	Absolute frequency of c-occurrences
German	429
Bulgarian	113
Spanish	119
Italian	111
Finnish	130

Within a conversation, the speakers are relatively consistent. There are still considerable differences, as in one case where SB33's conversation partner FL31 produces only half as many co-occurrences. However, FL31 is still within a higher range of frequency compared to other speakers and conversations. In general, this means that if one speaker has a higher

number of co-occurrences, their conversation partner is likely to also have higher numbers and vice versa with lower ones. Between the conversations, there are significant differences. Of note is that these frequencies seem to depend mostly on how many features a participant uses in a conversation in general, as the proportions of these translate into similar proportions of co-occurrences between the two speakers.

7.4. Qualitative analysis of co-occurrences

The quantitative analysis above shows how *we*, the pragmatic markers and laughter co-occur in the corpus. This gives a general overview of the relationship between the individual features. The section also discusses some examples, which focus on some more salient co-occurrences, in detail. The following section will include a detailed qualitative analysis of extracts from the corpus. It will not focus on co-occurrences between specific features, but instances where features from all three groups co-occur, as in examples (7.7) and (7.8) above.

7.4.1. Co-occurrences within one turn

Example (7.1) above shows how features from the three different categories are used by a speaker to manage rapport effectively in a situation. The following example (7.9) occurs towards the middle of the conversation. ST05 and SB69 are discussing the promotion of one variety of English over another in schools, especially since teachers spend their year abroad during their studies in different English-speaking countries.

(7.9) ST05: yeah I **I think_#2 I think_#2** it is the sa **I think_#2** it is the same uhm but talking about lingua franca lingua franca ’s it ’s just one and **I think_#2** that it ’s ONE variety of English and WHAT **we_#1** are **we_#1** well I speak an inclusive **we_#1 ((heh))** […] **we_#1** all tend to think that British English is more prestigious when i in reality it is AMERICA who has this power for **((hehe))** to say it in **((heh))** in some way

(04SB69ST05)

ST05 immediately agrees with her conversation partner SB69 and uses *I think* to introduce her part of the argument. The pragmatic marker allows ST05 to clearly take a stance, saying that she considers the different varieties (i.e. British English and American English, for example) to be equal in the discussion about whether one of them should be preferred in teaching. She then proceeds to make the point about English as a Lingua Franca only being one variety, retrospectively marking the utterance as her own opinion with *I think* again. ST05 then adds to

her argument, saying that while British English is considered to be more prestigious, *America* (the United States of America) is the more powerful state, which means that it is really American English that has a dominant position. Note that ST05 uses inclusive *we* in her reasoning, not only positioning herself in the group of people considering British English the prestigious variety, but also including SB69 in her stance. She makes sure that this is understood by stressing the fact that this *we* is an inclusive one. She then chuckles briefly *((heh))*, seemingly unsure whether it is appropriate to draw her conversation partner into her stance. It is a cautious, evaluative laughter used to mitigate the potentially delicate situation, giving SB69 the option to interpret it seriously or non-seriously. This is answered by SB69 smiling at her[50], which encourages ST05 to continue and indeed repeat the inclusive *we* once more. At the end of her comment, ST05 chuckles *((hehe))* as she does not seem to know how to end the sentence *it is AMERICA who has this power for*. The chuckle mitigates this lack of words. She then sums up her argument with *to say it in ((heh)) in some way*, chuckling again as to mitigate possible disagreement SB69 could show.

This use of features is clearly argumentative. Note how the markers are clearly structured: the speaker uses pragmatic markers to argue her case, introduce a point and mark the stance as her own, also inviting her conversation partner to contribute her opinion. The pronouns include ST05's conversation partner in her stance and the laughter is mainly used to mitigate possible disagreement and problems with stance-taking, as well as to mitigate a lack of words and continue the conversation fluently. This example resembles that of (4.62) in chapter 4, which has been discussed in the context of switching between exclusive *we* and impersonal *you*. The speaker SB33 is trying to answer her Italian conversation partner's questions whether there are any dead languages in Germany, similar to Latin in Italy. She seems uncertain whether Old German would qualify as such and struggles through a somewhat ambiguous answer. SB33 switches between pronouns, and uses *I mean* twice and *I think* three times. During her short example story of reading a text in Old German, she chuckles after she tells her conversation partner FL31 that she could not even properly read it. This introduces non-seriousness into a form of minor troubles-telling and creates rapport between the speakers, since FL31 back-channels with a chuckle. SB33 uses the combination of these features to position herself and

[50] This is marked by the ellipsis in square brackets. As the lexical version of the transcripts used in this thesis does not contain anything but the uttered words, laughter and speaker annotation (see chapter 2), turns that only consist of gestures or facial expressions appear "empty" in the transcript. As this seemed to be a reaction to the ongoing interaction, I checked the original, fully annotated transcript for the kind of gesture used.

mitigate possible criticism, while also making her uncertain knowledge sound more generalised and less subjective.

In example (7.10), the conversation participants discuss English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and its future prospects. SB33 makes the argument that the future of ELF is hard to foresee, since English is already so wide-spread. Her conversation partner FL31 initially does not seem too convinced by SB33's criticism of simply presuming that English is a lingua franca. SB33 therefore supports this with a statement her father made when she decided to study English: her father did not see the need for her doing so, since according to him everyone nowadays speaks English already. SB33, however, has some fundamental criticism for that observation, which she expresses in the statement below. SB33 works in a publishing house selling the rights of German books to other countries and therefore mainly speaks English in her job.

(7.10) SB33: so I I never talk to native Germans and I **we_#0 we_#0** always talk in English so even even though I I live in Germany I have to so to say to talk or to write English every day and **I mean_#2** my FATHER is maybe right when he says okay everybody knows a LITTLE bit of English or at least understands a little bit of English but **I think_#2** it 's a DIFFerent thing if you really have to WORK or have to to have like meaningful discussions **((chuckling))** and stuff like that in English because it 's not that easy

(04SB33FL31)

SB33 criticises her father's statement. While she acknowledges that English is very widespread, she points out that most people speak or understand so little of it that they would not necessarily be able to have an in-depth conversation or work exclusively in English. Her argument is essentially that while English is widely used, that does not mean that people speak it well enough to make effective use of it; just as she has to do every day. SB33 introduces her argument by pointing at her own experience in the job at a German publishing house and switches from *I* to *we* mid-way through her first point, before she switches back to *I* at the end of it. This allows her to make the experience sound more general, since it is not an individual but a cooperative task. The following pragmatic marker allows her to transition to a new part in her argumentation, where she quotes her father's opinion. It seems like *I mean* concedes the father's point rather than SB33 really aligning with it. This is also supported by her stressing the words *FATHER* and *LITTLE (bit of English)*, as well as the next pragmatic marker *I think*. It positions SB33's following point as her own, subjective view and simultaneously serves as a

clear line of demarcation between her father's opinion and her own one. She then chuckles the end of her core argument, which seems to soften her serious point, but might also be an assessment of her own word choice concerning the *meaningful discussions*. This all allows SB33 to position herself in the complex discussion of ELF and make FL31 understand her viewpoint, with which she initially struggled. She presents her argument and stance clearly to FL31, who agrees with her in her next turn. Examples like this show how rapport between the conversation partners can be managed by establishing a sound argument and making use of the pragmatic features that position the speaker. As the above examples show, how the number of features co-occurring in a turn can vary considerably, even though that does not necessarily affect the intensity of the rapport management and can be a personal preference or depend on the situation that warrants rapport management.

7.4.2. Co-occurrences across two speakers

The two speakers in the following excerpt have appeared in previous examples which commented on their positive behaviour. They are the two women who build the hypothetical scenario of their future in London. The following part occurs towards the end of the conversation, where they speak about contacting each other soon after the talk and then speak about their feelings and initial worries about their talk and how it felt talking to a virtual stranger.

(7.11) SB75: […] and I was like yeah well so do **we_#1** have to stop after thirty minutes or
HE01: **((hehe))**
SB75: no do **we_#1** have some freedom can I contact her later on or **((chuckling))**
HE01: **((laughs))**
SB75: **((laughs))** .H it 's like **I do n't know_#2** it 's a bit
HE01: no no no now **we_#1** have to you know BURN **our_#1** computers so that there will be NO trace of this conversation **((thh))**

(01SB75HE01)

Commenting on the questions she had before taking part in the project, SB75, using reported speech, describes the exchange she had with the project organisers. Her use of an inclusive *we* when asking about the rules and guidelines of the project has two consequences: on the one hand, SB75 shows that she was open in advance to having a "real" conversation that may last longer than what is set by the project. This communicates her eagerness and positive attitude that she had to begin with also to her conversation partner. On the other hand, SB75 also

includes her conversation partner in this stance, almost making her "complicit" in following or breaking the rules together if their conversation goes well. HE01 back-channels with a chuckle, indicating understanding this as a non-serious, light remark and SB75 continues the reported speech, asking whether they would be allowed to stay in contact if they so wish. She again includes HE01 in her stance with inclusive *we* as in the previous turn and chuckles during her statement, seemingly to indicate non-seriousness and in response to HE01's chuckle. This then leads to shared laughter. SB75 takes the turn again, in what appears to be an attempt to sum up her stance and express how she feels about these project guidelines but expresses a level of uncertainty through the use of the pragmatic marker *I don't know*. Her signalling avoidance and mitigation prompts HE01 to take over and show agreement and alignment with SB75 by jokingly creating a hypothetical scenario. As a reply to SB75's question whether staying in contact with the conversation partner was allowed, HE01 negates this three times, saying that they would have to burn their computers to destroy the recording in its entirety. To support the joking quality of her remark, she stresses the words *BURN* and *NO* (*trace*) and adds a brief chuckle to the end of her statement. In addition, she builds on SB75's established joint stance by continuing SB75's use of the inclusive first-person plural pronouns *we* and *our*.

In this excerpt, the speakers create a hypothetical scenario as a joke to mitigate the slightly delicate situation that arises from SB75 revealing her initial worries and the questions about staying in contact after a conversation with a stranger. Since the two speakers at this point in the conversation have already established that they like each other and will keep in touch, they work together on resolving this situation and move on in their conversation. In comparison to the examples in the section above, where the features are used by one speaker alone, this is a co-operative exchange. Compare this example specifically to (7.9), which uses very similar markers but to a very different end.

In example (7.12), two other speakers also co-operate on mitigating a delicate situation with the help of the features under investigation. SB73 and ST14 in the following extract speak about Christmas traditions. The exchange occurs shortly after example (6.12) in the chapter on laughter, where the two speakers learn that they both use artificial Christmas trees rather than real ones. They ask each other when they put up their Christmas tree; SB73 answers that they

put theirs up on the 24th of December[51] and ST14 says that they have already put theirs up [in early December].

(7.12) SB73: it 's very early **((ehh))**
ST14: **we_#0** right people do it though over here I do n't know_#3 why they just they just want to start Christmas early **I guess_#2**

(06SB73ST14)

SB73's evaluative comment is probably unintentionally critical, but it creates a delicate situation. Her chuckle introduces a degree of non-seriousness into her statement which somewhat mitigates this criticism. ST14 starts her "justification" with an exclusive *we*, but then switches to the generic term *people*. Similar to a change from *we* to a generic *you* discussed in chapter 4, this allows ST14 to distance herself from the criticism to a certain degree by shifting the focus onto an unknown group of people rather than herself. While it is technically clear that ST14 belongs to the group of people doing that, she generalises the custom of putting up a Christmas tree earlier and tries to offer a reasoning for it with *they just they just want to start Christmas early*. The pragmatic marker *I guess* at the end of her turn sums up her point, but its subjective, slightly vague or uncertain quality leaves the floor open for SB73 to further share her opinion. SB73 simply agrees with ST14. ST14's answer seeks to appease SB73, without aligning with her stance, while keeping ST14 out of the focus of criticism. This supports SB73 in her initial attempt at a non-serious stance and the two speakers continue talking about other Christmas traditions with their rapport successfully managed.

The following example is different to the extent that there is not a specific delicate point, but rather an imagined one that the speaker thinks requires mitigation. FL31 describes her visit to Berlin and reports a very mixed experience between the *really cool* parts and the *sad and grey* ones in example (5.33) from chapter 5. FL31 seems to be talking about the state of buildings and quarters, but then immediately continues talking about the weather, saying that there is mostly sun in Italy, which is what she was lacking in Berlin. SB33 seems to understand this as a critical comment.

[51] This is a common practice in Germany. Christmas trees are only put up and decorated shortly before Christmas, traditionally on Christmas Eve.

(7.13) SB33: **((laughs))** well that that 's a general problem in Germany **I think_#2** **((chuckling))** **we_#0** do n't have enough sun **((chuckling))**
FL31: **((heh))** no but I I really like like cold weather and winter
SB33: really

(04SB33FL31)

SB33 laughs in reply to FL31's comment and then hedges and suggests that the lack of sun is an overall German problem. She chuckles as she is making the argument, evaluating and mitigating her own statement as she is displaying non-seriousness in what is a mock "troubles-telling". She is confirming the stereotype of bad weather in Germany to her conversation partner and even specifically includes herself in the group of Germans "suffering" from that with exclusive *we*[52]. This is intensified by the subjectivity introduced with the pragmatic marker *I think*. SB33 seeks to align with her Italian partner's perceived stance on grey weather and goes further by displaying herself as the mock "victim" of it to elicit compassion. FL31 chuckles in response to this, acknowledging SB33's attempt, but then makes clear that her original comment was not meant as criticism, since she likes this kind of weather really. SB33 is surprised, since she dislikes cold and grey weather (*really*), but this clears up the conflict she imagined existing and the need to align with FL31 in order to mitigate the situation. Ultimately, the two speakers collaborate in maintaining rapport between them.

This is also mirrored in another example, (7.14), with subtly different dynamics between the speakers. This extract occurs shortly after example (4.21) and is discussed in the context of changing from exclusive *we* to impersonal *you* in example (4.52), both in chapter 4. SB17 talks about her parents' travel agency and the various destinations they have on offer. She lists popular German holiday destinations, among them the Caribbean. SF10 asks whether that was not a rather expensive place, to which SB17 replies that it is rather affordable.

(7.14) SF10: sounds very exotic to me and very expensive **I do n't know_#2**
SB17: yeah but uhm **we_#0** also sell a lot in the Mediterranean area
SF10: mh I like the Mediterranean Sea **((chuckling))**

(07SB17SF10)

[52] Note the difference to the above example, where the speaker is excluding herself from a group in the effort of managing rapport.

SF10's response is rather direct, calling the Caribbean as a travel destination *exotic* and *expensive*. She does not hide her somewhat critical comment, but she mitigates it slightly by introducing ambiguity into the statement. While she takes a clear stance, she then uses the pragmatic marker *I don't know* to indicate uncertainty. The pragmatic marker also opens the floor to SB17 and allows her to contribute her opinion. While SF10's directness could be seen as problematic, the pragmatic marker signals that she is open to a different suggestion. SB17 agrees with her and does not object to the criticism but rather shifts the focus to another prominent holiday destination, the Mediterranean. With this, SB17 attempts to relate SF10 to something well known for Europeans that is perceived as more normal or "down to earth" than the Caribbean. She also positions herself very clearly as the entity who sells these holidays in more affordable and easily accessible areas by using *we* rather than an impersonal construction. This proves to be successful, as SF10 displays positive emotions towards the Mediterranean in what she says and also through her chuckling. This shows that both speakers co-operate in situations where a direct, critical or negative comment could threaten their rapport.

7.5. Conclusion

Many of the examples in the previous chapters have shown and analysed co-occurrences of pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter and I discussed their relation to rapport. This chapter brings a more systematic approach into the analysis of those co-occurrences. The quantitative analysis shows that certain features are more likely to co-occur than others. In the span of a single turn, *we* and the pragmatic markers are more often part of the co-occurrences, while across the span of three consecutive turns, that is the case for inclusive *we* and laughter. This confirms observations from the individual analysis chapters. Within a single turn, i.e. a turn by one speaker alone, there is a concentration of features which does usually not occur across the three consecutive turns. Across three turns, the features are more evenly spread between the speakers.

