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Bionote

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Abstract

This paper approaches data from L2 German argumentative discourse from Goffman's related notions of *face* and *frames*. *Face* as the social identities and qualities speakers want to have upheld is seen to be associated *frames*, i.e. the way speakers frame and interpret an event.

Comparing three examples from a cross-sectional data set of discussions on issues associated with university life, the paper shows that, in each of these cases, speakers applied different frames to the task, resulting in different patterns of turn-taking and modalisation. These differences can be explained with the varying degrees of exposure to the target language in classroom and out-of-classroom situations as well as the educational environment in which the data were collected.

The paper ends with a number of proposals for research in the field of interlanguage pragmatics, suggesting that politeness and speech act perspectives are insufficient to grasp learners' real pragmatic intent. Instead, the question of how tasks and situations are interpreted by learners need to be at the forefront of inquiry, with methods for data collection and analysis appropriate to that agenda following suit.

Key words

Interlanguage pragmatics, face, speech frames

Using speech frames to research interlanguage pragmatics

Facework strategies in L2 German argument

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1. Introduction

Frames give a picture definition and shape, and a change of frame can even change a picture's appearance significantly. Similarly, the interpretation of a speech event can significantly alter depending on what frame is applied to its interpretation.

This paper seeks to explain German L2 learners' performance in argumentative discourse tasks with the related notions of speech frames and face (Goffman) in order to demonstrate how these can provide a new perspective on interlanguage pragmatics, a field which so far has been dominated heavily by politeness perspectives and by non-interactional approaches to data collection and analysis. I will use this data to discuss, in the final sections of this paper, the implications for research in interlanguage pragmatics.

2. Frames and face as social and individual phenomena

Frames are defined by Goffman (1974: 10-11) as follows:

“I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify. That is my definition of frame. My phrase “frame analysis” is a slogan to refer to the examination of these in terms of the organisation of experience.”

Goffman proposes that frames are a speaker's reference point for interaction in social encounters; they define speakers' perceptions of situations and tasks. Within the frame of a fight, a child may understand a push by another child as an offence, for example, and react accordingly by defending him/herself or becoming upset. When understood within the frame of play, the result may be a playful fight.

To arrive at interpretations, speakers use what Goffman calls *primary frameworks*, which he further subdivides into natural and social frameworks. While natural frameworks see events as unguided and occurring without intention, social frameworks “incorporate the will, aim, and controlling effort of an intelligence” (Goffman, 1974: 22). From Goffman’s point of view, frames are therefore individual and social phenomena at the same time: while they are individual in the sense that they encapsulate speakers’ personal interpretations of events, these interpretations are never formed in isolation, but rather through individuals’ interaction with and knowledge of the world.

In applied linguistics research, frames have, so far, played a subordinate role and only been involved very occasionally in explaining participants’ interactional behaviour. Roebuck (2000) for example observed that, in a problem-solving activity, students did not necessarily act within the frames initiated by the researcher, e.g. ‘subject of an experiment’ or ‘Spanish university student’. Instead, they “were also engaged in the ongoing activity of constructing and maintaining an interaction in which the self needed to be positioned”, and continuously “reframed the activity in which they were involved” (p. 93). Similarly, Wildner-Bassett (1989; 1990) showed that participants in a role-play switched among what she calls coexisting *discourse worlds* (role-play vs. real life vs. native speaker-learner), i.e. they invoked a variety of frames.

A related notion to frames is *face*:

“The term *face* may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes – albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself.” (Goffman, 1967:5)

For Goffman, there is an individual as well as a social basis for face: while speakers *claim* an image of self (individual) and therefore aim to present themselves as certain kinds of people, the image presented to others may or may not be shared and acknowledged by others. Moreover, Goffman also argues that the image that speakers want to have acknowledged includes both social roles and attributes associated with these roles. This is a conception that is shared by Spencer-Oatey (2000: 14) in her distinction of *quality face* – “a fundamental desire for people to evaluate us positively in terms of our personal qualities, e.g. our competence, abilities, appearance”– and *identity face* – “a fundamental desire for people to acknowledge and uphold our social identities or roles, e.g. as group leader, valued customer, close friend”.

It is here that frames and face meet: what social identities and qualities speakers want to uphold and have acknowledged depends on how they frame an event. Human behaviour has a social basis, but is filtered through an individual, cognitive sieve. Hence, there is much more to face and facework than politeness and avoidance of imposition in orientation to external factors such as social distance, power and imposition as Brown & Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, which is the framework that most research in interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatics has traditionally relied on, suggests.

3. Research in interlanguage pragmatics (ILP)

3.1 Politeness and speech acts

Interlanguage pragmatics is, according to Kasper & Rose (2003: 5), the study of “how non-native speakers comprehend and produce action in a target language” and of how they “develop the ability to understand and perform action in a target language”.