The difference between co-occurrences across single or multiple turns that becomes clear in the qualitative analysis of the examples is supported by the quantitative analysis comparing the conditional probabilities of occurrences to one another. While single-turn co-occurrences are often argumentative (with a persuasive or dialectic quality), multiple turn co-occurrences are more cooperative and interactional. This is of course intrinsically already determined to a certain degree by their form, but qualitative examples across three turns like (7.11) and (7.13)

clearly detail the cooperative approach the speakers have to rapport management, where both participants negotiate stance together.

Despite these differences, however, these examples show various successful ways of managing rapport between unacquainted speakers. *We* and the pragmatic markers in single turn co-occurrences have argumentative functions, since they allow speakers to clearly position themselves and make a specific point. Similarly, pragmatic markers and laughter in those turns are used for expressing a controversial opinion or introducing a delicate point which needs mitigating. Contrast this with the more cooperative, (obviously) interactional multiple turn co-occurrences, where laughter and inclusive *we* are used by speakers to negotiate stance together. Rather than only allowing a speaker to position themselves, inclusive *we* and laughter also position the conversation partner. While not every single instance of co-occurring features is an indicator of rapport, many of them are, especially if all three feature categories are represented. Different features can take the lead depending on their functionality. Which features take the lead is specific to the situation that warrants rapport management. Even if one of the features might not be the most salient linguistic feature responsible for rapport management in this instance, each one contributes to positioning the conversation participants in exactly the way that is intended.

This chapter concludes the analyses of the pragmatic features and their influence on rapport. It exemplifies the final stage of using of a corpus to explore linguistic features that have usually been studied in isolation, extending the methodology used in corpus studies to the qualitative findings of pragmatic studies. An analysis such as this is only possible due to the combination and consolidation of qualitative and quantitative methods and tools. The analysis of the co-occurrences needs to be based on findings from qualitative analyses of each of these features, as I have demonstrated in this thesis. The co-occurrences then give an additional, essential insight into the functions of the pragmatic features and point to instances in the conversations where rapport management is considered necessary. By creating a tool that is specifically programmed for isolating and analysing the pragmatic features and their co-occurrences in a corpus of spoken language, it is possible to consolidate the two methods with relative ease and draw meaningful conclusions from the results.

Chapter 8: Discussion

8.1. Introduction

I set out to address two gaps in rapport research with this thesis. They concern the drifting apart of qualitative and quantitative research on rapport as well as the disparate nature of existing research, with many independent studies which are not replicable or methodical enough to add to our knowledge of rapport. To approach these gaps, this thesis asks several research questions. My linguistic analysis has looked at specific ways in which people use language to manage their relationships, in particular how distinct pragmatic features influence rapport and how their occurrence can be analysed in the data. Leading back to the main research questions, this thesis has approached the topic of rapport management from a theoretical and a practical viewpoint. This chapter discusses the findings based on the three main research questions and along the lines of the themes that run through each of the analyses. The research questions are interrelated and have been informed by one another as the thesis progressed. The first of the three questions has been the following:

1. Which linguistic strategies are used when managing rapport?

Rapport is investigated in many different academic disciplines and there is a considerable amount of research on how our behaviour influences our relationships. Chapter 2 discussed how rapport management is conceived of and investigated across psychology, sociology, and many linguistic disciplines. The research discusses larger linguistic, sociological, psychological, etc. strategies as well as specific linguistic features or behaviours. The first goal of my research has been to take an account of relevant literature and narrow down the analysis of rapport management to very specific linguistic features which are known to affect rapport management. Chapter 2 also highlighted that there are considerable gaps in knowledge about the rapport strategies themselves and how they are applied by speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, as well as the methods for analysing the strategies. For the reasons outlined in chapters 2 and 3, I decided to focus on stance, conversational positioning, and its realisation in the form of three linguistic features: pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter in order to fill gaps in rapport research.

From the three features mentioned above, laughter is least often found in spoken corpora, since it needs to be transcribed specifically. I chose a larger spoken corpus for my investigation that

includes detailed pragmatic annotations (prosodic, paralinguistic and gestures and facial expressions) which can give a helpful insight and to whose recordings I have full access. The nature of the corpus data which served as a basis for the analysis then prompts the second research question:

2. How is the rapport management strategy influenced by the medium, the speaker background and idiosyncrasies?

This, like the first research question, mainly aims at capturing theoretical data. It focuses on the particularities of the data and their effect on stance and rapport management in general. The medium, Skype, and the speaker background, unacquainted non-native speakers, had been investigated to a certain extent with regards to rapport, but I have put a particular focus on comparing extant research on face-to-face native or non-native speakers with various relational backgrounds to this data. In addition, I have shown in the analysis that it is important to investigate the data with regards to idiosyncrasies in speaker behaviour, as I explain further below.

Capturing the practical data in this thesis is driven by the third research question:

3. How can corpus linguistic methods be appropriated to analyse a rapport strategy and its realisations in the form of linguistic features?

I approached the study of rapport management by analysing stance and in particular three features which are tangible, meaning that they can be identified and analysed to a certain degree with the help of corpus linguistic methods. This chapter specifically discusses the efficacy of quantitative and qualitative methods regarding the individual features. Findings relating to the three research questions are presented along the lines of several themes, some of which have also been variables in the analysis, that structure how the research has been approached. These themes include:

- General rapport management
- Strategy (stance/positioning) and features (pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter)
- Non-native/ELF speaker behaviour
- Strangers (unacquainted people/first acquaintance)
- Skype/video conferencing

- Idiosyncrasies
- Qualitative vs. quantitative research methods

While certain topics are more closely relevant to a specific section or research question, all these themes inform the general capturing of the theoretical and practical knowledge relating to the overarching question "How is rapport managed through positioning in conversations?". The following sections are structured around these three research questions, discussing each of them in detail. Besides the findings of this thesis, I discuss relevant research that has emerged since the start of this thesis in each section respectively.

8.2. Which linguistic strategies and features are used when managing rapport?

Curating the existing research on rapport management has been a difficult task. Traditional research on rapport has for a long time been very much focused on social and interactional strategies that are relatively disconnected from the actual linguistic features. Its findings have in many cases been provided by linguists from other areas studying a specific feature in connection with rapport or mentioning rapport in passing only. There is a difference in how the research is framed when the focus of the study is the feature rather than rapport itself. When computational linguists approach the topic of rapport management, they side-line the larger interactional strategies and qualitative analyses to focus on feature- and fact-based quantitative research that a machine could eventually process. This thesis balances traditional and newer research by using both qualitative and quantitative methods. In order to achieve this, the study has been conducted on a basis of and with a focus on rapport management, and the study uses linguistic features as a means to understand how rapport management can be analysed in such a context.

The discussion of academic research in chapter 2 highlighted that disciplines use different terminology and also have different preconceptions when it comes to rapport. In addition, the research analyses very different datasets in a variety of often rather incomparable ways. In more traditional research, rapport is often firmly based on politeness theory and the notion of appropriate behaviour, especially in the context of following sociopragmatic rules. Regarding the linguistic features which have been analysed in the context of rapport, chapter 2 showed that researchers look at two different linguistic elements—conversational strategies and linguistic features—and the difference between these elements is not always made clear enough. Studies that focus on strategies like conversational positioning, disclosing personal

information and complimenting must define these strategies with the help of specific linguistic features if they are to analyse the data quantitatively, but doing so limits the study to these features alone and risks excluding other essential elements of a strategy. If the researchers are not aware of this or do not present their study as such, strategies might be misrepresented or causalities misunderstood, as in the case of accommodation that I discussed in chapter 2. I also presented studies which focus on the specific linguistic features that influence the relationship between two speakers but do not connect them to larger conversational strategies. However, I argued that the specific linguistic features and their effect have to be understood in the larger context when it comes to rapport. For example, switching between different pronouns that include or exclude the speakers in various ways needs to be examined in the context of how it affects their stance in the interaction and how that is then linked to rapport. Stance therefore has an intermediary function between the specific features and their effect on rapport.

The above considerations are reflected in my decision to focus my analysis on one strategy that is realised by many different features and to choose three features to analyse specifically. I explained the reasons for choosing this strategy and its realisations over other strategies and features that have been considered in detail in section 3.3.4. The three features, first-person plural pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter, share similarities, but they also occur at different linguistic levels and are therefore well suited for an analysis that uses exploratory corpus linguistic tools in order to study the features and their effect on rapport. Testing the corpus linguistic tools and methods on features of different linguistic levels has been shown in the analysis to give broader insight into which approaches work, and which do not. The features' main similarity is their pragmatic nature. As extant research and the present analyses have shown, depending on the context, the features can have an additional or differing meaning to their conventional one. While their pragmatic function was the original reason for my choosing these features, the analysis has stressed that in the case of pronouns and laughter those more conventional functions can also have an impact on rapport.

As I have argued, a macro-level linguistic phenomenon like rapport can only be investigated quantitatively by analysing individual features that exist on a micro-level of language, with the strategies occurring on a level in-between the two, connecting the concrete level of the features and the more abstract level of rapport. Considering these three levels is important for a complete analysis. None of the different levels can exist in isolation in the study of rapport, since there is pragmatic work going on that cannot purely be quantified but, at the same time,

looking at larger datasets means that the researcher has to find a way to quantify and automate certain steps. This can also be helpful in detecting patterns, as the previous chapter on co-occurrences demonstrated. I have concentrated my research on one specific strategy that has been analysed widely, but that has not been analysed in the context of the dataset (unacquainted, lingua franca Skype conversations) and with these particular linguistic features. This means that there is already a broad understanding of stance and my work adds to this knowledge without making claims of absoluteness of the findings. The thesis exists in its specific context, the influence of which is discussed in section 8.3 below.

As I argued in chapter 2, many situational or contextual factors influence rapport management in a variety of linguistic domains and with a variety of functions. I hypothesised that this explains why rapport strategy taxonomies have so far not been exhaustive and why they rarely get taken up and applied to new datasets by other researchers. In order to allow for a higher degree of replicability, I chose a dataset that has very specific guidelines and makes it easy to collect more data with a different contextual basis. The conversations could be held in person, between different levels of acquaintance, for example, to compare those findings to the present ones. This is especially important for the findings discussed in section 8.3 below. It is already possible to compare this analysis to native speaker data, which has been collected and transcribed between 2017 and 2019, under the coordination of the CASE research team. The new corpus is called TaCoCASE (forthcoming), the Transatlantic Component of the CASE project, and contains Skype conversations between British and US-American speakers from Birmingham, UK and Boise, Idaho, USA. The finished corpus is expected to be available by the end of 2020.

With the present data, I have shown how the specific features more or less subtly affect rapport. The most surprising finding to me is how many individual sub-functions exist within the dataset, compared to some of the findings of extant rapport research on ELF datasets, which highlight a lack of pragmatic knowledge of the ELF speakers (cf. section 8.3 for an in-depth discussion). My analysis stresses how rich in features ELF data is, which makes it an ideal source for analysing language strategies. This is in contrast to how non-native language use has been perceived for a long time: as lacking something compared to native language use. ELF researchers on the other hand focus their attention on the linguistic strategies non-native speakers employ for successful communication, which is exactly what the present analysis highlights too. In ViMELF, the speakers all use similar strategies in general, but they are

applied in a very creative and diverse number of ways. In the following sub-sections, I discuss the effect of every individual feature on rapport and how the findings relate to extant research.

8.2.1. Pronouns

The distribution of all occurrences of *we, our, ours* and *us* in ViMELF varies quite significantly between the different conversations but is relatively stable (i.e. similar) across first language-based sub-corpora. I have developed annotation frameworks for the plural pronouns, the degree of solidarity, the context of the pronoun and the kind of *you*, which are exhaustive in their classification for the specific dataset and can be identified by the software tools I used for further data analysis (AntConc, Excel and SpanExtract). To determine the degree of solidarity of each of the first-person plural pronouns, I developed a tagging scheme based on existing research on this topic, which splits the instances into four categories: exclusive, inclusive, other (formulaic or quotative *we*), and unclear cases. Studies like Planken (2005) do not include all these functions in their analysis of the effect of *we* on rapport, but they all have to be taken into account when doing a quantitative analysis, since there is no reliable way of distinguishing them in the data automatically. Therefore, a mixed-methods approach like mine needs to account for this limitation, which I did in the form of manual annotation. I discuss this in more detail in section 8.4.1.

To my knowledge, there is no comparable quantitative analysis of inclusive and exclusive *we*, to which I could relate my findings. My quantitative analysis has shown that approximately three quarters of all instances of *we* in the corpus are exclusive, which reflects the kind of conversations that make up ViMELF: the speakers are unacquainted and therefore have less common ground upon which they could immediately draw to build rapport with their conversation partner. The cases in which they create a joint stance via inclusive *we* are very often task-based, as the secondary contextual analysis has revealed.

In comparison with extant rapport research, the use of inclusive *we* in ViMELF does not deviate from previous findings. In the explicit context of positioning and rapport, inclusive *we* allows a speaker to draw their conversation partner into their stance and thereby create a common ground, which is an assertive way of managing rapport. Often, this happens in subtle ways during the parts where the speakers organise the conversation, when they speak about the task they are jointly working on. In these instances, working together and creating a joint

stance means that they implicate each other in the responsibility they both have towards successfully completing the task.

There are many examples where speakers align very transparently and non-ambiguously with another speaker's stance or include the other speaker in theirs. The most straightforward form of this is the exchange of pleasantries at the end of a conversation. In other specific examples, one speaker for instance includes herself in a hypothetical action that has positive consequences for her conversation partner and thereby creates a joint stance. This puts the speaker actively in the position of a benefactor and well-wisher of her conversation partner, which increases rapport. However, when a speaker includes their conversation partner in their stance in a direct, assertive way with an utterance like *we're on the same page*, which openly points out similarities and thereby aligns two pre-existing stances, that is often in some way mitigated or hedged in order not to be too direct or problematic. It could become problematic if the conversation partner does not wish for stances to be aligned, does not consider it appropriate or feels like their opinion is misunderstood. If the speaker knows the other's position because it had been mentioned before in conversation, hedging does not seem to be considered necessary. In one example for instance the speaker can assume the stance from previous comments, which means that pre-empting it is less risky. Mitigating such an instance can increase rapport both by averting a potentially delicate situation and by actually creating a shared stance, even if the agreement with it might be ambiguous. If the conversation partner agrees and aligns, that further increases rapport between the speakers. Another instance in which inclusive *we* seems to contribute to rapport is when the speaker shows a positive attitude towards the other's home country by collaboratively fabricating a non-serious but positive joint stance regarding the conversation partners exchanging places with each other. Especially when the situation is potentially delicate, a mix of these strategies than can be seen in the data.

According to previous research like Planken (2005), switching between inclusive and exclusive forms of *we* influences rapport management, as a person's relations and the degree to which the speakers engage with each other are affected by the way they position themselves in conversation. My analysis has shown that speakers in ViMELF do not usually switch between inclusive and exclusive forms of *we*. In the rare cases that they do switch, the speakers do not seem to be doing this with the intent to reposition themselves, as the *we*s usually occur in distinct contexts (see also section 8.3). I did, however, find a change from exclusive *we* to impersonal *you* that affects rapport in the data. Impersonal or generic *you* defocuses the agent

of an utterance. It is a way of achieving either a more personalised or a depersonalised style on a pronoun level, depending on how it is employed. I have shown how, in order to do that, speakers use different grades of generalisation or abstraction to position themselves in conversation. The pattern of switching between exclusive *we* and impersonal *you* occurs rather frequently in comparison with the whole dataset. A qualitative analysis has shown how the ViMELF speakers switch between personalised and depersonalised stances by switching from *we* to *you* in their utterances. They take advantage of impersonal *you*'s ambiguity, either including or excluding themselves from a reference. If a speaker excludes themselves from the group denoted by *you*, it is because they disagree with something that group says, does, or stands for, or because they simply do not consider themselves part of that group. In those cases, *we have* often introduces a general description of something, like a state, a situation or a custom and the second part of the utterance containing impersonal *you* is the part where they distance themselves from something, like a hypothetical example or a specific action, state, etc. they disagree with. When a speaker includes themselves in a group, this can have two functions. If they include themselves in a group they would normally not belong to, it makes their example more personal, more convincing or compelling in the case of for instance a hypothetical example when they are making a point. On the other hand, they make their utterance more generic and seemingly objective if they broaden and soften a subjective stance to include more people. Thus, in several ways, switching from exclusive *we* to impersonal *you* allows the speakers in this corpus to manage rapport by repositioning themselves and making them appear less problematic or critical, more amicable and knowledgeable and enables their conversation partner to align and agree with them more easily.

I have so far not been able to identify any previous research on this exact pattern and its effect on rapport, which also means that there does not seem to be any quantitative data with which to compare my findings. Compared to the business ELF (BELF) communication detailed in chapter 2, where professional negotiators use multiple strategies on a pronoun level to manage rapport during their interaction, in ViMELF, the speakers use similar strategies, but these are adapted to the conversation type. In ViMELF, the participants often position themselves, their country and other parts of their identity with exclusive *we.* The switch to impersonal *you* allows them to create more ambiguity around the person at the centre of a story, especially in delicate instances during the interaction, which can mean that they either personalise or depersonalise an utterance depending on the situation.

8.2.2. Pragmatic markers

The second linguistic feature that I investigated in regard to its effect on rapport was the pragmatic markers. ViMELF speakers use pragmatic markers in managing rapport in situations where they are trying to mitigate potentially delicate situations, but also where they simply have a constructive, well organised discourse during the first interaction with each other and respect each other's stance. They show great sensitivity to the interactional needs of a situation and use the full range of multi-functionality of the pragmatic markers. This means they are able to increase either certainty and uncertainty, depending on the situational context, in order to position themselves in their conversation and create, invite (the other speaker), and align or distance themselves from stances. I have shown in my analysis that *I think, I mean* and *I guess* are mostly used by the ELF speakers in ViMELF as described in extant research about native speakers. This is important for the consideration of how pragmatic markers used by non-native unacquainted speakers affect rapport. The pragmatic markers influence the epistemic value of subjectivity, but more specifically also certainty and uncertainty of the speaker and therefore their stance towards utterances. I have shown in detail how the individual pragmatic markers help position the speaker and contribute to a harmonious relationship with their conversation partner in individual situations.

ViMELF speakers use *I think* to change or shift the topic, introduce another part to an argument, introduce a new argument, double down on a statement or indicate the completion of a particular stretch of discourse or topic and the expectation for the conversation partner to speak, i.e. seeking recipient uptake. *I think* is also used for on-line planning and epistemic modifications of a varying range of syntactic elements, always introducing subjectivity into the utterance. This can be prompted by something the conversation partner asks for or mentions and is therefore modified or hedged in the answer of the speaker or in their contribution to the point or topic, i.e. where the focus is on this particular item. On the other hand, it can also be unprompted, as I have shown in other examples, especially when it is used as a hedge or when a speaker expects their conversation partner to disagree with them or when they do not wish to align their stance with their conversation partner. In one instance, *I think* is even used by a speaker to mitigate a delicate situation between them and their conversation partner who has created a misunderstanding. The speaker helps out their partner by clearly marking their own stance on a topic with *I think* as if it had been a normal topic proposal by them rather than a misunderstanding by their conversation partner, and thereby does away with the awkwardness of the situation. In some of the qualitatively analysed cases, the epistemic function of *I think* is

not clear. Especially in cases where the function of the pragmatic marker is secondary to its discourse organisational function, it is unclear whether the introduced subjectivity encodes certainty or uncertainty.

I have found similar functions in the ViMELF data for *I mean* and *I guess*. *I guess* functions very similarly to *I think*, even though it is used less in the corpus. In addition to their shared functions, *I mean* introduces many clarifications, which vary in range regarding what is modified or clarified. This is to say that *I mean* is used to take a stance and show subjectivity. This occurs especially in cases where the speakers agree and create a joint stance or align with the stance of the conversation partner. It also occurs where they add to the topic by making a point of their own, or where they clarify the meaning of their statements to be more precise and make their stance clearer for the conversation partner. But as I have shown in the qualitative examples, *I mean* can also do the opposite and introduce a higher degree of imprecision and ambiguity into a statement. This is the case, for example, where the speaker initially agrees with their conversation partner in order to acknowledge their point but then appears unwilling to align with their partner as the speaker seems to have some reservations. *I mean* is used to introduce what seems like a clarification but really allows the speaker to avoid taking a stance which would contradict their opinion. At the same time, *I mean* lets the speaker acknowledge their partner's concerns. This is also the case when the speaker is unsure about the reception of their utterance. Fox Tree and Schrock (2002) seem to allude to this last function, but the lack of an explanation or a concrete example from them make it difficult to know whether that is indeed the case.

I don't know has a slightly different function than the other three pragmatic markers, even though there is some overlap, such as its functions of verbalising and overcoming on-line planning difficulties, introducing a new point to an argument and indicating a possible point of turn-taking. ViMELF speakers use *I don't know* to characterise their statement as subjective in so far as its core meaning of uncertainty allows the speaker to not outright commit to a stance and to relativize their position. The speaker is introducing a level of vagueness into their statement, which makes them less accountable for its accuracy. This and the fact that they save

time by not having to provide more details make the conversation much more fluent[53], especially for non-native speakers. *I don't know* is also used by ViMELF speakers when they introduce an example for something, which can refer to a stretch of discourse that varies in length. *I don't know* can function as a planning device, structure discourse and soften the statement. As such, it increases the tentativeness of the statement and it allows the speaker to show neutrality rather than avoidance towards a stance of the conversation partner or the speaker's own statement. In that case, the pragmatic marker does the opposite of indicating subjectivity by allowing the speaker to take a step back and not commit to a stance. This means that speakers not only mitigate with *I don't know* when they cannot agree with the conversation partner, they also use it in less problematic situations when they want to indicate neutrality.

While my analysis of *I don't know* mostly falls in line with findings of extant research on native speakers, I have found differences to ELF speaker's use of *I don't know* as a pragmatic marker in Baumgarten and House (2010). Speakers in ViMELF are more pragmatically advanced than those in their data: ViMELF speakers use the full range of functions of pragmatic *I don't know* and do not select only a few like the on-line planning function. While the ViMELF speakers have a clear preference for *I think*, native speakers in a comparable conversational set-up might use similar frequencies or proportions of pragmatic markers to those of the non-native speakers. A further study with native speakers using the same set-up as these conversations could be useful to compare actual frequencies of use regarding form and functions of the pragmatic markers with the present study. Such a corpus is currently being compiled by the CASE research team (see section 8.2).

Since I started my thesis, new research has emerged on the use of pragmatic markers by native as well as non-native speakers. Clancy (2018) has looked at the same four forms that have been analysed in this thesis to study conflict in a corpus of family discourse in Ireland. He comments on their retrievability as a reason for choosing these forms, mentions their ambiguous functionality and uses a very similar methodology to me for sampling and sifting the pragmatic markers. His focus on the same forms reinforces the findings in my thesis, but his focus on conflict between family members differs quite significantly from mine. Gablasova

[53] This has a positive effect on rapport, since, as mentioned in chapter 2, conversational flow (i.e. the interaction being classed as responsive and seamless) is according to Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990) one of the features that establishes the essential rapport element coordination.

et al. (2017) have investigated epistemic stance in spoken L2 English depending on different speaking tasks and styles. One of the three features they analyse are "verbal expressions" or, as I refer to them in this thesis, *I + epistemic verb* collocations (see section 8.4.2). While the aim of Gablasova et al.'s (2017) study is different to mine, my findings correlate with theirs. Even though they investigate a variety of pragmatic markers, they find that the most prominent ones in their data by a large margin are variations[54] of *I think, I know, I mean*, *I believe* and *I guess.* This mostly reflects my findings, with the exception of *I believe*, which has a very low frequency in ViMELF and has therefore not been included in the analysis (see chapter 5). The fact that speakers favour certain pragmatic markers over others in mostly similar proportions strengthens the findings of my analysis. Gablasova et al. (2017: 630) also find that their speakers show "sensitivity to different interactional requirements", "demonstrated sensitivity to social dimension of the task" (2017: 633) and are pragmatically very competent, like ViMELF speakers. This goes far beyond Baumgarten and House's (2010) findings where the ELF speakers are considered to be lacking competence. A reason for this is potentially the level of English language knowledge. All of Gablasova et al.'s participants are advanced non-native speakers, as are the ViMELF speakers. In addition, Gablasova et al. (2017), similar to my results, find that epistemic marker use is highly individualised and therefore varies between speakers. Research on epistemic stance in non-native speakers has lacked an account of spoken language, and Gablasova et al. have tried to fill this gap to the extent of a more general, quantitative account and with less attention on the individual features. This could explain why according to them, their participants "convey the epistemic information explicitly and unambiguously" (Gablasova et al., 2017: 615), whereas my qualitative analysis has shown that there are many subtleties to the use of pragmatic markers and that ambiguity is one of the functions of pragmatic markers that very effectively contributes to rapport. I agree with their statement that "[F]urther research, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, is needed to explore the complex nature of stance-taking in L2" (Gablasova et al., 2017: 633).

My analysis of co-occurring pragmatic markers shows that they often point to situations where the conversation partners manage rapport. This is especially true for instances with higher numbers of pragmatic markers, as occurrences of two markers together are often simply used as an on-line planning tool. Previous research has only pointed out co-occurrences of *I don't*

[54] They searched for *I @ think*, etc., with @ standing for zero to two words in-between *I* and *think*.

know and other pragmatic markers. I investigated co-occurrences with and without *I don't know* in order to understand whether there is a difference between their functionality. The results indicate that there does not seem to be any difference. *I don't know*, using its unique functions, adds to the variety of ways in which the pragmatic markers can be used to manage rapport. I have found that ViMELF speakers do not only use pragmatic markers in instances where they mitigate a potentially delicate or problematic situation or utterance, but also where they seem to show a more subtle form of rapport management and are attentive to one another. In these instances of co-occurrences, the conversational set-up, an interaction between unacquainted people, requires a speaker to be extra sensitive to their conversation partner. This use reflects the proficiency of those speakers, their knowledge of socio-pragmatic norms and the specific context, i.e. what they are trying to achieve with their utterance.

8.2.3. Laughter

The third and final linguistic feature I analysed with regard to its rapport function is laughter. Speakers in ViMELF both take a stance and avoid taking a stance with laughter. Due to its flexibility, they openly align with a conversation partner's stance as well as use exactly that very function when they do not want to take a stance, knowing that their laughter can be interpreted ambiguously by the conversation partner. I have shown that ViMELF speakers mostly use supportive functions of laughter from Stewart's (1997) domains[55]. Even though the participants are strangers, they used laughter from all three domains (metalinguistic, evaluative and joking). Similar to the function of pragmatic markers, ViMELF speakers use metalinguistic laughter to maintain the flow of a conversation, but also to mitigate delicate points of an interaction or steer the other speaker subtly in a specific direction. The evaluative laughter is used not only to agree and align with the other speaker, but also for more serious, delicate or problematic situations during the interaction. When a speaker cannot or does not want to commit to agreeing or aligning with their partner's stance, they laugh or chuckle and create an ambiguous situation, where their laughter might mean actual agreement or masked disagreement. This means that they offer a possibly non-serious interpretation of the interaction without having to affirm the stance. It is then left to the partner to interpret the ambiguous laugh. Joking or humorous laughter occurs less often in ViMELF, but it contributes to rapport between the speakers by creating a joyful, non-serious stance and it creates increased

[55] That is to say those domains where laughter is used in what is considered a positive, more polite way, rather than, for example, interrupting the other speaker or laughing at them.

emotional closeness through teasing. Through evaluation and conversational structuring, laughter can transform a problematic or delicate situation into a neutral or positive one.

My analysis has also shown that in a delicate or serious situation like a disagreement, laughter can help to change the frame from serious to non-serious, even playful. Laughter in these cases helps to manage the delicate issue, especially in situations of anxiety or when a salient incident occurs, like committing a minor transgression, a *faux pas*, or displaying one's own shortcomings. These delicate instances occur quite frequently in the data, since the participants are unacquainted and can therefore not build on existing knowledge about their conversation partner. The speakers cannot assess their conversation partner's reaction or level of tolerance for certain dispreferred behaviour with the same level of confidence as for a friend. Consider for example the cases of self-deprecation and troubles talk in the analysis: the speakers seem to use laughter as a means of rectification for the negative talk, as this is a dis-preferred option in interaction, much like disagreeing with somebody. Laughter lessens the severity of this negativity. Unlike in previous research by for example Partington (2006), I have found that the unacquainted ViMELF speakers seem to appreciate shared laughter in these instances, presumably because they are strangers and the severity of the troubles-talk in the analysed examples does not reach a critical limit, which makes the shared non-seriousness that is introduced by the laughter more appropriate[56].

It has become clear through my analysis that the general categorisation into Stewart's (1997) domains is useful in order to describe the functions of laughter. The problem with this framework is, though, that while it seems to cover all the possible functions of laughter, the individual functions can only serve as a guideline or help to describe laughter, but not to annotate it or categorise it further than the domain level. This is due to the fact that the individual functions are not mutually exclusive and often overlap. Laughter is very complex and often spans multiple functions or even dimensions at once. It can for example close an argument and work as a topic transition point, but at the same time be a reaction to the partner's utterance and therefore back-channel as well as signal agreement, spanning functions across both the metalinguistic and the evaluative domain. In addition, laughter can only be

[56] As opposed to Partington (2006) who finds that speakers in these situations do not invite or appreciate shared laughter, since displaying non-seriousness as the interlocutor (of the troubles-telling) means that they do not take the speaker's complaint or trouble seriously.

understood by closely analysing the context of an instance. The intent may be different to what the listener or conversation partner actually perceives. Their interpretation and reaction ultimately determine the function of each instance and how the laughter affects the conversation and their rapport. But that does not mean that it is not feasible to study laughter quantitatively. Laughter has a great impact on rapport and my analysis shows that there are still quantitative techniques that can aid the qualitative analysis, such as co-occurrence analysis. I have shown in the laughter co-occurrence analysis that examples with many co-occurrences are instances of constant stance (re)negotiations. An instance that might be meant as a turn-taking cue can be ignored by the other speaker or be interpreted as a marker of non-seriousness from the evaluative rather than the metalinguistic domain. I have shown that ignoring or not reacting to such a marker can also have positive effects, since alternative conversational norms and forms of politeness are adhered to at that time. These observations also have implications for a corpus analysis of laughter and its effect on rapport, which are discussed in section 8.4.

Since I started this thesis, new research has emerged on laughter and its effect on rapport in an ELF context. Mežek (2018) for example investigates laughter in PhD vivas or defences between ELF speakers and finds that laughter is most often used by a single speaker in a non-humorous context as a way of mitigating face threats. She contrasts this with the humorous instances in the data, which are co-produced by the speakers. Mežek's findings align with my own. We both find non-humorous laughter to occur more often than humorous (or joking) laughter in the ELF data and both types of laugher seem to perform similar functions. While many instances relate to explicit face threats for Mežek, I have shown that in the ViMELF data, laughter enables speakers to mitigate delicate situations, but its effect on rapport is also realised in the more subtle forms of laughter that simply contribute to a respectful conversational organisation and a better conversational flow. A combination of humorous and non-humorous functions occurs very often in the examples of laughter in ViMELF discussed in chapter 6. A salient difference between our studies is her finding that humorous and non-humorous instances are different depending on whether they are produced by a single speaker or multiple speakers. In my analysis of laughter, specifically the co-occurrences of laughter, I have shown how the conversation partners work together on mitigating a delicate situation, but also how one person alone can use humorous or joking laughter during the interaction to create a more light-hearted situation. In my opinion, these different findings highlight the differences between the two datasets. Mežek (2018) investigates high-stakes situations with imbalanced power dynamics, whereas ViMELF data contains much more informal situations, with the two

conversation partners having a balanced power dynamic. The communicative purpose of the situation and the conversational norms vary. The participants in ViMELF have a Skype call with a stranger and cooperate in completing it successfully, but on a much more informal and equal level than viva participants.