While in theory, ‘action’ is a wide term, in practice, research on L2 learners’ pragmatic behaviour and their development of pragmatic strategies has, to date, been predominantly conducted under the overall umbrella of politeness theory, featuring speech acts such as apologies, refusals and requests (e.g. Trosborg, 1995; Rose, 2000; Barron, 2003; Schauer, 2004).

Methodologically, studies such as these are characterised by data collection procedures that allow for little or no interaction (e.g. discourse completion tasks) or are strongly scripted (e.g. role-plays), making it possible to easily manipulate external factors such as social distance, power and degree of imposition. Moreover, analytical categories are usually imposed on the data via a coding scheme, which is often based on the CCSARP framework (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). These schemes tend not to leave much flexibility and room for interpretation of the data.

It is not my intention here to discount discourse completion tasks or other highly scripted methods of data collection completely. Indeed, these may be advantageous in gathering large amounts of data, to explore what learners think are appropriate strategies in a given context and in answering research questions that do not focus on interaction. However, I will make the point that using frame and face as an approach to explaining learners’ behaviour in discourse will need to entail approaches to analysis which focus on interaction, and which work bottom-up from the data rather than top-down with pre-imposed categories of analysis.

3.2 Argumentative discourse

The data analysed for this paper stems from dyadic argumentative discourse tasks (see 4.1). Argumentative discourse has characteristics that are distinct from speech acts, as

speakers' contributions are inherently dependent on each other. One of its defining characteristics is that participants propel each other along:

“The conversation-analytic approach seems to show interactants using a three-part sequence of claim and counter-claim as a ladder for the argumentative exchange, each step depending on the previous one and constructing it either as another rung up the dispute or as an opportunity to jump off.” (Antaki, 1994: 186)

Any turn can become arguable, thereby prompting what Jackson & Jacobs (1980: 257) call “argument expansion”. The absence of a relevant answer turn to an argument turn (such as a reply to a challenge or disagreement) is however both noticeable and accountable (principle of conditional relevance; Schegloff, 1968).

As for interlanguage argumentative discourse, missing reactions to proposals were one of the problems uncovered by Kotthoff (1988, 1989, 1991) in her research on pragmatic behaviours of native English speaking learners of German in a university setting. She also found that learners sometimes did not use relevant contextualisation cues to indicate a cooperative or a confrontational attitude. Altogether, learners' style was focused on content rather than the manner of its conveyance and lacked vital facework cues (e.g. aggravators or softeners).

Kotthoff made a number of suggestions regarding the reasons for these specific pragmatic behaviours, including learners' orientation to English norms of pragmatic behaviour and preference for indirectness owing to the higher status of the professors. Kotthoff therefore explains her results with reference to a cultural frame in the first instance, and an institutional frame in the second.

Argumentative discourse has so far featured only rarely in ILP research. One further exception is research on the development of disagreement strategies by learners of English (Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, 2001; Bardovi-Harlig & Salsbury, 2004), for which

interactions between ESL students at an American university and graduate students of Applied Linguistics were recorded over one year. The authors of this study found that language proficiency and their ability to process language in real time may presents learners with further obstacles to overcome. As their overall proficiency progressed, learners' turns became more elaborated, i.e. they started to include agreement components, downgraders and postponed disagreement within a turn.

4. Methodology

4.1 Data

The data stem from a research project on pragmatic development in L2 German argumentative discourse. The subjects were learners of German at a large UK university, most of whom were enrolled on a BA Modern Languages degree. Data was collected from learners at three levels of proficiency: first year university students (post A-level), second year university students and final year university students (post year abroad). 12 first year students, 12 second year students and 10 final year students participated.

Most of the students were native speakers of English, but some foreign exchange students currently studying at the university also took part. No formal assessment of learners' proficiency level took place. However, students went through a standardized system of placement into levels, which in year one was based on A-level grades and from there onwards on their success in passing the previous year.

Six different tasks (sample task instruction cards in the appendix) were designed for this study, featuring topics related to student life (university admission criteria, binge-drinking, obesity, advice for first-year students of German, extra-curricular activities for students of German, tuition fees). Students worked in pairs and each dyad was allowed to choose their

task for themselves. Each member of the dyad was then given a task instruction card with the discussion question (e.g. What should the University of X do to fight binge-drinking in the student population?), four different options to address the problem (e.g. close all campus bars), and a blank space to write down a fifth option of their own choice. Students first ranked the options individually and then discussed their ranking with their partners.

After the conversations, interviews were conducted with some of the learner dyads. They consisted of stimulated recall in which learners were asked to report their thoughts and decision-making processes based on a recording of their conversation which was replayed to them, and a semi-structured interview in which learners were asked further questions about their perceptions of the strategies they had used.

The researcher was a PhD student known to all students as a member of teaching staff and who taught some of the classes for first year students. While students were engaged in the discussions, she left the room, a language lab equipped with computers and top-mounted webcams. After that, she returned for the retrospective interviews.