An interesting new argument about laughter has been introduced by Matsumoto (2018). She describes the functions of laughter in ELF classrooms in the case of miscommunications. Matsumoto identifies similar communicative functions to those investigated in this thesis. While she acknowledges the positive effect laughter has on rapport, she also finds that in situations of miscommunication in a classroom setting laughter can be counter-productive due to its ambiguous quality. While I describe the ambiguity of laughter as something positive as it aids the management of rapport, Matsumoto highlights that in situations like teaching, where clear communication is essential to learning success, miscommunication is only increased by ambiguous laughter. These new studies highlight that laughter is very context-dependent and should always be studied as such. The studies also show that no matter the context, laughter contributes to rapport management and is used in versatile ways by ELF speakers and strangers.

8.2.4. Co-occurrences

The qualitative analysis of the three main features has shown that they often co-occur in situations that are relevant to rapport. It therefore seemed sensible to add a fourth analysis of instances where those features co-occur. The quantitative and qualitative analyses in chapter 7 showed differences in number and kind between co-occurrences within a single turn and three consecutive turns. In the span of a single turn, *we* and the pragmatic markers are more often part of the co-occurrences, while across the span of three consecutive turns inclusive *we* and laughter occur more frequently. While single-turn co-occurrences are often argumentative (with a persuasive or dialectic quality), multiple turn co-occurrences are more cooperative and interactional. This is of course intrinsically already determined to a certain degree by their form (being one turn of a single speaker or three turns of two speakers), but the qualitative examples have shown the cooperative approach the speakers take to rapport management, where both participants negotiate stance together. I have found that in the single turn co-occurrences with argumentative functions, speakers position themselves and make a point, express a controversial opinion or introduce a delicate point which needs mitigating. In the more cooperative multiple turn co-occurrences, speakers negotiate stance together, or position

themselves and their conversation partner. I have shown that not every single instance with co-occurring features is an indicator of rapport, but that the likelihood of that rises significantly when all three features co-occur. In those cases, depending on the situation that warrants rapport management, different features are more important in the management of rapport. Even if one of the features might not be the most salient linguistic feature responsible for rapport management in this instance, each one contributes to positioning the conversation participants exactly in the way that is intended. To this point, I am not aware of anyone using this technique as an approach to the study of rapport management.

8.3. How is the rapport management strategy influenced by the medium, the speaker background and idiosyncrasies?

Above, I answered the first research question, showing how rapport management is influenced by stance work, which is realised by three specific linguistic features: pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter. The second research question relates to the specific dataset, asking how rapport management is influenced by the medium, the speaker background and idiosyncrasies. As I have argued above and at many points in this thesis, the findings of how rapport management is realised always have to be considered within the very specific context in which the data is captured. I have presented recent findings of other researchers above that deviate to a certain degree from mine, mainly due to them using a different dataset. In the qualitative analysis, I have often pointed out where and how the particular situational setting influences the use of the individual features.

Due to the lack of existing research on rapport in the medium (video conferencing) or between unacquainted non-native speakers, a substantial part of my analysis has been to compare extant native speaker research findings to that of the non-native speakers in my data, always with the difference between the two datasets in mind.

In this section, I discuss the implications each of the following topics have for my data:

- The general project set-up and Skype/video conferencing
- Strangers/unacquainted speakers/first acquaintance
- Non-native/ELF speaker behaviour
- Idiosyncrasies

The general set-up of the project and the medium, Skype, seems to have very little influence on stance and the analysed features. The biggest influence of the task can be seen in pronouns,

since a higher number of inclusive *we* is used when speaking about the task that the two conversation partners are working on; pragmatic markers and laughter seem to be relatively independent from these two factors. Skype mostly influences the structure of the conversation and how it is organised and negotiated. Parts of the conversation are dedicated to discussing the recording, whether the connection is appropriate, negotiating the length of the conversation, etc. One of the negative factors in using Skype is the connection, i.e. when there are interruptions. Ease and fluidity of the call are similar to previous research that suggests that adding the visual mode in video conferencing improves understanding and create a common ground between speakers. I briefly discussed my choice to not measure rapport in chapters 2 and 3. I did, however, analyse Skype conversations with and without a video feed and with and without interruptions of the connection and there does not seem to be any significant difference between the two modes with regards to the use of any of the linguistic forms investigated in this thesis. This finding relates to the numbers only, since I did not analyse and categorise each feature in detail. Such a detailed investigation could shed light on whether there is a difference between the two modes in form and function.

Being unacquainted but taking part in the recording project mostly affects the conversation in the kind of topics that are discussed. Possibly because the speakers do not know each other, they draw on any common ground they can find, which in their case is usually their studies, their family, and their knowledge of each other's (but also other) cultures. The informal setting as well as the conversation prompts allow the participants to speak about general as well as more personal topics. Topics like politics, culture, education or language are always discussed in a personal context by making reference to personal experiences. The choice of topics in turn influence the features, most prominently which kind of *we* is used in the data. Exclusive *we* occurs mostly in the context of language, identity and culture, and education, as a way of presenting and comparing cultures and university life to each other. Inclusive *we* on the other hand occurs frequently in the context of task-based conversation, where speakers talk about the project or the task itself, either organising it or simply discussing it. Not surprisingly, inclusive *we* does not occur in the context of disclosing private, personal information, because the speakers do not know each other and therefore have no shared personal history they could possibly refer to with inclusive *we*. Inclusive *we* though serves them well in cooperating on the task—completing a conversation with each other, when it is needed. The use of exclusive and inclusive *we* is a means of overtly positioning the conversation partners in relation to one another but also a larger group of people, similarly to how the pragmatic markers can overtly

mark a speaker's stance when they give their opinion. Other realisations of these features are also influenced by these being first conversations. The stance work that these realisations support is different, however.

Rather than overtly positioning speakers, the shift for example from exclusive *we* to generic *you* is a much more subtle way of managing stance. This form takes the conversation partner into consideration, as I have shown how speakers switch in order to include themselves in a group or distance themselves from it, depending on what they assume will contribute to rapport. The speaker can of course only to a certain extent make assumptions about their partner's stance and about what their partner will find appropriate and expect from them conversationally. This is also visible in the function of the pragmatic markers which increase the ambiguity of a stance and allow the speaker to not clearly position themselves in cases where the conversation partner's stance is unclear or where the speaker's stance differs from their partner's. When making an argument, for example, they are mostly very attentive to their conversation partner's stance and the surrounding interaction. The same holds true especially for non-humorous laughter in ViMELF.

The influence of the speaker's unacquaintance to one another on the use of the features seems to be limited, however. The difference in the use of features like the pragmatic or linguistic ones that Haugh and Carbaugh (2015), Svennevig (1999), Duck et al. (1991) and others describe between initial interactions and conversations between acquaintances seem to be relatively subtle in ViMELF. I suspect that this is the case because the speakers are already able to draw on common background due to the project, their being students (of English, mostly) and their European identity.

I have found very little variation between the different national sub-corpora regarding the use of the pragmatic features, with few noticeable exceptions. When the Bulgarian speakers for example talk about their personal background, their family and friends, they do so by presenting themselves more often as part of a group of people compared to the other speakers, using exclusive *we*. The Italian speakers on the other hand present their studies and university life in more of a group context rather than an individualistic one. This suggests that the speakers try to build a stance as a member of a larger group surrounding these topics, which

makes them seem more generic or commonplace[57] and therefore approachable, which in turn offers them a broader basis for rapport with the other person. Similarly, the Finnish participants use *we* in the context of the task or project more than the other nationalities, particularly in combination with exclusive *we*. This seems to indicate that the Finnish participants describe the project and task from their view at length to their conversation partner, possibly to establish a topic where they can be sure that they have something in common, as explained above. ViMELF speakers manage rapport with the tools they have and in the situational context they are in, since creating a common ground or identity is a well-established rapport management strategy among native as well as non-native speakers. Even though they are from different linguistic backgrounds and language families (Indo-European with various sub-families (Germanic, Italic, Balto-Slavic) and Uralic), the ViMELF speakers mostly seem to use the investigated pragmatic features to create rapport in similar ways.

I have shown in my analysis that *I think, I mean* and *I guess* are mostly used by the ELF speakers as described in extant research about native speakers and that my findings agree with other recent research. All three features, plural pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter, are used by the non-native speakers with the same range of functions as those of native speakers in similar conditions. Where research like Baumgarten and House (2010) focuses on what non-native speakers cannot do compared to the native speakers in their data, I have pointed out in my analysis how effective the communication of ELF speakers can be. This mirrors Gablasova et al.'s (2017) opinion, who call for a focus on whether ELF speakers fulfil their communicative goals (see also section 8.2.2).

What has become very apparent in my analysis is that idiosyncratic choices play a very important role in the use of the three linguistic features that influence how stance is negotiated. Especially in the case of pragmatic markers, the use varies greatly between speakers, with no linear correlation or other distinctive pattern apparent even when comparing conversation partners to each other or to native language-based sub-corpora. For laughter, comparing the conversation partners reveals that speakers seem to co-ordinate their use of laughter to that of their partner. This is similar to native speakers and supports the notion that laughter is

[57] This trait is not intended to carry any negative connotation but indicate a state of accepted normalness or neutrality.

reciprocal and depends on the interactive choices of the speakers and their reaction to one another. Pragmatic markers can be used in such a way, as I pointed out in the analysis, but they are more often used by a single speaker in my data. The lack of patterns in the individual national sub-corpora can have different reasons. While the individual national sub-corpora might simply be too small for this, the larger German sub-corpus is very balanced and individual speakers continue to vary highly in their use of pragmatic markers. The fact that individual conversations do not seem to have correlating patterns means that the use of the features is very likely not dependent on the topic or the kind of interaction either. Rather, it becomes clear that in this data speakers have their own, idiosyncratic ways of using the features in conversation, which is also supported by the findings of Gablasova et al. (2017). The speakers' idiosyncratic choices[58], as I pointed out on numerous occasions in the analysis and in section 8.2.2, are reflected in how they perceive themselves and their conversation partner and therefore how, based on that, they choose to position themselves (Gablasova et al., 2017: 617; Bucholtz and Hall, 2005). The above findings have largely been enabled by the mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods, which are discussed in the following section.

8.4. How can corpus linguistic methods be appropriated to find evidence of stance work?

At the start of this thesis, I set out to develop ways of analysing rapport going beyond the traditional qualitative methods and the newer almost purely quantitative and feature-based research, moving towards a mix of those methods. I have used the linguistic features that realise stance work as a tool for understanding how a corpus can be analysed by such means.

Identifying the linguistic features was the first major part in each of the analyses. Neither rapport nor many of the strategies that affect it are tangible in non-annotated corpus data, which means that identifying sites of rapport management needs to be done by identifying concrete features that are involved in managing rapport. The computational linguistics approaches to rapport that I discussed in detail in chapter 2 choose features based on behaviour which can be recognised to a reasonable degree by machines and technical tools (because those features can be translated relatively straight-forwardly into a specific effect). In contrast to that,

[58] Kirkham (2011) goes into even more detail in his qualitative study of epistemic features, finding that individual speakers will use the same epistemic forms differently. Because of the breadth and focus of my study, I did not go into that level of detail in my analysis. This seems, however, an interesting topic to pursue in future. It is possible to do that with the present ViMELF data, but not in the context of this study.

I have shown that pragmatic features are more difficult, since their meaning changes depending on the specific situational context and they first need to be analysed with a more traditional, qualitative research approach that describes their functionality in different contexts. Only based on that, research like Ravichander and Black (2018), Romero et al. (2017), Matsuyama et al. (2016) and Zhao et al. (2016) can then implement their highly specialised automated solutions. In that sense, I used a more traditional linguistic approach for this part of my research that focuses on the context of each individual feature and its effect on stance. My research forms a middle ground between the two forms of rapport research and my choice of methods, techniques and tools from both pragmatics and corpus linguistics reflects this.

There are limitations and challenges but also opportunities in adopting methods from both Pragmatics and Corpus Linguistics, a point that has also been made by Rühlemann and Clancy (2018). Over the last few years, more and more research has come out of the field of Corpus Pragmatics that knows that at its core "the relationship between linguistic form and function is characterised by ambiguity […] and it is the unfolding of dynamic contextual elements that facilitates the correct understanding of the function a particular form fulfils" (Rühlemann and Clancy, 2018: 244). This is exactly what this thesis has done by combining methods from both fields. As mentioned in chapter 3, the latest detailed methodological considerations for Corpus Pragmatics are described by O'Keeffe et al. (2019). Their systematic overview of Corpus Pragmatic research methodology allows me to define the research approach used in this thesis in clear terms and contextualise it with other current research. The *function-to-form* methodology from Pragmatics and the *form-to-function* methodology from Corpus Linguistics described by them (2019: 47-48) largely reflect the methodology I employed. I therefore understand this thesis, as a contribution to their call for "developing a method that can accommodate both form-to-function and function-to-form approaches" (O'Keeffe et al., 2019: 64) in Corpus Pragmatics.

My research builds more strongly on the form-to-function approach but includes many elements from the function-to-form methodology. I did, for example, apply a function-to-form approach to this thesis in the sense that the individual analysis chapters are informed by existing literature (since I looked for forms in extant literature that are said to influence stance). I then made sure that these forms exist in the corpus I chose, by sampling and sifting the data and isolating relevant forms through annotation. With these annotations, I was able to make frequency-based observations, but also do a detailed qualitative analysis of each form in the

corpus, their specific function and how that translates into stance and rapport management on a larger scale. In essence, I used extant literature to get from the function to the forms, but then used the corpus to understand the form in context and understand each specific function in detail. I did this using a corpus with a limited size and a specific context (speaking situation, speaker background, etc.), which mirrors O'Keeffe et al.'s (2019: 65) recommendation to "start with a small micro-analysis within a specific genre".

I was unable to conduct a one-to-one search for the pragmatic functions as proposed in O'Keeffe et al. (2019), since there was no corpus available that include either rapport management or stance annotations (this is of course what has prompted this thesis in the first place). Instead of manually looking for the function by sampling, searching and sifting the data, I used the known forms as a means to circumvent this. Looking at the co-occurrences of the linguistic features allowed me to point out other features that occur in these instances and that also affect stance or rapport management. This technique could be used for future manual sampling, which I discuss in section 9.2.

8.4.1. Data annotation

As described above, in my analysis, I used techniques that bring together a qualitative and a quantitative research approach. The forms I analyse can generally be easily identified in the data, since all of them are part of the standard corpus transcription of ViMELF and many other spoken corpora. Their pragmatic nature, however, implies that they change their meaning depending on the context. For the feature identification, this means that not all forms of the first and second-person plural pronouns and pragmatic markers investigated are involved in rapport management and need to be left out of the analysis. This can be done by annotating the data. I have found that this is not necessarily the case for laughter for two reasons. Firstly, even though metalinguistic laughter does not strictly contribute to positioning or stance, as explained above, all laughter forms contribute to rapport management, for example by causing a more fluid interaction. Secondly, distinguishing between the different types of laughter, especially metalinguistic and evaluative, as I have shown in my analysis and discussed above, is not always clear-cut. This "mismatch, and often ambiguity, between form and function" has been recognised as a general problem in Corpus Pragmatics (O'Keeffe et al., 2019: 57).
In all three cases, I used an annotation framework based on extant research on the feature, tested it on a smaller sample of the data and then applied it to the whole dataset. For the pronouns, I used three annotation frameworks, one for the degree of solidarity of first-person

plural pronouns, one for the kind of *you* (generic vs. standard form) and one that I developed myself for the topical or thematic context of first-person plural pronouns. The annotation has been confirmed as comprehensive in a test with a colleague. The frameworks are exhaustive in their classification for the specific dataset and can be identified by the tools I use for further data analysis like AntConc, Excel and SpanExtract. Whereas the two pronoun annotation frameworks can be applied to any conversational dataset, the context-based one would have to be amended and adapted to the situational context of the interaction. This naturally means that for this framework, the findings are also dataset/situation-specific. If the speakers were for example not students, the category concerned with education and studies might not be discussed. If the speakers were not ELF speakers from different linguistic backgrounds but a shared one, the culture and identity category might include very different proportions of inclusive and exclusive *we*. Even though this specific framework is not as applicable on a large scale as the other two, it has nevertheless been instrumental in giving an insight into how ELF speakers use first-person plural pronouns in the data. In addition, my analysis has shown that if the thematic context of a pronoun is known, it can help categorise the pronoun more easily. This is due to the fact that inclusive and exclusive *we* (and the other first-person plural pronouns) have appeared in different contexts in my analysis. In the case of inclusive *we*, for example, I could see a trend of it occurring at specific points in the conversation, often co-occurring towards the beginning or end of a conversation. This is connected to the conversation topic in whose context inclusive *we* occurs: the project/task based interaction, which has the speakers refer to themselves and their conversation partner as a team. If a program could for example categorise the topics occurring in each utterance with a semantic tagger, it would be possible to determine the likelihood of an instance of *we* being either inclusive or exclusive, knowing the context of the dataset and the usual proportions within such a dataset. This will, however, require many detailed further studies into this particular topic. The annotation frameworks for the pronouns have assisted my analysis mainly in identifying places of rapport management. I have been able to do much deeper analyses into how specific changes between pronouns by a speaker can influence stance work and the co-occurrence analysis would also not have been possible without the annotations. A potential further study like the one described above could help in identifying and classifying the instances quicker and more easily.

The manual annotation of the pragmatic markers has been very successful when deciding on whether a *pronoun + epistemic verb* collocation is a pragmatic marker or not. The resulting annotated data allows for quantitative analyses, easy identification of instances in the data for

qualitative analyses and pattern detection via for example the co-occurrence analysis. A second attempt at annotating the pragmatic markers regarding the subjective content of the utterance and whether the pragmatic marker changed the epistemic value to a more certain or uncertain one has been unsuccessful, especially with *I think*, *I guess* and *I mean*. This is not due to the fact that the framework was not exhaustive in categorising these changes, but rather because of the data itself and how pragmatic markers function. In many instances, it has not been possible to determine whether the marker introduces certainty or uncertainty. Even though this attempt at categorisation has been unsuccessful, it has also revealed information about the data and assisted the qualitative analysis. In a considerable number of cases, the use of a pragmatic marker first and foremost encodes subjectivity, especially when it is used to introduce a point of an argument, to take the floor, etc. Extant research often lists the functions of pragmatic markers as either committing to a stance (as in "This is my opinion. This is what I know/think/mean.") or as the opposite, where the speaker seeks to avoid taking a stance (as in "This is only *my* personal opinion."). What this organised attempt at categorising these instances has shown, however, is that speakers seem to use the fact that both forms exist to create ambiguity and neither commit to nor openly not commit to a stance. Without the unsuccessful annotation, it would have been much more difficult to discover this specific pattern.

In the case of laughter, I used a pre-existing framework to strategically categorise each instance. While it is possible to apply the framework to each instance and it is comprehensive, very often the functions and domains of the framework overlap (see also 8.2.3). Investigating only evaluative instances for my research on rapport management and stance was the intention behind the categorisation, but there are too many instances where especially metalinguistic and evaluative functions overlap or both interpretations are possible. The intent of the person laughing can also vary from how their laugh is interpreted by the listener. The distinction would in the end not have added any substantial advantage to my analysis. In addition, much more context is necessary to be able to differentiate between the different domains, which is rather difficult for the amount of spoken data in larger corpora. As all forms of laughter influence rapport, even though the metalinguistic one does that less by affecting a speaker's stance, I decided not to add any further annotations.

It is important to note, though, that the analysis of laughter in this thesis has only been possible because ViMELF is a pragmatically[59] and multimodally annotated corpus, which also allows for the integration of other features beyond the lexical level. My research on laughter supports the importance of paralanguage and nonverbal elements for stance and their inclusion in spoken corpora. My approach of extracting the text and features that this thesis focused on from the many other transcribed features in ViMELF demonstrates how useful such corpora can be for quantitative studies too, if they can be adapted to the individual needs of the researcher.

8.4.2. Identification of features

The identification of the pragmatic features is not yet automated and my study shows that it remains difficult to identify the features automatically. The annotation frameworks I compiled and applied to the pragmatic features have generally assisted the identification of the pragmatic features with the exception of laughter. The annotations made it possible to identify, locate (in relation to the context but also the position within the conversation), count (and quantitatively analyse) as well as find examples of the pragmatic features as described in other sections of this chapter[60].

Compared to my research, Gablasova et al.'s (2017: 620) study (see also section 8.2.2) shows the same challenges of identifying pragmatic markers automatically without suitable annotation due to their being "notoriously multifunctional" and the process of annotating them being "prohibitively time-consuming". Similar to my analysis, they scout extant research for lists of epistemic markers and then go through samples of their own data to find a full list of instances. The researchers are also aware of the double meaning of some of the markers. For them, a double meaning of a form exists where the form could have a non-epistemic function. In my research, on the other hand, I differentiate between pragmatic and non-pragmatic forms, which both encode epistemic stance but in different ways. The focus of my analysis has been on pragmatic features alone. In it, I annotate every instance of pragmatic markers, unlike Gablasova et al. (2017), who sample their data to determine whether the forms they encounter in a sample are mostly epistemic markers instead of the original meaning. They then use all

[59] Cf. Diemer et al. (2016) for a discussion of what they define as pragmatic annotation.
[60] As such, this method is not too different from corpus linguistic methods in general, since applying the annotation framework before the second part of the analysis is like filtering out all verbs when looking for the noun "address". It is just that many corpora are often already POS tagged, which saves the researcher time.

instances of that form, whether they are epistemic markers or not, since a sample has shown that the majority of all cases are epistemic markers. This means that they accept the fact that an unknown number of instances are mislabelled. In their study it makes sense to do so, because this is not what they are focused on. As the focus of my research is different to theirs, however, and I did not have any ELF spoken research on pragmatic markers to which I could have compared my approach at the time, I tagged each instance in my data. As I have shown in chapter 5, the percentage of the non-pragmatic (or "original") forms of these markers is very low for *I think*, *I guess*, and even more so for *I mean*[61]. The numbers are very different for *I don't know*, where there are many more non-pragmatic forms[62] compared to the other pragmatic markers. This means that, in data like this, if the researcher is willing to take the risk of a small margin of error, it is technically not quite as necessary to spend time on annotating the first three kinds of pragmatic markers, especially for *I mean*, where there is just one instance of the original form in my data. For *I don't know*, this is not the case. For this first investigation into the topic, in my opinion, it has been necessary to identify all forms nevertheless in order to establish a baseline for these kinds of conversation.

My data shows that idiosyncrasies have an effect on the use of pragmatic markers. I have also shown that this is the case for the other two pragmatic features I analysed. Laughter has proven to be the most difficult of these features to annotate. The individual instances of laughter cannot be as easily categorised and tagged as pragmatic markers and pronouns[63]. A higher individual variability makes it harder in general to find automating procedures for the analysis of pragmatic features, which means that it seems like they will for now still have to be analysed within their concrete context. SpanExtract's features have been instrumental in assisting my qualitative and quantitative analyses. The open-source program I designed and a colleague coded for me has multiple modes which have furthered my mixed-methods approach. Similar to a concordancer, it finds a search term in the text and is able to display the search term and the co-text around it. The crucial difference is, though, that is based on spans of turns (or intonation units, if the transcript is segmented into those) rather than words, which

[61] On average 96.37% pragmatic markers versus 3.63% of the non-pragmatic form.
[62] 58.59% pragmatic markers versus 41.41% non-pragmatic forms.
[63] In fact, even accurately transcribing the individual forms of laughter for corpora is still considered a difficult task. Truong et al. (2019) have attempted to develop a transcription scheme for "complex" laughter in corpora and find that their annotators rarely agree in their judgement and that many components of laughter need more research.

is a segmentation that is much more sensible for pragmatics. Apart from that, the tool can take into consideration multiple search terms at once, which is helpful when investigating variations of the forms such as I did in my analysis. The output of the program can be used for statistical descriptions and calculations of the co-occurrences in the data. I discussed the specific functions and possible applications of SpanExtract in the respective analysis chapters. The program has already been tested and has aided analysis by researchers in Germany who are working on the same corpus.

8.5. Limitations of the study

There are several limitations to the study of rapport management in this thesis. They concern the breadth and depth of the study, as well as the techniques used to analyse the data. The chosen corpus provided a good dataset for analysing rapport management in a qualitative and quantitative way due to its sampling, set-up, size and format. There are two issues with the sample, which I addressed in the methodology chapter. Firstly, the corpus provides conversations that might not perfectly reflect an everyday setting or an experience that every person would be expected to have, since the conversations are being held between unacquainted speakers who are asked to chat with each other via Skype. These conversations do exist, however, and are becoming increasingly more frequent nowadays. Secondly, the number of countries represented in the corpus is rather restricted, which means that the findings of this thesis can really only apply to the specific context. This restriction is necessary though in order to study the data methodically and make the analysis replicable in other contexts. In some cases in the analysis, there has been an insufficient sample size for accurate statistical measurement. I pointed this out in the relevant places of the analysis, and I put a focus on the qualitative analysis throughout the thesis but backed my findings with numerical data where possible. Testing statistical significance even on this scale is nevertheless a valuable tool to avoid pre-conceptions and wrong assumptions in the data.

There are also limitations to the techniques used to analyse the dataset. I explained some of the possibilities and limitations to my annotation framework in the analysis. My experimental approach (that is nevertheless based on extant research) to the annotation of my data in general enabled a much deeper analysis and the co-occurrence analysis would otherwise not have been

possible. The form of the annotations[64] is not essential and these could be changed as required. One of the annotations I used in this thesis (the context in which *we* is used)—while being a very useful tool in my analysis and contributing to understanding the speakers' use of *we*—is specific to the dataset (the speaking situation, speakers' background, etc.), i.e. the context in which conversation exists. Another annotation attempt (the degree of subjectivity of the pragmatic markers) was unsuccessful due to the ambiguous function of the pragmatic markers, but this also revealed important information about the markers. Lastly, the attempt at annotating the functions of laughter showed that laughter is very complex, and its functions often overlap, which adds to the ambiguity it creates. The annotations, while seeming limited to the scope of this study, can be applied in a wide range of contexts and they are methodologically essential for bridging the gap between qualitative and quantitative approaches.

In terms of the depth of the analysis, it would have been possible to go into more detail annotating the individual functions of stance-taking (and the mitigation thereof) of each feature and study these in clusters. It is unclear, however, whether that would have had significantly different results to that of the annotation of laughter functions, since I have shown in the qualitative analyses that even pronouns and pragmatic markers can have more than one function at once, which is often the reason for their ambiguity. In addition, this thesis is limited in its size and it was not possible to add such an in-depth analysis. This also links to the analysis of co-occurrences as a technique. The analysis of co-occurrences shows that while it can reveal very interesting instances of rapport management, the problem is that it is first necessary to gain a detailed insight into how the individual features affect rapport. This is feasible in a thesis such as this, but in a different context, it would have to be carried out either over a longer term by a single researcher studying several features or a team of researchers working on different features and bringing their knowledge together for an analysis of how other rapport-relevant features co-occur.

[64] For this thesis, I used a form (_# followed by a *number*) that the computers could easily process and was visually distinctive from the rest of the transcript for me as a researcher.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1. Summary

I understand this thesis as a basis for possible future research into rapport that creates an intersection between qualitative and quantitative methods from pragmatics and corpus linguistics, capturing both theoretical as well as practical knowledge. I brought research from multiple disciplines together to look at the specific strategies involved in rapport management and the linguistic features that realise these strategies. I identified gaps in the research on rapport that relate to there not being more of an overlap between qualitative and quantitative research, especially considering the lack of research into the linguistic features involved[65]. My analysis focuses on stance (conversational positioning), specifically how speakers commit to it and avoid doing so in order to manage rapport. I exemplify this strategy with three concrete linguistic features and their different realisations: pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter.

For the pronouns, I have found that the use of inclusive and exclusive *we* in this particular type of data (unacquainted ELF speakers working together on a "task") is not so much realised as a switching between one and the other, but rather that they are each used in a specific context. Inclusive *we* is used when the speakers create a joint stance, especially during task-based interaction. This is of course very much contextual, but there are also examples in the data where the speakers use inclusive *we* to align with their conversation partner's stance and where they build a hypothetical future joint stance with it. This can be problematic if the conversation partner does not wish for stances to be aligned, does not consider it appropriate or feels that their opinion is misunderstood; this is why such an utterance is often mitigated in some form. Exclusive *we* does not affect stance between the speakers directly, but does so in combination with other linguistic forms. A shift from exclusive *we* to generic forms like impersonal *you* or vice versa personalises or depersonalises a statement. The speakers take advantage of impersonal *you*'s ambiguity, either including or excluding themselves from a reference. Switching from exclusive *we* to impersonal *you* allows the speakers to manage rapport by repositioning themselves. The switch can also make the speakers appear less problematic or

[65] Based on this, I have chosen one specific strategy that is well researched, but three of its realisations that have not been investigated thoroughly quantitatively with regard to their effect on rapport.

critical by distancing themselves from a stance, as well as making the speakers more amicable and knowledgeable by aligning with or committing to a stance.

The pragmatic markers influence the epistemic value of subjectivity, but more specifically also certainty and uncertainty of the speaker and therefore their stance towards utterances. *I think, I mean* and *I guess* allow the speaker to commit to a stance or to align with one, but also to avoid doing so. This can be prompted or unprompted by the other speaker. In addition, I have shown how those markers mitigate a potentially delicate or problematic situation or utterance by increasing the notion of uncertainty in a statement and avoiding commitment to a stance. *I don't know* is slightly different to the other three pragmatic markers. It characterises a statement as subjective since its core meaning of uncertainty allows the speaker to not outright commit to a stance and to relativize their position. This also increases the tentativeness of the statement. *I don't know* can also do that by showing neutrality rather than avoidance[66] towards the stance of the conversation partner or the speaker's own statement. As such, the pragmatic marker does the opposite of indicating subjectivity by allowing the speaker to take a step back and not commit to a stance. This means that speakers not only mitigate with *I don't know* when they do not agree with the conversation partner, they also use it in less problematic situations when they want to indicate neutrality.

I have found that the speakers in ViMELF take a stance and avoid taking a stance with laughter. Due to its flexibility, they openly align with a conversation partner's stance as well as use exactly that very function when they do not want to take a stance, knowing that their laughter can be interpreted ambiguously by the conversation partner. When a speaker cannot or does not want to commit to agreeing or aligning with their partner's stance, they laugh or chuckle and create an ambiguous situation, where their laughter might mean actual agreement or masked disagreement. Laughter also re-frames the situation as a more playful or non-serious one, in which certain utterances are more acceptable (like future interaction, criticism, etc.).

As a common theme, then, these three features all allow the speakers to commit to a stance or avoiding doing so, depending on which function is necessary in a particular situation. They do this by making use of the very ambiguity that the features entail, meaning that their pragmatic

[66] Avoidance in my understanding means that the speaker is actively not taking a stance because they do not wish to do so, whereas neutrality means that the speaker has no direct preference and therefore does not distance themselves from or commit to a stance.

quality (having different meanings depending on the context) makes them the perfect tool for navigating the fragile relationship speakers are building with their conversation partner.