4.2 Analysis

The research project from which this data is drawn was originally set up to illuminate the development in argumentative discourse by learners of German. The data was analysed under two aspects: the preference organisation of turns and the sequential organisation of argumentative sequences¹ on the one hand, and aspects of modality (e.g. downgraders and upgraders) on the other.

I am going to draw on both analytical approaches whenever appropriate. However, the sequential organisation of learners' argumentative sequences, in particular the overall conversational coherence of turns within such argumentative sequences, proves to be most illuminating for this investigation.

The extracts featured have been chosen to illustrate the theoretical claims made earlier about frames and face. When extracts are representative of wider trends, this will be mentioned in the discussion of the examples. Extracts from the interviews will be used to illuminate reasons for learners' behavior in the argumentative discussions.

5. Results

5.1 Frame 1: Language task

The first argumentative sequence discussed for this paper is from a discussion between two first year students.

Ex 1: first year students

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | <p>ASHLEY: =man (.) ich weiß es nicht aber ich werde es ich denke dass es auch nicht eine gute idee ist em (.) e:h (.) dass alkoholische getränke in den campus bars teurer machen</p> | <p>ASHLEY: =one (.) I don't know but I will I think that it is also not a good idea em (.) e:h (.) that alcoholic drinks in campus bars are made more expensive</p> |
| 2 | <p>BROOKE: ja: ich denke dass ich em (.) persönlich könnte nicht em mehr bezahlen für [getränke aber=</p> | <p>BROOKE: yeah: I think that I em (.) personally would not be able to em pay more for [drinks but=</p> |
| 3 | <p>ASHLEY: [ja</p> | <p>ASHLEY: [yeah</p> |
| 4 | <p>BROOKE: =vielleicht das ist gut weil em manchmal trinke</p> | <p>BROOKE: =perhaps this is good because em sometimes I drink</p> |

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ich zu viele und dann an die | <i>too much and then the nex-</i> |
| nächs- die nächste tag bin | <i>the next day I am ()</i> |
| ich () bin ich em | <i>I am em em e:h (.) guilty?</i> |
| e:h (.) schuldig? ((sieht | <i>((looks at Ashley))</i> |
| Ashley an)) | |
| 5 ASHLEY: ja? ((zögerlich)) | ASHLEY: <i>yeah?((hesitant))</i> |
| 6 BROOKE: weil ich habe= | BROOKE: <i>because I have=</i> |
| 7 ASHLEY: =du hast | ASHLEY: <i>=you have a headache=</i> |
| kopfschmerzen= | |
| 8 BROOKE: =ja= | BROOKE: <i>=yeah=</i> |
| 9 ASHLEY: =und magenschmerzen | ASHLEY: <i>=and a tummy-ache</i> |
| 10 BROOKE: und ich em habe | BROOKE: <i>and I em have</i> |
| menschen (.) insultieren | <i>insulted (.) people (nods,</i> |
| ((nickt, rollt mit den | <i>rolls her eyes))</i> |
| augen)) | |
| 11 ASHLEY: ja ((laughs)) em ja | ASHLEY: <i>yeah ((lacht)) em</i> |
| nein eh wir sind studenten | <i>yeah no eh we are students we</i> |
| wir möchten nicht so viel | <i>don't want to pay so much</i> |
| geld beza-- | <i>mo--</i> |
| 12 BROOKE: =ja: | BROOKE: <i>=yeah:</i> |
| 13 ASHLEY: zahlen | ASHLEY: <i>ney</i> |
| 14 BROOKE: nein | BROOKE: <i>no</i> |

Ashley starts the sequence by reference to one of the suggestions from the task instruction cards on how to stop students from binge-drinking to excess, namely the proposal to make alcoholic drinks in campus bars more expensive. She expresses her discontent with this suggestion, using the task instruction card to scaffold herself into the

task. This suggestion forms the first part of an adjacency pair and makes an answer by Brooke relevant.

In her reply, Brooke partially agrees with Ashley, suggesting that she would personally not be able to pay higher prices for alcoholic drinks, but that the proposal as such may be useful because she herself sometimes drinks too much. Hence, a disagreement is established in the two initial ('core') turns of the argumentative sequence. According to the principle of conditional relevance (Schegloff, 1968), we would expect Ashley to come up with a reply to Brooke's turn; not necessarily fierce disagreement, but at least some form of justification for the opinion she had brought forward earlier.

However, Brooke had ended her turn with signs of linguistic insecurity (hesitation, rising intonation, seeking eye contact). At this point, Brooke breaks out of the frame of a debate and into the frame of a language task, in which she makes her role as a learner of German relevant. Subsequently, Ashley takes up this role orientation and uses Brooke's linguistic problems for linguistic scaffolding rather than a reply to the actual argument brought forward by Brooke. By doing so, she presents herself as a helpful peer.