The findings in this thesis are to some extent context-dependent. They are less dependent on the medium that is used, but more so on the task and the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The latter influences how the conversation partners position themselves and the other person, but not in the sense that there are any salient differences that are country- or first-language-specific, but rather regarding what is discussed and how the speakers negotiate knowledge about commonalities and differences between their cultures. The external factor with the biggest impact is that the speakers are unacquainted or strangers. It affects how they use pronouns as they at first have nothing on which they can build a common stance with inclusive *we*. It also means that they have to be careful with openly taking a stance since they cannot build on pre-existing knowledge about their conversation partner's character, attitude and expectations. This seems to be why the speakers often use the ambiguous quality of the pragmatic features. These external factors affect the linguistic features and stance work to a certain extent and following specific patterns. It seems though that idiosyncratic choices play the most important role in the use of the three linguistic features that influence how stance is negotiated.

Co-occurrence of features has proven to be of particular importance. This indicates points in a conversation where rapport management is considered necessary by the speakers. While not every single instance of co-occurring features is an indicator of rapport, many of them are, especially if all three feature categories are represented. Which features take the lead is specific to the situation that warrants rapport management. Even if one of the features might not be the most salient linguistic feature responsible for rapport management in an instance, each one of the features contributes to positioning the conversation participants in exactly the way that is intended. Conceptually, the analysis of co-occurrences of linguistic features that affect stance and rapport and that have usually been studied in isolation represents an important step in combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in analysing pragmatic data. My research extends the methodology used in corpus studies to the qualitative findings of pragmatic studies in order to study rapport management. An analysis such as this is only possible due to the combination and consolidation of qualitative and quantitative methods and tools.

Another essential concept of this thesis is the finding that it is necessary and beneficial to annotate the pragmatic data when studying rapport in larger corpora. As I have demonstrated in

this thesis, annotation does not only aid the identification of the linguistic features in corpora of spoken language. The annotation frameworks have also enabled me to carry out much deeper analyses into the functions of the linguistic features. In addition, the co-occurrence analysis would not have been possible without the annotations. To further my analysis of rapport management in a larger spoken corpus, I appropriated functions of corpus linguistic software to fit a pragmatics-based understanding of language, developing a program that brings together a more traditional corpus linguistic method of analysing language with the needs of someone analysing pragmatic spoken data (i.e. multiple contexts and features, spans of turns instead of words). Its design enables the analysis to be more thorough and the findings to be more meaningful. The output of this program, SpanExtract, is improved by the annotation frameworks for the pragmatic features. The program allows for a qualitative analysis of the extracted instances[67] as well as a closer insight into the numerical side of the data for quantitative analyses. SpanExtract has considerably eased and sped up my analysis, since it extracts information in a way that a normal concordancer cannot. This is especially important in the case of the co-occurrence analysis, which traces co-occurrences across speaker turns (and which traditional concordancers are also not be able to do). Looking at speaker turns rather than words for search spans is a crucial consideration that needs to be developed further in future studies. On a methodological level, this approach allows for new ways of analysing pragmatic features in spoken language, especially considering the co-occurrences. On a theoretical level, this research has enabled me to identify and call attention to different forms of managing rapport depending on how or where the features co-occur.

To sum up, speakers commit to a stance and avoid doing so with the help of pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter. These choices seem to be mostly idiosyncratic. The individual rapport management functions of these pragmatic features are manifold. The features can be identified, isolated and analysed qualitatively and quantitatively more easily and quickly with annotation frameworks based on pragmatic research, studying the co-occurrences of features based on turns instead of word spans and using SpanExtract, the program that I designed for this thesis but that has great potential for use beyond this specific context. It is important to note that a corpus linguistic analysis can only yield so much superficial information; this is a consequence of what I have established in the previous chapters. It is indispensable to look at

[67] This can be done by using the extracted data with another program as a sub-corpus for a qualitative or quantitative analysis.

the detailed instances of the exchange when studying rapport and stance, even more so when the features that realise the linguistic strategy are so heavily context-dependent.

My study represents one way of bridging the gap between traditional and modern rapport research on features that are notoriously difficult to investigate in a more automated environment. I attempted to balance both depth and breadth in this study, as I analysed a limited dataset in terms of its size, the type of speech examined, the setting, and the variety that is used, i.e. I limited the context of the study and I limited the analysis to one strategy and its realisations into three features. At the same time, the research background of each of these single features, let alone the strategy, is immense and I focus on a specific section of this array of forms and functions. In this thesis, building on pragmatic and corpus linguistic elements has been crucial, which has considerable implications for future research.

9.2. Outlook

With this thesis as a foundation for my outlook on future rapport research, I am convinced that that research will find more precise and automated solutions to create an intersection between qualitative and quantitative methods. Rapport management is a very important research subject, as it is something everyone does almost every time they interact with others. The field will surely need many more contributions from scientists from different disciplines who jointly work on new research, since its interdisciplinarity is what has advanced this topic and that will surely solve future problems. This is possible when more machine-focused research is backed with human-human interaction research and qualitative research learns from quantitative research and vice-versa.

Future research has the opportunity to develop many different aspects discussed in this thesis. It could, for example, go more in-depth on each of the features. Future research in the area of pronouns and their impact on stance should determine how speakers build rapport as they position themselves through first person singular pronouns and others through second and third person singular and plural pronouns. To my knowledge, there have not been any studies specifically connected to rapport. New work by Fernández Polo (2018) for example finds that instances of (second person/explicit) *you* cluster around rapport-relevant moments, but his research in general has a different primary focus. Studying the features in more contexts could also be advanced by using other corpus linguistic technology. If we were to categorise the topics occurring in each utterance by studying the collocations with a semantic tagger instead

of manually (as I did in chapter 4), for example, it would potentially become possible to determine the likelihood of an instance of *we* being either inclusive or exclusive. This is of course dependent on knowing the context of the dataset and the usual proportions within such a dataset, which will require detailed further studies into this particular topic but seems like a promising avenue.

Another way of studying these linguistic features would be to analyse them in different contexts (which means settings, varieties, types of speech, etc.) or to compare the existing findings in this exact same setting and speech type to a native speaker variety or different ELF or second language varieties. Even though they are from different linguistic backgrounds and language families, the ViMELF speakers mostly seem to use the investigated pragmatic features to create rapport in similar ways. This could in future be studied in closer detail, for example by focussing on one feature only and manually analysing and comparing each instance by each speaker. There is also still much to consider when it comes to studying a different set of features which affect stance and rapport management, some of which I touched upon in chapter 2. In particular those features that are more difficult to identify in a larger dataset will provide challenges and opportunities for future research in this field. An example of this is the absence of certain features in a conversation and a consideration of what the speakers in these interactions do instead. It is currently only possible to say which conversations show lower numbers of these features, but alternatives used by those speakers need to be studied closely and, to this point, manually. Innovations in this area would greatly benefit rapport research by providing a deeper insight into the functionality of these forms and their alternatives for negotiating stance and creating rapport.

Regarding the considerations on statistical significance applied in this thesis, it would be interesting to determine in further studies how often speakers use the individual functions of the pragmatic markers, especially if machines are to understand language better. Future research on laughter co-occurrences and rapport could for example carry out investigations into critical numbers of co-occurring laughter instances, i.e. determine exactly from when a number of instances within a pre-defined span is unquestionably rapport-relevant. For this, it would also be beneficial to test the annotation frameworks used in this thesis on different sets of data, which would also again lead to a broader understanding of rapport in other spoken settings.

My research has shown that an integration of qualitative and quantitative methods is not only beneficial to the study of rapport, but also looks very promising for the intersection of qualitative and quantitative linguistic studies in general. I see the biggest potential for future developments in the area of the exploration of co-occurrences between the pragmatic features. Future research should carry out an in-depth analysis of co-occurrences, specifically looking at variations of the co-occurring features and their effect on rapport management in those constellations. It would be equally beneficial to repeat this analysis on a larger dataset with a similar context. I would be particularly interested in seeing new methods developed that allow for more accurate mapping of the co-occurrences of the linguistic features in conversations, which will give a better overview of rapport management on a larger scale. Co-occurrence analyses are now also being tested for other linguistic features. Researchers in the CASE team are currently working on a publication using co-occurrences of transition markers to find topic-shifts in conversations[68].

For rapport research, co-occurrences can also have other applications. For instance, looking at the co-occurrences of the linguistic features has allowed me to point out other features that occur in these instances and that also affect stance or rapport management. This technique could be used for future manual sampling, allowing a researcher to look for other forms in the known instances of rapport management which are the co-occurrences of pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter. This would allow for a more "systematic way" of retrieving both the features and pragmatic phenomena (O'Keeffe et al., 2019: 48), which is one of the key issues in Corpus Pragmatics. To this point, I am not aware of anyone using this technique as an approach to the study of rapport management. I hope that future researchers will find ways to fine-tune these methods since they are not only promising for rapport research, but also for the wider discipline of Corpus Pragmatics. Ideally, this kind of research will be carried out by a team of researchers, working on different features and strategies and bringing their knowledge together for an analysis of rapport management on a larger scale. In this way they will not only bridge the gap between qualitative and quantitative research, but also make the study of rapport more methodical and replicable.

[68] This research is based on a conference paper by Marie-Louise Brunner and Stefan Diemer: "Tracking transitions: A corpus-based investigation of transitional clusters in Skype conversations" delivered at ICAME 39 in Tampere, Finland, 30 May – 3 June 2018.

Appendices

I. ViMELF – A Corpus of Video-Mediated English as a Lingua Franca Conversations

Compilation: CASE project, Trier University of Applied Sciences, Version 1.0: 15 April 2018
Full documentation on CASE and ViMELF can be found here: http://umwelt-campus.de/case

Project Coordination & Contact:

Stefan Diemer & Marie-Louise Brunner
Language & Communication, Trier University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Composition:

20 Conversations, 40 main speakers
Conversation length: 744.5 min total, about 12.5 hours of conversations
Average conversation length: 37.23 min.
Words/Tokens: 154,472 (annotated version)
Medium: Video both sides: 11, video one side: 3, audio: 6

Conversation names, medium and length

01SB32FL06 (video both sides), 00:39:46
01SB36FL10 (video both sides), 00:31:48
01SB75HE01 (video both sides), 00:35:42
01SB78HE04 (video both sides), 00:33:20
02SB80HE06 (video both sides), 00:39:43
04SB25SF01 (video one side SB25), 00:40:04
04SB33FL31 (audio), 00:41:01
04SB69ST05 (video both sides), 00:33:48
05SB70ST07 (video one side SB70), 00:33:57
05SB93HE19 (video both sides), 00:34:18
06SB73ST14 (video both sides), 00:42:22
07SB17SF10 (audio), 00:41:00
07SB49FL33 (audio), 00:42:24
07SB50FL34 (video both sides), 00:39:50
07SB51ST01 (video both sides), 00:32:15
07SB53ST03 (video both sides), 00:33:00
08SB05SF05 (audio), 00:40:11
08SB106HE03 (video one side HE03), 00:44:37
10SB03SF09 (audio), 00:31:16
10SB07SF07 (audio), 00:44:09

The conversation ID includes the conversation topic (see Appendix II). The second and third set of letters and numbers indicate the speaker IDs (see Appendix III). Conversation 01SB32FL06 therefore is a call between speakers SB32 and FL06, who received topic prompt number 1.

II. CASE and ViMELF conversation topics

The first number of each conversation ID (see Appendix I) indicates the topic the conversation participants received as conversation prompts. The following topics were provided as conversation prompts:

1. "So, what are you studying" – Course of studies and job prospects
2. "And what do you do all day?" – Life as a university student
3. "University here and there" – Different academic cultures
4. "The role and future of English" – Lingua Franca & global attitudes
5. "Should learning be virtual?" – Mobile learning, online courses: pros & cons
6. "How do you celebrate?" – Cultures and traditions
7. "Let's talk about food" – Eating habits and preferences: What do you like to eat?
8. "What's on?" – Popular Culture: Talk about your favourite TV show (from round 3)

The initial talks between Saarland and Sofia Universities had 12 topics which are renumbered in the finished corpus as far as possible - a list of corresponding topics follows:

- SF1. "So, why are you studying English?" – Course of studies and job prospects – corresponding to 1. "So, what are you studying" – Course of studies and job prospects
- SF2. "And what do you do all day?" Life as a university student – corresponding to 2. "And what do you do all day?" – Life as a university student
- SF3. "University here and there." – Different academic cultures & individual research interests – corresponding to 3. "University here and there" – Different academic cultures
- SF4. "How do you learn?" – Learning resources – no corresponding topic
- SF5. "Our research" – Aspects of World English – no corresponding topic
- SF6. "Should learning be virtual?" – Mobile learning, video seminars, key-pals: pros & cons – corresponding to 5. "Should learning be virtual?" – Mobile learning, online courses: pros & cons
- SF7. "Learning by surfing?" – Can online communication enhance language skills? – no corresponding topic
- SF8. "How do you celebrate…?" – Cultures and traditions - corresponding to 6. "How do you celebrate?" – Cultures and traditions
- SF9. "A network for languages?" – Computer networking in ELT and education – no corresponding topic
- SF10. "The Future of English" – Lingua Franca & global attitudes – corresponding to 4. "The role and future of English" – Lingua Franca & global attitudes
- SF11. "One voice or many?" – Europe and its role in the future – no corresponding topic
- SF12. "What would you like to talk about?" – Current issues – no corresponding topic

III. ViMELF speakers and national sub-corpora

Speaker	Nationality
SB03	German (Saarbrücken)
SB05	
SB07	
SB17	
SB25	
SB32	
SB33	
SB36	
SB49	
SB50	
SB51	
SB53	
SB69	
SB70	
SB73	
SB75	
SB78	
SB80	
SB93	
SB106	

Speaker	Nationality
SF01	Bulgarian (Sofia)
SF05	
SF07	
SF09	
SF10	
ST01	Spanish (Santiago de Compostela)
ST03	
ST05	
ST07	
ST14	
FL06	Italian (Forlì)
FL10	
FL31	
FL33	
FL34	
HE01	Finnish (Helsinki)
HE03	
HE04	
HE06	
HE19	

IV. CASE transcription conventions – Overview

Transcribed feature	Description
.	Falling tone
?	Rising tone
,	Continuing intonation
-	Cut-off
CAPS	Heavy stress
° °	Spoken more softly
" "	Voice shift
.. / ... / (x.x)	Pause: < .5 seconds / > .5 seconds, timed (in secs.)
:	Lengthening
< >	Spoken more slowly
> <	Spoken more quickly
[ ]	Overlap
=	Latching
H	Audible breath sounds
.h	Inhalation
h	Exhalation
( )	Transcription uncertain (with interpretation)
(( ))	Aspects of the utterance, e.g. whispers, coughing, laughter
((/ /))	Phonemic transcription
((German (x.x)))	Code-switching (with language and duration)
~~€€€~~	Echo
{ }	Nonverbal behaviour, e.g. gestures, movements and looks
_	Liaison

Detailed conventions: CASE transcription conventions (2017). Birkenfeld: Trier University of Applied Sciences. [umwelt-campus.de/case-conventions]

V. ViMELF Transcript versions example: 01SB32FL06

V.A. ViMELF Transcript – Original

#start of conversation#
SB32: okay.
FL06: .. uh?
(>where can I go<)? {clicks with mouse}
... o:kay?
(5.5) .t so:?
(2.0) O:KAY?
… "HI"?
SB32: hi.
.. how are you?
FL06: I'm fine °thanks°,
>and you<?
SB32: doing well.
FL06: mhm,
.h .t how is the weather in German? {smiles}
SB32: ... very bad:, {looks to upper corner}
h it's raining all day,
it's <co:ld:> ((col/t/)).
FL06: ... °oh°.
.. now? {squints}
yeah, {looks to upper corner} #00:00:30-2#
it's raining here also,
we have_uh like_uh {looks up} ten degrees:,
which is:_uh really cold for Italy. ((hehe))
SB32: ((LAUGHS))
I think it's:, {scratches nose}
around:,
(1.1) eight degrees,
[seven] to eight degrees here,
FL06: [uh], {tilts head to the left}
ah. {nods}
... that's not BAD.
but_uh yesterday we had: like_uh twenty-two? {looks to upper corner}
.. was like summer,
we were wearing_uh t-SHIRTS_uh, {thumping sound}
.. >I don't know<,
.. this morning was like "B:R" {imitates freezing by shaking his body}, ((hehe))
#00:01:00-5#

V.B. ViMELF Transcript – Orthographic transcript (including speaker markers)

SB32: okay
FL06: uh where can I go okay so OKAY HI
SB32: hi how are you
FL06: I 'm fine thanks and you
SB32: doing well
FL06: mhm how is the weather in German
SB32: very bad it 's raining all day it 's cold
FL06: oh now yeah it 's raining here also we have uh like uh ten degrees which is uh really cold for Italy
SB32: I think it 's around eight degrees seven to eight degrees here
FL06: uh ah that 's not BAD but uh yesterday we had like uh twenty-two was like summer we were wearing uh t-SHIRTS uh I do n't know this morning was like BR

V.C. ViMELF Transcript – Orthographic transcript including laughter (and speaker markers)

SB32: okay
FL06: uh where can I go okay so OKAY HI
SB32: hi how are you
FL06: I 'm fine thanks and you
SB32: doing well
FL06: mhm how is the weather in German
SB32: very bad it 's raining all day it 's cold
FL06: oh now yeah it 's raining here also we have uh like uh ten degrees which is uh really cold for Italy ((hehe))
SB32: ((LAUGHS)) I think it 's around eight degrees seven to eight degrees here
FL06: uh ah that 's not BAD but uh yesterday we had like uh twenty-two was like summer we were wearing uh t-SHIRTS uh I do n't know this morning was like BR ((hehe))

VI. Microsoft Office Excel Macro (VBA Project)

Developed by **Mathias Alt**, 16 March 2018

Returns “TRUE” if one of the search terms from a designated worksheet (here called SEARCH TERMS) occurs in a specific column (n1) in the worksheet ANALYSIS and returns a result for each row in the worksheet ANALYSIS in a designated column (n2).