Her linguistic scaffolding has however got further consequences on how the argument proceeds: mentioning headaches and tummy-aches as a consequence of drinking puts Ashley and Brooke firmly into student shoes. While, initially at least, Brooke had argued from the perspective of a responsible adult, supporting higher prices for alcohol on the basis of the fact that, as a student, she might not be able to afford them. Ashley's summary and insistence on a shared student identity leads to the sequence ending in agreement and a shared understanding. Ashley and Brooke do not solve the issue in question, and the two speakers move on to the next point.

This sequence shows how quickly and readily subjects in a research task can change the frame they are operating in. By listing typical effects of alcohol, Ashley and Brooke are

neglecting the actual purpose of the task and align themselves with a task typical for the foreign language classroom. Even though they eventually return to the actual argument (l. 21 onwards), what they create is a piece of discourse that proceeds without embarrassing gaps that might be seen as displaying a lack of proficiency of one or both speakers. Hence, by trying to present themselves positively as participants in debate (e.g. by disagreeing, elaborating on their opinions, etc.), they protect and seek to enhance their face as language learners, orienting their strategies to the social framework provided by the research setting (educational institution, researcher seen in role as language tutor).

In the retrospective interviews, Ashley and Brooke did not directly comment on this section of their discussion. However, when asked during the semi-structured interview whether they would have argued differently if they had conducted their conversation in their mother tongue English, they answered as follows:

Ex. 2: Interview with Ashley and Brooke

Interviewer: Would you say you would have argued in different style if you would have done the conversation in your mother tongue with another na- I mean you two would have probably done the conversation in English together.

Ashley: Yeah it would have definitely been as I said more assertive.

Brooke: I think maybe we would contradict one another more often just because we could (state the opposite) whereas we can't do that in German just because it just makes it more complicated.

Ashley: It would have been much more complex as well.

Interviewer: Do you think you would have argued in a different way at any time with a native speaker of German - if you had done the conversation say either in English or in German with a native speaker of German.

Brooke: If it was in German I probably just would have asked them questions and let them talk more because that would have made it easier for myself.

Ashley's and Brooke's answers confirm that they were aware of the fact that their argument lacked qualities such as assertiveness and complexity. However, according to Brooke, this may have been a conscious decision to remove themselves from too complex an argument, in an effort order to display other qualities which might include fluency and accuracy in the foreign language.

5.2 Debate frame

Then next example, from a debate on obesity by two final year learners, shows a different kind of frame orientation:

Ex 3: Final year students

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | EMMA: ich habe es auf em (.) vier gemacht | EMMA: <i>I have put it on em (.) four</i> |
| 2 | DONALD: auf vier? wieso [das denn? | DONALD: <i>on four? why [that?</i> |
| 3 | EMMA: [JA? (.) weil ich denke dass man freie wille haben soll [() | EMMA: [YES? (.) <i>because I think that one should be free to choose [()</i> |
| 4 | DONALD: [ja aber man kann leute so ein bisschen erMUTIGEN so [man kann sagen ja | DONALD: [yes but one <i>can ENCOURAGE people a bit so [one can say yeah</i> |
| 5 | EMMA: [ja aber man soll nicht | EMMA: <i>[yes but one shall not</i> |

| | | |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | zwingen (.) und ich denke studenten haben kein kein geld [und und= | <i>force (.) and I think students have no no money [and and=</i> |
| 6 | DONALD: [hm (.) hm | DONALD: [hm (.) hm |
| 7 | EMMA: =deswegen das ist nicht eine gute idee weil sie brauchen es (.) um zu denken und studien zu machen | <i>EMMA: = therefore this is not a good idea=because they need it (.) in order to think and to do their studies</i> |
| 8 | DONALD: ja dann können wenn sie nicht so viel geld haben dann können si:e (.) so diese BILLIGES essen kaufen [und zwar gesundes essen | <i>DONALD: yeah then they can when they don't have as much money then they ca:n (.) buy this CHEAP food [which is healthy food</i> |
| 9 | EMMA: [() vielleicht | <i>EMMA: [() maybe</i> |
| 10 | DONALD: also ich finde es nicht gezwungen ich finde es nur so ein bißchen: (.) die studenten zu ermutigen (.) aber das war nicht mein erstes mein erstes war kostenlose sportkurse in allen teilen der universität anbieten (.) weil ich bin der meinung? also (.) ich esse (.) nicht SUPER gesund also ich esse schon versuche so'n (.) schon ein paar gesunde | <i>DONALD: well I am not finding it to be forced I am only finding it to be a bit (.) to encourage the students (.) but this was not my first one my first one was to offer free sports classes in all parts of the university (.) because my opinion is? well (.) I am eating (.) not SUPER healthily well I do it I try to eat so (.) some some healthy things but I don't eat super healthily</i> |

sachen zu essen aber ich esse *I eh: yeah exactly BUT I do do*
nicht super gesund ich eh: ja *lots of exercise and I am*
genau ABER ich mache viel *finding this really (.) eh*
sport und ich finde das echt *important*
(.) eh wichtig

This argumentative sequence centres on the question of whether more healthy food should be introduced in all university cafeterias. The difference of opinion ignites due to a difference in ranking: While Donald had ranked the suggestion as his third option (turn not represented in the transcript), Emma replies by saying that this was the fourth option for her.

Donald's next turn is very interesting: instead of replying immediately, he asks a question that forces Emma to come up with reasons while postponing his own reply until his next turn. From here on, the topic of the debate changes slightly, as Donald and Emma start to argue about whether students can be forced to eat healthily or whether they should be given free choice as far as their nutrition is concerned.

What is particularly interesting in this section of the conversation is the fact that Donald and Emma forge local connections between each others' turns. For example, Donald opposes what Emma terms free choice ('freie wille') with the verb 'ermutigen' in order to emphasize that the introduction of healthy food choices does not necessarily imply a nanny state approach of forcing people to behave in a particular way. The token agreement 'ja aber' contributes to the sharpness and the immediate connection of the two turns. Similarly, Emma's next turn continues the argument by opposing 'ermutigen' with 'nicht zwingen', elaborating further by saying that students do not have enough money to pay for these kinds of foods.

Donald uses the financial argument for his next turn and stresses that the healthy food should also be affordable and would therefore encourage students to eat healthily rather than force them. He then introduces his fourth choice at great length, namely to offer free sports classes as a measure against obesity. A long exchange about the feasibility of free sports classes vs. healthy food choices ensues which, due to its length, could not be represented here fully. This reorientation in topic is made without repeated reference to the task instruction card, but emerges naturally from the conversation.

From the perspective of the theory of argumentative discourse, this example is a rather successful attempt by both speakers to present and defend their opinions: Both speakers build their turns upon the interlocutor's turns, they propel each other along throughout the sequence and generally orient their strategies toward arguing about the issues at hand (i.e. by postponing pending disagreement and challenging the interlocutor to come up with further evidence). Hence, the frame of the debate is firmly maintained. This is also evident in Emma's and Donald's retrospective comment on this section, in which, rather than commenting on the exchange, there are even attempts to continue debating the issues:

Ex. 4: Interview with Donald and Emma

Interviewer: What went through your mind while you were saying this?

Donald: I don't know I was just trying to force my point out.

Interviewer: And what went through your mind?

Emma: I don't know I said I could see his point of view but I could also not see that would happen) and there isn't enough cheap food at the moment so I was trying to say it is not going to work at the moment by just making it more expensive.

Donald: I was trying to express from my point of view - if I am honest I was thinking about me if I had the choice between cheap and fast food and they would go for the same

price I would buy the fast food definitely and I thought for me what would it take for me to buy healthy food it would have to be a bit cheaper. That is possibly a bloke's perspective.

By the way in which Emma and Donald fiercely defend their positions we can see that they interpret the task in the way originally intended by the researcher – a debate – without slipping back explicitly into a student / language learner role.

While examples of students breaking out explicitly from the frame of a debate – as seen in example 1 – are rare even within the discussions by first year students, distinct differences in the way argumentative sequences are structured can be discerned between final year and first year student discussions. Table 1 summarizes these differences in detail:

Table 1 about here

These differences are tendencies rather than clear-cut dichotomies, but the table illustrates that, while first year learners generally treat the discussions as an exchange of opinion, final year learners treat them in the manner in which it was conceptualised by the researcher, i.e. as an argument.

One expectation with which the researcher had approached the tasks was that learners might orient to either English or German cultural frames of pragmatic behaviour in debates. Kotthoff (1989) for example had described the behaviour of native German speakers in argumentative discourse as more geared toward the direct attack of others, while native speakers of English would convey disagreements through advice or justifications. These general trends were also confirmed by others (e.g. Byrnes, 1986; House, 2000).

Questions in the retrospective interviews, which were originally designed to elicit learners' opinions, knowledge and perceptions of English and German pragmatic norms however did, with one exception, not attract any answers in which cultural frames of behaviour were discussed. Instead, learners of all levels contrasted their own pragmatic behaviour to what they perceived to be strategies typical of native speakers in either language, English or German (as shown in the retrospective comments by Ashley and Brooke, example 2). Only Emma and Donald referred to cultural norms for pragmatic behaviour:

Example 5: Interview with Donald and Emma

Interviewer: Did you consider the hearer's reactions when you were planning your utterances and did this influence what you said?

Emma: I think like - two thirds during the conversation I suddenly started thinking about the vocabulary and my grammar a bit more - and I think that made me probably worse in a way.

Donald: [...] I could have been rude and said "That's complete rubbish what you say" but obviously I had to bear in mind her feelings.

Interviewer: Do you think a German or two native speakers of German they would have argued in a different style in a conversation like this.

Donald: They [native speakers of German] are lot more confrontational I think.