The names for the worksheets have to be changed when applied to a different workbook (either in the macro or the data). Choose a number n1 for the column in worksheet ANALYSIS in which to search for the terms from worksheet SEARCH_TERMS and a number n2 for the column in ANALYSIS in which the results for each row are returned.

The developer is German and used the German version of Microsoft Office, which is why the macro includes German terminology. The macro works in any version of Excel.

```
Sub CHECK_COLUMN()
 Dim i As Integer
Dim start, spalteSuche, spalteErg As Integer
Dim gefunden As Boolean

start = 1
i = 1
spalteSuche = n1
spalteErg = n2
gefunden = False

While (Worksheets("ANALYSIS").Cells(start, spalteSuche) <> "")
   gefunden = False
   i = 1

   While (Worksheets("SEARCH_TERMS").Cells(i, 1) <> "")
      If InStr(Worksheets("ANALYSIS").Cells(start, spalteSuche),
Worksheets("SEARCH_TERMS").Cells(i, 1)) > 0 Then
         gefunden = True
      End If
      i = i + 1
   Wend

Worksheets("ANALYSIS").Cells(start, spalteErg) = gefunden

   start = start + 1
Wend


End Sub
```

Searches in the n^{th} column from the left, choose a number

n^{th} column from the left into which the result is returned

Name of worksheet with data to be analysed

Name of worksheet with list of search terms

VII. Collocation Analyses – Pronouns

VII.A. List of collocates of all instances of *we* in ViMELF

Collocation analysis of all instances of *we* in ViMELF with AntConc.
Span 5L/5R, minimum collocate frequency = 5, thirty-five most frequent collocates

#Total No. of Collocate Types: 269
#Total No. of Collocate Tokens: 8776

Rank	Freq	Freq(L)	Freq(R)	Stat	Collocate
1	5	0	5	7.32928	skip
2	5	0	5	7.00735	participate
3	6	3	3	6.59231	club
4	6	1	5	6.27038	took
5	16	3	13	6.00735	together
6	11	0	11	6.00735	celebrate
7	15	4	11	5.91424	each
8	7	4	3	5.90781	tree
9	8	0	8	5.75942	talked
10	5	1	4	5.74432	points
11	5	2	3	5.74432	list
12	59	9	50	5.74025	got
13	5	1	4	5.62884	project
14	5	0	5	5.52192	snow
15	5	1	4	5.52192	church
16	41	9	32	5.42239	talk
17	6	1	5	5.42239	several
18	6	3	3	5.42239	being
19	322	161	161	5.36099	we
20	7	2	5	5.35527	stop
21	5	1	4	5.32928	set
22	30	10	20	5.29953	should
23	40	18	22	5.28488	our
24	22	3	19	5.25733	ll
25	8	0	8	5.25246	supposed
26	13	9	4	5.24836	topic
27	19	1	18	5.16781	start
28	9	2	7	5.13288	pay
29	15	4	11	5.10689	minutes
30	8	1	7	5.10046	normally
31	24	2	22	5.10046	eat
32	5	4	1	5.08135	erasmus
33	5	3	2	5.08135	dinner
34	5	2	3	5.08135	decided
35	6	3	3	5.06875	during

project/task/topic

traditions/culture

studies/education

VII.B. List of collocates of exclusive *we* (we_#0) in ViMELF

Collocation analysis of exclusive *we* in ViMELF with AntConc.

Span 5L/5R, minimum collocate frequency = 5, twenty-five most frequent collocates

#Total No. of Collocate Types: 218

#Total No. of Collocate Tokens: 6275

Rank	Freq	Freq(L)	Freq(R)	Stat	Collocate
1	5	0	5	7.00735	participate
2	6	3	3	6.59231	club
3	6	1	5	6.27038	took
4	16	3	13	6.00735	together
5	7	4	3	5.90781	tree
6	10	0	10	5.86985	celebrate
7	5	1	4	5.74432	points
8	52	7	45	5.55804	got
9	5	0	5	5.52192	snow
10	5	1	4	5.52192	church
11	6	1	5	5.42239	several
12	5	2	3	5.15935	being
13	8	1	7	5.10046	normally
14	24	2	22	5.10046	eat
15	5	4	1	5.08135	erasmus
16	5	3	2	5.08135	dinner
17	253	127	126	5.01306	we
18	6	3	3	5.00735	party
19	8	3	5	5.00735	each
20	8	2	6	4.96296	pay
21	25	16	9	4.79323	christmas
22	8	4	4	4.75942	few
23	27	13	14	4.71784	our
24	10	3	7	4.71457	choose
25	13	4	9	4.68542	went

traditions/culture

studies/education

VII.C. List of collocates of inclusive *we* (we_#1) in ViMELF

Collocation analysis of inclusive *we* in ViMELF with AntConc.
Span 5L/5R, minimum collocate frequency = 5, twenty-five most frequent collocates

#Total No. of Collocate Types: 104
#Total No. of Collocate Tokens: 1826

Rank	Freq	Freq(L)	Freq(R)	Stat	Collocate
1	5	0	5	7.32928	skip
2	28	10	18	5.19999	should
3	7	0	7	5.05982	supposed
4	11	8	3	5.00735	topic
5	6	2	4	5.00735	record
6	12	1	11	4.78496	minutes
7	7	1	6	4.68542	both
8	6	0	6	4.59231	each
9	22	3	19	4.52427	talk
10	13	3	10	4.49834	ll
11	5	3	2	4.19999	conversation
12	10	0	10	4.10046	talking
13	5	1	4	3.71457	done
14	13	5	8	3.6634	our
15	5	0	5	3.57439	half
16	6	0	6	3.50485	start
17	5	0	5	3.49639	thirty
18	46	9	37	3.47834	can
19	27	5	22	3.32761	about
20	5	0	5	3.26319	try
21	6	1	5	3.23476	another
22	10	5	5	3.11982	see
23	13	13	0	3.06393	maybe
24	5	3	2	2.98943	alright
25	62	31	31	2.98427	we

project/task

also in project/task

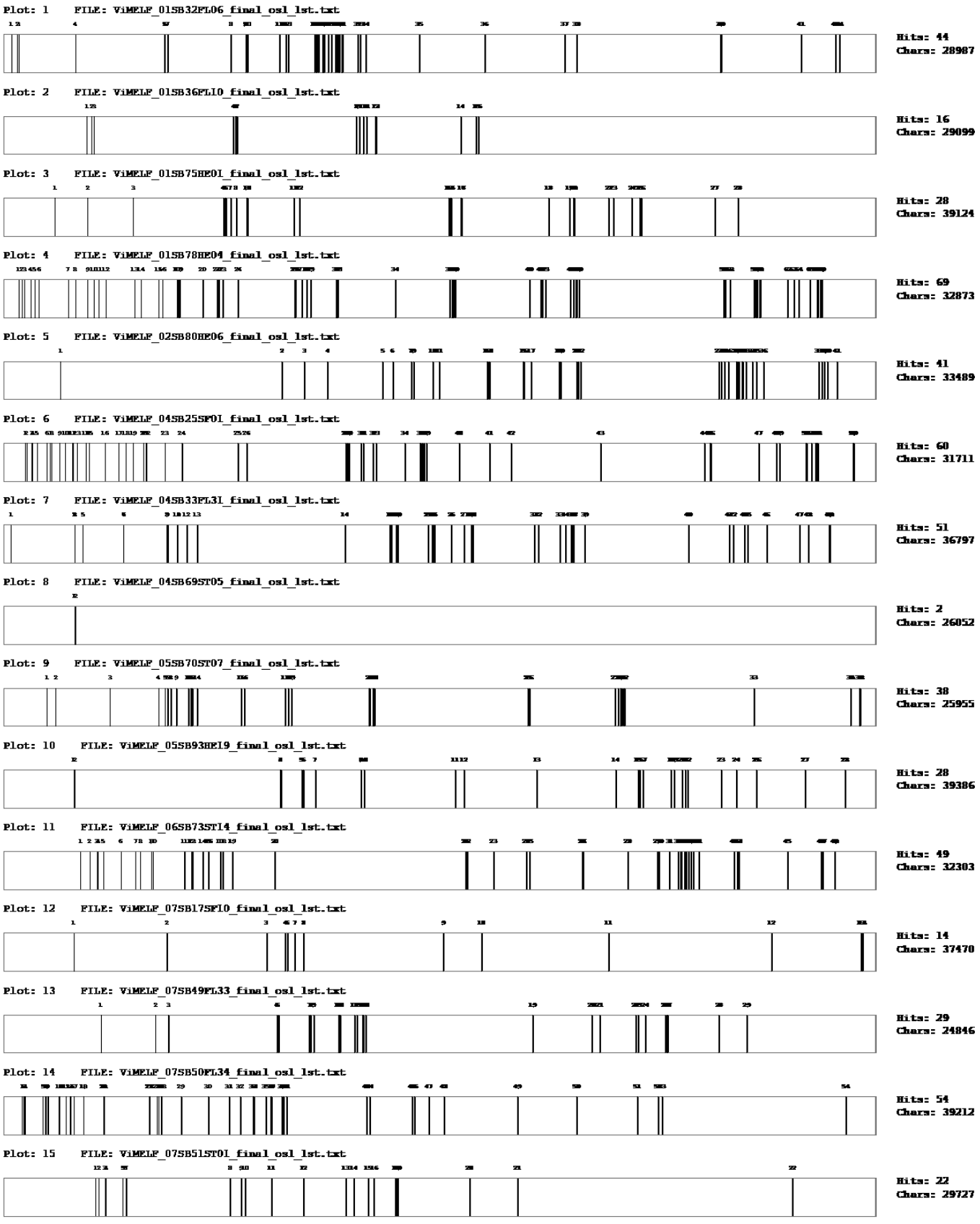
context: e.g.

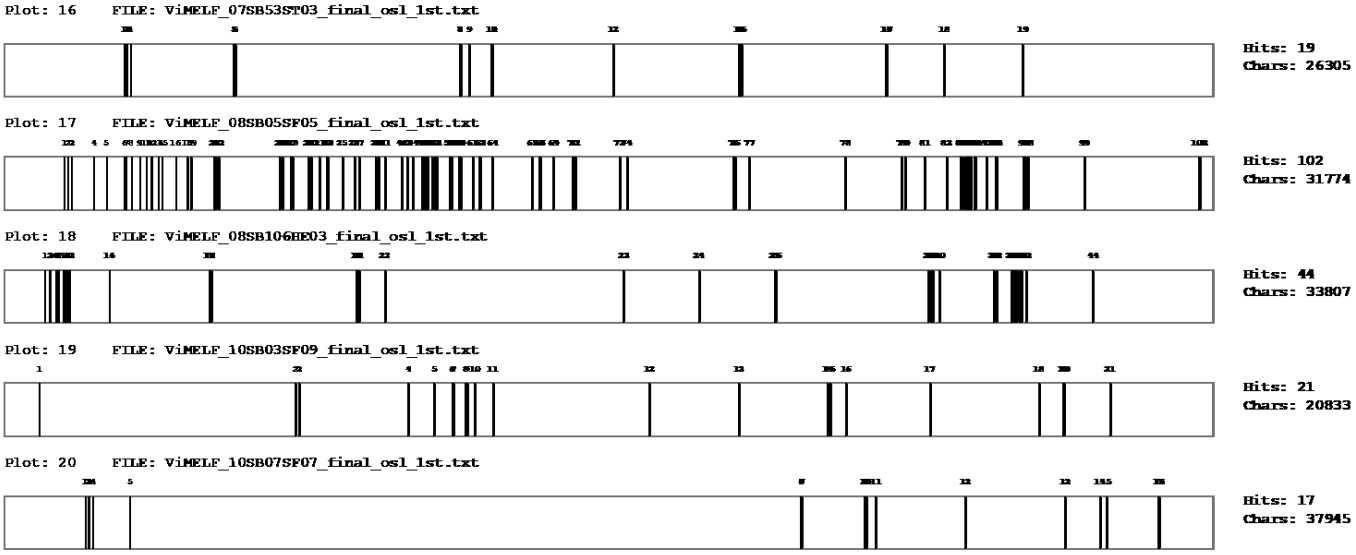
supposed to talk about

should we skip

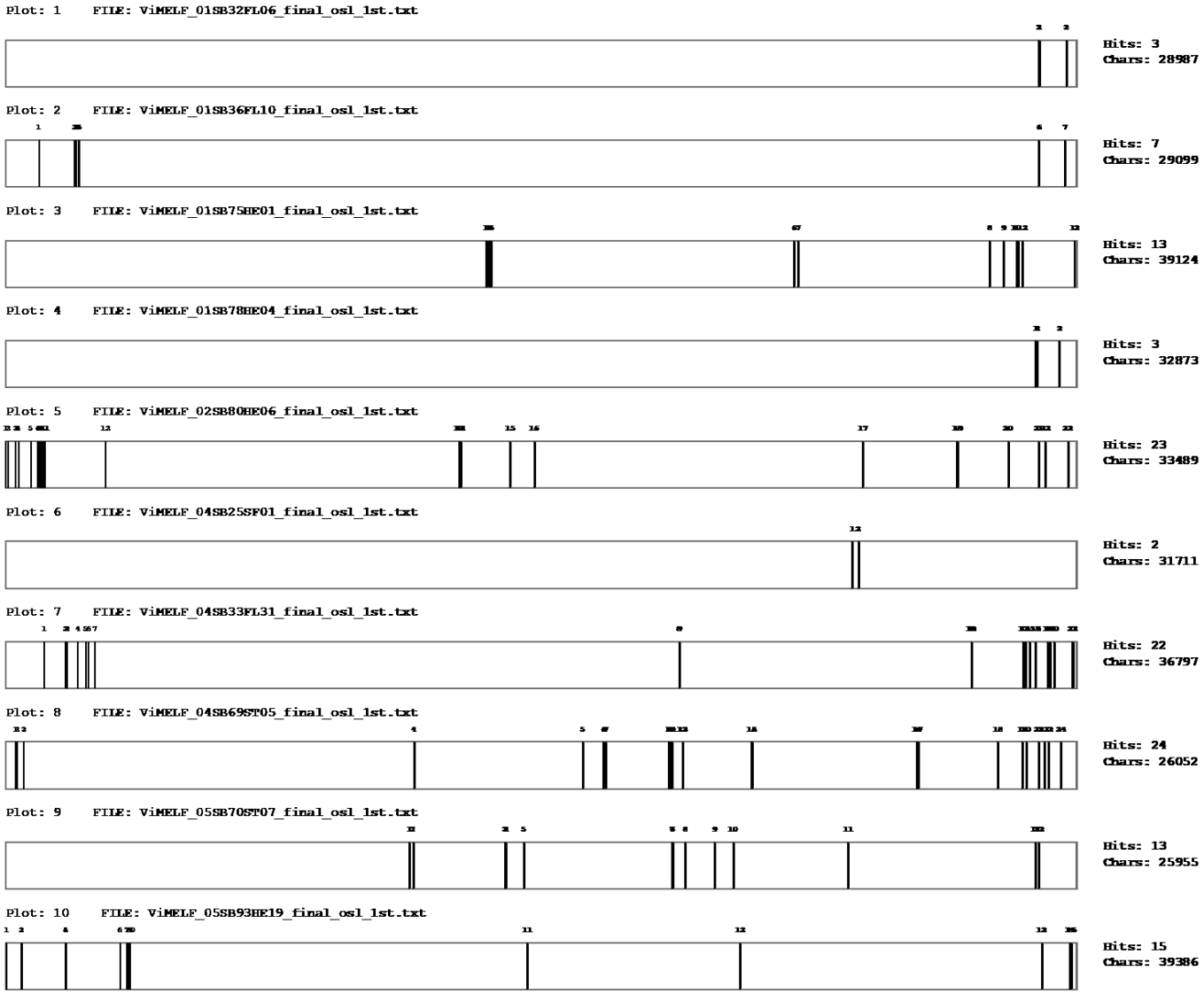
VIII. AntConc concordance plots – Pronouns

VIII.A. Concordance plots of exclusive *we* in ViMELF





VIII.B. Concordance plots of inclusive *we* in ViMELF



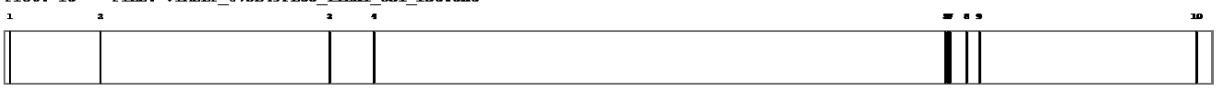
Plot: 11 FILE: ViMELF_06SB73ST14_final_osl_1st.txt

Hits: 10
Chars: 32303

Plot: 12 FILE: ViMELF_07SB17SF10_final_osl_1st.txt

Hits: 12
Chars: 37470

Plot: 13 FILE: ViMELF_07SB49FL33_final_osl_1st.txt



Hits: 10
Chars: 24846

Plot: 14 FILE: ViMELF_07SB50FL34_final_osl_1st.txt

Hits: 5
Chars: 39212

Plot: 15 FILE: ViMELF_07SB51ST01_final_osl_1st.txt

Hits: 15
Chars: 29727

Plot: 16 FILE: ViMELF_07SB53ST03_final_osl_1st.txt

Hits: 3
Chars: 26305

Plot: 17 FILE: ViMELF_08SB05SF05_final_osl_1st.txt

Hits: 10
Chars: 31774

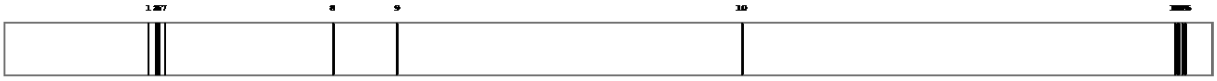
Plot: 18 FILE: ViMELF_08SB106HE03_final_osl_1st.txt

Hits: 14
Chars: 33807

Plot: 19 FILE: ViMELF_10SB03SF09_final_osl_1st.txt

Hits: 4
Chars: 20833

Plot: 20 FILE: ViMELF_10SB07SF07_final_osl_1st.txt



Hits: 15
Chars: 37945

IX. ViMELF laughter types: absolute and relative frequencies

Absolute frequency of laughter forms in ViMELF

	((laughs))	((laughing))	((chuckles))	((chuckling))	((hehe))	((thh))	((ehh))	((heh))	Total
01SB32FL06	12	4	13	24	42	13	18	9	135
01SB36FL10	4	0	1	16	8	1	0	26	56
01SB75HE01	78	11	26	60	31	7	31	33	277
01SB78HE04	8	7	12	51	23	5	6	17	129
02SB80HE06	31	11	19	28	18	5	5	22	139
04SB25SF01	5	2	2	4	4	2	2	14	35
04SB33FL31	43	30	2	19	22	3	38	72	229
04SB69ST05	11	1	18	34	28	1	15	24	132
05SB70ST07	9	6	18	15	6	6	8	6	74
05SB93HE19	10	8	1	1	16	1	4	8	49
06SB73ST14	37	10	49	12	71	3	65	20	267
07SB17SF10	31	26	18	21	12	2	31	21	162
07SB49FL33	14	24	11	16	5	10	25	17	122
07SB50FL34	35	9	19	45	8	1	12	9	138
07SB51ST01	88	17	21	14	15	11	43	18	227
07SB53ST03	5	2	10	12	9	2	13	31	84
08SB05SF05	1	0	2	10	5	0	0	17	35
08SB106HE03	7	1	4	4	19	3	2	28	68
10SB03SF09	4	0	13	2	15	0	33	6	73
10SB07SF07	17	16	17	46	16	0	51	34	197
Total	450	185	276	434	373	76	402	432	2628

Relative frequency of laughter forms in ViMELF

	((laughs))	((laughing))	((chuckles))	((chuckling))	((hehe))	((thh))	((ehh))	((heh))	Total
01SB32FL06	2.28	0.76	2.47	4.57	7.99	2.47	3.42	1.71	25.68
01SB36FL10	0.77	0.00	0.19	3.10	1.55	0.19	0.00	5.04	10.85
01SB75HE01	11.42	1.61	3.81	8.78	4.54	1.02	4.54	4.83	40.56
01SB78HE04	1.44	1.26	2.15	9.15	4.13	0.90	1.08	3.05	23.15
02SB80HE06	5.41	1.92	3.31	4.88	3.14	0.87	0.87	3.84	24.25
04SB25SF01	0.85	0.34	0.34	0.68	0.68	0.34	0.34	2.37	5.93
04SB33FL31	6.68	4.66	0.31	2.95	3.42	0.47	5.90	11.18	35.56
04SB69ST05	2.47	0.22	4.04	7.63	6.28	0.22	3.37	5.39	29.62
05SB70ST07	1.97	1.31	3.94	3.28	1.31	1.31	1.75	1.31	16.20
05SB93HE19	1.38	1.11	0.14	0.14	2.21	0.14	0.55	1.11	6.78
06SB73ST14	7.05	1.90	9.33	2.29	13.52	0.57	12.38	3.81	50.85
07SB17SF10	4.53	3.80	2.63	3.07	1.75	0.29	4.53	3.07	23.66
07SB49FL33	3.05	5.23	2.40	3.49	1.09	2.18	5.45	3.70	26.57
07SB50FL34	4.82	1.24	2.62	6.20	1.10	0.14	1.65	1.24	19.02
07SB51ST01	17.17	3.32	4.10	2.73	2.93	2.15	8.39	3.51	44.28
07SB53ST03	1.04	0.42	2.09	2.50	1.88	0.42	2.71	6.47	17.53
08SB05SF05	0.17	0.00	0.34	1.70	0.85	0.00	0.00	2.89	5.95
08SB106HE03	1.10	0.16	0.63	0.63	3.00	0.47	0.32	4.42	10.72
10SB03SF09	1.07	0.00	3.48	0.54	4.02	0.00	8.84	1.61	19.56
10SB07SF07	2.46	2.31	2.46	6.65	2.31	0.00	7.37	4.92	28.48
Total	3.95	1.62	2.42	3.81	3.28	0.67	3.53	3.79	23.08

X. Co-occurrences of pronouns, pragmatic markers and laughter in ViMELF

X.A. Conditional probabilities of co-occurrences within a single turn

	we_#0	we_#1	think_#2	mean_#2	guess_#2	know_#2	((laughs))	((laughing))	((chuckles))	((chuckling))	((hehe))	((thh))	((ehh))	((heh))
we_#0	156	2	64	17	13	17	11	8	7	26	17	1	13	18
we_#1	2	40	36	6	5	5	14	10	3	12	11	4	7	15
think_#2	64	36	56	24	10	28	14	14	6	28	25	5	23	19
mean_#2	17	6	24	18	7	7	6	10	2	8	5	4	11	10
guess_#2	13	5	10	7	7	12	5	3	4	8	6	1	3	5
know_#2	17	5	28	7	12	18	4	6	7	14	8	4	9	9
((laughs))	11	14	14	6	5	4	23	34	12	39	14	0	8	9
((laughing))	8	10	14	10	3	6	34	8	4	13	7	0	7	12
((chuckles))	7	3	6	2	4	7	12	4	3	17	11	2	7	10
((chuckling))	26	12	28	8	8	14	39	13	17	24	29	6	29	36
((hehe))	17	11	25	5	6	8	14	7	11	29	6	1	8	7
((thh))	1	4	5	4	1	4	0	0	2	6	1	0	2	1
((ehh))	13	7	23	11	3	9	8	7	7	29	8	2	4	14
((heh))	18	15	19	10	5	9	9	12	10	36	7	1	14	7
	748	223	643	233	133	249	450	185	276	434	373	76	402	432
we_#0	0.209	0.009	0.100	0.073	0.098	0.068	0.024	0.043	0.025	0.060	0.046	0.013	0.032	0.042
we_#1	0.003	0.179	0.056	0.026	0.038	0.020	0.031	0.054	0.011	0.028	0.029	0.053	0.017	0.035
think_#2	0.086	0.161	0.087	0.103	0.075	0.112	0.031	0.076	0.022	0.065	0.067	0.066	0.057	0.044
mean_#2	0.023	0.027	0.037	0.077	0.053	0.028	0.013	0.054	0.007	0.018	0.013	0.053	0.027	0.023
guess_#2	0.017	0.022	0.016	0.030	0.053	0.048	0.011	0.016	0.014	0.018	0.016	0.013	0.007	0.012
know_#2	0.023	0.022	0.044	0.030	0.090	0.072	0.009	0.032	0.025	0.032	0.021	0.053	0.022	0.021
((laughs))	0.015	0.063	0.022	0.026	0.038	0.016	0.051	0.184	0.043	0.090	0.038	0.000	0.020	0.021
((laughing))	0.011	0.045	0.022	0.043	0.023	0.024	0.076	0.043	0.014	0.030	0.019	0.000	0.017	0.028
((chuckles))	0.009	0.013	0.009	0.009	0.030	0.028	0.027	0.022	0.011	0.039	0.029	0.026	0.017	0.023
((chuckling))	0.035	0.054	0.044	0.034	0.060	0.056	0.087	0.070	0.062	0.055	0.078	0.079	0.072	0.083
((hehe))	0.023	0.049	0.039	0.021	0.045	0.032	0.031	0.038	0.040	0.067	0.016	0.013	0.020	0.016
((thh))	0.001	0.018	0.008	0.017	0.008	0.016	0.000	0.000	0.007	0.014	0.003	0.000	0.005	0.002
((ehh))	0.017	0.031	0.036	0.047	0.023	0.036	0.018	0.038	0.025	0.067	0.021	0.026	0.010	0.032
((heh))	0.024	0.067	0.030	0.043	0.038	0.036	0.020	0.065	0.036	0.083	0.019	0.013	0.035	0.016
	we_#0	we_#1	think_#2	mean_#2	guess_#2	know_#2	((laughs))	((laughing))	((chuckles))	((chuckling))	((hehe))	((thh))	((ehh))	((heh))

X.B. Conditional probabilities of co-occurrences across three turns

	we_#0	we_#1	think_#2	mean_#2	guess_#2	know_#2	((laughs))	((laughing))	((chuckles))	((chuckling))	((hehe))	((thh))	((ehh))	((heh))
we_#0	296	18	150	52	34	65	62	32	48	82	84	19	67	84
we_#1	18	104	87	15	13	17	66	35	32	47	56	16	53	55
think_#2	150	87	170	77	39	90	92	52	56	112	110	27	123	118
mean_#2	52	15	77	51	21	30	42	28	23	52	30	12	58	53
guess_#2	34	13	39	21	23	30	22	8	19	28	32	10	32	24
know_#2	65	17	90	30	30	52	38	20	35	70	52	20	57	56
((laughs))	62	66	92	42	22	38	179	133	101	176	117	25	157	145
((laughing))	32	35	52	28	8	20	133	35	32	75	64	12	68	68
((chuckles))	48	32	56	23	19	35	101	32	51	112	83	20	97	93
((chuckling))	82	47	112	52	28	70	176	75	112	112	144	31	132	139
((hehe))	84	56	110	30	32	52	117	64	83	144	72	23	110	113
((thh))	19	16	27	12	10	20	25	12	20	31	23	4	24	17
((ehh))	67	53	123	58	32	57	157	68	97	132	110	24	63	108
((heh))	84	55	118	53	24	56	145	68	93	139	113	17	108	93
	748	223	643	233	133	249	450	185	276	434	373	76	402	432
we_#0	0.396	0.081	0.233	0.223	0.256	0.261	0.138	0.173	0.174	0.189	0.225	0.250	0.167	0.194
we_#1	0.024	0.466	0.135	0.064	0.098	0.068	0.147	0.189	0.116	0.108	0.150	0.211	0.132	0.127
think_#2	0.201	0.390	0.264	0.330	0.293	0.361	0.204	0.281	0.203	0.258	0.295	0.355	0.306	0.273
mean_#2	0.070	0.067	0.120	0.219	0.158	0.120	0.093	0.151	0.083	0.120	0.080	0.158	0.144	0.123
guess_#2	0.045	0.058	0.061	0.090	0.173	0.120	0.049	0.043	0.069	0.065	0.086	0.132	0.080	0.056
know_#2	0.087	0.076	0.140	0.129	0.226	0.209	0.084	0.108	0.127	0.161	0.139	0.263	0.142	0.130
((laughs))	0.083	0.296	0.143	0.180	0.165	0.153	0.398	0.719	0.366	0.406	0.314	0.329	0.391	0.336
((laughing))	0.043	0.157	0.081	0.120	0.060	0.080	0.296	0.189	0.116	0.173	0.172	0.158	0.169	0.157
((chuckles))	0.064	0.143	0.087	0.099	0.143	0.141	0.224	0.173	0.185	0.258	0.223	0.263	0.241	0.215
((chuckling))	0.110	0.211	0.174	0.223	0.211	0.281	0.391	0.405	0.406	0.258	0.386	0.408	0.328	0.322
((hehe))	0.112	0.251	0.171	0.129	0.241	0.209	0.260	0.346	0.301	0.332	0.193	0.303	0.274	0.262
((thh))	0.025	0.072	0.042	0.052	0.075	0.080	0.056	0.065	0.072	0.071	0.062	0.053	0.060	0.039
((ehh))	0.090	0.238	0.191	0.249	0.241	0.229	0.349	0.368	0.351	0.304	0.295	0.316	0.157	0.250
((heh))	0.112	0.247	0.184	0.227	0.180	0.225	0.322	0.368	0.337	0.320	0.303	0.224	0.269	0.215
	we_#0	we_#1	think_#2	mean_#2	guess_#2	know_#2	((laughs))	((laughing))	((chuckles))	((chuckling))	((hehe))	((thh))	((ehh))	((heh))

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