Emma: They wouldn't see as much "vielleicht", they would be more direct and say "This is what I think"

These answers show that Donald and Emma are aware of differences of German and English pragmatic norms. While there is no evidence in the discussion that they consciously drew on any of these norms, concerns for politeness seem to have guided their

performance throughout. However, even learners of such a high calibre as Emma and Donald were unable to entirely suspend concerns for vocabulary, grammar and general accuracy.

5.3 Student / national culture frame

I will close this analysis with a final example, which is again an excerpt from a discussion by final year students:

Ex 6: final year students

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | MATTHEW: ja ich stimme zu (.) und dann alkohol aus allen campusbars verbannen? [als (.) letzte | MATTHEW: <i>yes I agree (.) and then banning alcohol from all campus bars? (.) [last</i> |
| 2 | DARREN: [ja (.) das ist unmöglich ich glaube ((lacht)) | DARREN: <i>[yeah (.) this is impossible I think ((laughs))</i> |
| 3 | MATTHEW: es gibt keine (.) es macht keinen sinn= | MATTHEW: <i>there is no (.) it doesn't make sense=</i> |
| 3 | DARREN: =ja (.) und (.) ich glaube dass e:m alle die universität denen in england muss eh zusammenarbeiten weil wenn (.) nur eggburton eh alkohol aus allen campusbars verbannt dann | DARREN: <i>yeah (.) and (.) I think that e:m all universities in England need to collaborate because if only (.) eggburton eh is banning alcohol from all campus bars then</i> |
| 4 | MATTHEW: ja | MATTHEW: <i>yeah</i> |
| 5 | DARREN: eh wür- würde kein | DARREN: <i>eh no students wou-</i> |

studenten hier kommen *would come here probably!*
wahrscheinlich!

6 MATTHEW: ja (.) die meisten MATTHEW: *yeah (.) most of them*
wollen alkoholische [getränke *want to drink alcoholic*
trinken? (.)= *[drinks? (.)=*

7 DARREN: [ja DARREN: *[yeah*

8 DARREN: =also es tut uns leid DARREN: =*well we are sorry but*
aber ((Matthew lacht)) es ist *((Matthew laughs)) it is our*
unsere kultu- kultur hier *cultu- culture here ((speaker*
((speaker looks directly into *looks directly into the*
the camera)) *camera))*

This argumentative sequence begins with Matthew ranking a ban of alcohol in campus bars his least favourite option. Darren reacts to this with very direct agreement, which is only mitigated by the postponed downgrader ‘ich glaube’. From there onwards, Matthew and Darren collaborate on finding reasons for a rejection of a ban on alcohol in campus bars, their agreement showing in their latching turns.

However, of most interest is the end of this sequence, which is also the end of their discussion as a whole: Darren turns his face to the camera in order to face – at least with time delay – the researcher, who was not present in the room and whom both speakers knew to be a German national. In his final turn, Darren defends drinking alcohol as part of student as well as national culture (‘teil unserer kultur hier’), while Matthews laughter shows that, on the whole, he agrees with this statement.

Hence Darren’s and Matthew’s discursive strategies (overlaps, latching turns, upgraded agreement) are moving the discourse away from the researcher’s script (a debate) toward a different genre of discourse. Their enthusiastic agreement builds a case against one of the

proposals brought forward on the task instruction cards, which in the end is being made explicit in their addressing the researcher directly. Darren and Matthew frame their discussion – at least the part represented here – as a defense of a national culture (with a student subculture) against what they seem to perceive as an attack on that culture by way of the task instructions.

6. Discussion

6.1 Using frames and face to explain learners' pragmatic strategies

The analysis of three argumentative sequences from a corpus of argumentative discussions by second language learners of German has shown that the same task was approached in very different ways. Ordinarily, research in the field of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) would explain these differences with respect to factors such as linguistic competence, exposure to the target language etc. And certainly, there is no denying that these factors are probably playing some role.

When comparing examples 1 and 3 in particular, one can certainly argue that, at the highest proficiency level, learners are, due to the amount of target language exposure they have enjoyed and the amount of target language practice through interaction, well disposed to respond to interlocutors' turns at a local level and without reference to the task instructions than learners at lower levels. They have a wider range of vocabulary, making it possible for them to bring forward their opinions and respond to the interlocutors flexibly and in an elaborate way.

On the other hand, the interview extracts have shown that linguistic competence is not the only driver of pragmatic behaviours. Table 2 summarizes which frames I see to be most

relevant to the behaviours observed in the three examples referenced to the facework strategies used by learners:

Table 2 about here

I would like to add that the debate frame is never completely suspended in either one of these examples. Instead, I see the other frames to be temporarily foregrounded. What all examples show is how data collection procedures, in particular the physical environment and the researcher can influence participants' perceptions of tasks and therefore the actual task outcome. Ways of organising the argumentative sequence ranged from an exchange of opinions interrupted by word-search and mutual help (example 1) over a lively debate (example 3) to a co-constructed list of arguments (example 6), thus confirming Schiffirin's (1993: 256) claim that "each frame provides a different basis for understanding how one utterance follows another – a different resource for sequential coherence".

How the task is seen may be a matter of personal perception, but one that is developed in interaction with the social world. Ashley and Brooke, being first year students, are primarily motivated by linguistic accuracy, leading them to perceive the task as one in which their performance as language learners is evaluated. In contrast, Donald and Emma are likely to have encountered, during their year abroad, situations in which persistence in a debate or argument was important to achieve goals that were not purely motivated by linguistic accuracy. Therefore, they are likely to see higher stakes associated with their performance in the debate itself. And finally, Matthew and Darren used student culture, which, at this point, they had been a part of for more than three years, as their primary framework.

6.2 Implications for research in interlanguage pragmatics

The main insight that I have drawn from this data is of course not new. Research has long suggested that tasks that are specifically designed to elicit data make cognitive processing more difficult, thus possibly falsifying the outcome of the data. For example, Firth & Wagner (1997: 294) warn that “participants may not behave at the behest of their native or nonnative competencies and identities, but as a result of the (quasi-experimental) setting, their unfamiliarity with each other, and the setting-imposed task they have agreed to undertake”.

I am not suggesting that research in ILP should now suddenly go all “natural”, i.e. that all data should be drawn from sources that are to a large extent unscripted. This is neither possible nor practical. A number of implications for further ILP research can however still be derived.

As elaborated on earlier, interlanguage pragmatics draws mostly on speech acts and politeness theory. The general implication of this approach is that avoidance of imposition or politeness is speakers’ main goal in discourse. What is commonly ignored is the fact that learners are not puppets, and that they indeed, as shown, may not share the researcher’s interpretation of the speech event.

Therefore, the first conclusion is that it is necessary to go beyond speech acts and a focus on politeness. If the production of action in an L2 is the subject of interlanguage pragmatics research, action must be understood as far more than the maintenance of face through politeness or language use with a goal to achieving smooth interpersonal relationships in limited social encounters (e.g. apologies, requests, etc.). Instead, how subjects “do” things words, how they perform action, needs to be seen in relation to their perceptions of a task, to what they perceive their social roles to be and the qualities the task might require them to display. This might entail the use of strategies that are deliberately

not polite or even rude if they serve to enhance face, or that diverge completely from the task topic (see Dippold, 2009).

This leads to my second point: given that, by whatever method data is collected, a language task always entails learners' subjective perceptions of the situation, researchers need to carefully consider what source their data stems from and keep an open mind as to what learners perceive to be the context of the interaction. There needs to be recognition that, although personal to each participant, such contexts are indeed shaped socially, either co-constructed by participants, or shaped by the environment in which data is collected.

When data is collected within an educational institution, they are particularly 'vulnerable' to being misinterpreted as such data represent, to some extent, a form of what Drew and Heritage (1992) and Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (2005) call *institutional talk*, i.e. talk that orients to particular goals associated with a particular institutional framework. But even authentic, unelicited data is not necessarily superior to data gathered through other methods as, even in real-life contexts, L2 learners may not be able to completely disassociate themselves from their roles as language learners and the pragmatic strategies associated with this role orientation. As a result, factors beyond grammatical competence, overall linguistic proficiency and the likes need to be taken into account.

This leads me to my third point: Analysis of data, when conducted in conventional ways with pre-imposed categories of analysis, is likely to obscure participants' real motivations and attribute behaviours to factors that may be irrelevant. Hence, methods of data collection and analysis should adopt a more emic perspective, i.e. conclusions should be drawn by looking at data bottom-up, without pre-established categories of analysis. Microanalytical approaches to data analysis, such as interactional sociolinguistics or conversation analysis are methods appropriate to that agenda (Kasper, 2004) and the use of

introspective methods (e.g. stimulated recall, interviews, learner diaries) allow researchers further insight into all of these issues.

My fourth and final point is that the scope of interlanguage pragmatics also needs to be widened. *Pragmatic competence* is commonly defined as follows (Kasper and Roever, 2005: 317-318):

“Sociopragmatic competence encompasses knowledge of the relationships between communicative action and power, social distance, and the imposition associated with a past or future event (Brown and Levinson, 1987), knowledge of mutual rights and obligations, taboos, and conventional practices [...], or quite generally, the social conditions and consequences, of “what you do, when and to whom” [...]. Pragmalinguistic competence comprises the knowledge and ability for use of conventions of means (such as the strategies for realizing speech acts) and conventions of form (such as the linguistic forms implementing speech act strategies [...]).”

In this definition of pragmatic competence, a pragmatically competent speaker is somebody who can use the L2 strategies for performing speech acts (*pragmalinguistic competence*) and who can use these strategies appropriately in accordance with conventions and expectations (*sociopragmatic competence*) (see Thomas, 1983). Moreover, speakers are said to be orienting toward a social context determined solely by three factors: power, social distance, imposition.

Given how important a shared frame is for achieving understanding between conversational partners, I argue that a comprehensive definition of the scope of ILP research needs to include a focus on how non-native speakers *interpret* action in a foreign language and, based on their interpretations, they develop their understanding and their ability to perform action. In fact, Kuha (2003), in research based on written speech act

tasks, identified respondents' perceptions of the degree of seriousness of an offence as a major factor influencing how they responded to hypothetical situations. Consequently, this perspective on how participants *perceive* their world beyond the holy trinity of power, social context and imposition also needs to be taken up in research on sociopragmatic competence.

7. Conclusion

The discussion that I have tapped into with this paper is of course not new. In the last decade in particular, researchers have become aware of the important role that social and individual factors play for second language acquisition and use and have spoken out against tightly controlled experimental approaches to SLA research.

The study of Interlanguage Pragmatics is however still surprisingly limited in scope, theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches. Speech frames and a new perspective of what facework entails could contribute to changing this, allowing researchers to come to conclusions regarding learners' strategies and the development of these strategies from an emic, participant-relevant perspective.

Appendix

Transcript Conventions for Discussion Tasks

| | |
|--------|----------------------------------|
| (.) | pause |
| em, eh | hesitation markers |
| but- | false starts and abrupt cut-offs |
| ? | rising intonation |

| | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ! | very animated tone |
| CAPITALS | extremely stressed utterance |
| (word) | utterance not clearly intelligible; transcriptioners' best guess |
| : | elongation of an utterance |
| ((comment)) | some sound or feature of the talk that cannot be very easily transcribed, e.g. laughing, coughing |
| = | latched turns and turns by the same speaker that are overlapping lines |
| [| simultaneous/overlapping utterances |
| () | utterance unintelligible |

Sample Task Instruction card (Topic: Binge-Drinking)

Was sollte die Universität Eggburton tun, um den Trend des "Kampftrinkens" unter Studenten zu bekämpfen?

- _____ **Alkohol aus allen Campus-Bars verbannen**
- _____ **alkoholische Getränke in den Campus-Bars teurer machen**
- _____ **alkoholische Getränke in den Studentenwohnheimen ganz verbieten (auch auf den Privatzimmern)**
- _____ **alkoholische Getränke in den Campus-Bars nur noch an Studenten über 21 Jahre verkaufen**
- _____ _____

Please rank the suggested measures from what you think is the most acceptable one (1) to the one which, from your perspective, is the least acceptable one (5). Add a further suggestion of your choice.

Then discuss the above question with your partner. Your task is to find the best compromise which you can present as a list of suggestions to the university authorities. However, make sure your opinion is heard, and always give reasons for your choices!

Notes

¹An argumentative sequence was defined as a sequence of turns that are topically related, consisting minimally of a core adjacency pair in which speaker A brings forward an opinion or assessment in which speaker B reacts to that opinion or assessment. Such an adjacency pair can, but does not necessarily have to be extended with more turns, relating to the same (sub-)topic.

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Table 1:

| | first year | final year | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| exchange of opinion | focus on establishment of common ground through elaboration on agreement | defence of own and attack of interlocutors' opinion (use of interlocutors' turns for own disagreement; upgraded agreement to sharpen disagreement, challenging questions) | argument |
| | lack of cohesion with interlocutors' turns | generally cohesive | |
| | brief argumentative sequences | longer argumentative sequences | |
| | unelaborated turns; lack of evidence | elaborated turns; evidence, inclusion of concessive elements | |
| | sequentially expected turns missing | sequentially expected turns present | |
| communicative efficiency | 'ja aber' as disagreement preface and turn-entry device | more elaborated agreement elements as disagreement preface | communicative redundancy |

Table 1: Conversational argument at different levels of proficiency

Table 2:

| | Frame | Face and facework |
|------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Example 1 | Language task | <p><u>Face threatened:</u> L2 learner ‘ face, associated with qualities such as accuracy, fluency</p> <p><u>Social framework invoked:</u> Physical environment of the educational institution</p> <p><u>Facework:</u> asking for help to ensure accuracy & fluency, providing assistance</p> |
| Example 3 | Debate | <p><u>Face threatened:</u> Participant in a debate, associated with qualities such as persistence, originality</p> <p><u>Social framework invoked:</u> experiences during year abroad with real-life high-stakes encounters</p> <p><u>Facework:</u> overlap, challenge, coherence, insistence</p> |
| Example 6 | Student / national culture | <p><u>Face threatened:</u> Representative of student /(British) national culture, associated with qualities such as a love of partying and heavy drinking</p> <p><u>Social framework invoked:</u> Researcher seen as German citizen and representative of teaching staff</p> <p><u>Facework:</u> collation of arguments against proposal(s) on the task instruction cards, direct challenge to researcher</p> |

Table 2: Frames, face and facework