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Sociopragmatic Development in Study Abroad Contexts:

The Role of Learner Status in the Use of Second Language Pragmatic Markers

Candidate

Annarita Magliacane

<table>
<tr><td>Supervisors</td><td>Head of the PhD board</td></tr>
<tr><td>Dr Martin Howard</td><td>Professor Maura Striano</td></tr>
<tr><td>Dr Paolo Donadio</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

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Sociopragmatic Development in Study Abroad Contexts:

The Role of Learner Status in the Use of Second Language Pragmatic Markers

By

Annarita Magliacane (MA, CELTA)

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Supervisors	**Head of School**
Dr Martin Howard	Dr Martin Howard
Dr Paolo Donadio	

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Declaration

I, Annarita Magliacane declare that this dissertation is entirely my own work.
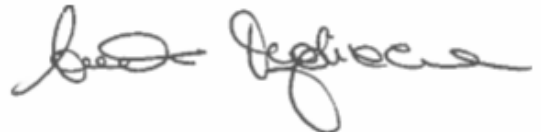
It will be submitted to University College Cork and the University of Naples Federico II following the agreement of joint supervision and dual award between the two institutions.

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Date:

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Abstract

With the ever-growing number of individuals who embark on study abroad (SA) sojourns, SA research has become a prolific and well-established area of investigation in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research. However, while SA sojourns extend to wide-ranging types of study and residence experiences, SA research to date has predominantly focused on university students. Hence, a question which needs more investigation concerns the differential characteristics of the learner's status abroad, such as work experience or university studies, which may have potential implications on the issues underpinning learner engagement with the input and interactional opportunities.

This study addressed this issue by comparing Italian students in a university SA setting (n=15) and a group of au pairs (n=15) in a family setting during a six-month sojourn in Ireland. The learners' sociopragmatic competence was tracked longitudinally with reference to their use of pragmatic markers (PMs) in oral production. More specifically, the analysis focused on the emergence and longitudinal use in the learners' language of the six frequently occurring PMs in Irish English, i.e. 'you know', 'I mean', 'I think', 'well', 'like' and 'yeah'. Data were elicited through individual sociolinguistic interviews, complemented by sociolinguistic questionnaires, and were compared to a reference corpus of Irish native speakers (NSs).

The analysis of these linguistic items was two-fold. Firstly, PMs were investigated quantitatively as the study progressed. Secondly, the results of the quantitative analysis were analysed with a quali/quantitative approach. More specifically, the quantitative analysis aimed to investigate whether a) changes were present over time in the spoken production of the learners in terms of frequency and characteristics of use; b) different SA experiences led to different results for the production of PMs; c) similarities or differences with NS frequency and characteristics of use were present. These findings were then analysed in terms of the amount and the type of input that participants claimed to have had during their SA experience. In particular, the findings were analysed by considering the responses given by the informants to the questionnaires and in the interviews.

Results of the research point to an increase in frequency as well as a more diversified use of PMs at the end of the SA sojourn. Thus, the six-month SA sojourn had a beneficial effect on the production of these linguistic items by the participants in this study.

However, despite this common trend, the two groups presented different types of results. While the ES group outperformed the other group in terms of frequency and approached more NS values in that regard, the AU pairs presented pragmatic functions which were more typologically similar to NS ones. Thus, a correlation with the amount and type of input was probably present and, as a result, the different SA experience played a role in learners' sociopragmatic development. Indeed, the ES group reported having used the language mainly in international contexts, whereas the au pairs tended to interact more with NSs more, but conversations were predominantly with NS children.

Keywords: sociopragmatic development, pragmatic markers, study abroad, TL exposure, contextual features.

List of Abbreviations

§ = section

A3VT = Three Word Association Test

AG = attention getting

AH = at home

Appr = approximator

Att. = Attitudinal

AU = au pair

CAF = Complexity, Accuracy, Fluency

CAH = Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

Cla = Clarification

CLI = Cross Linguistic Influence

Con = Concession

CPH = Critical Period Hypothesis

DCT = Discourse Completion Task

Dis_res = dispreferred response

DM= discourse marker

EFL = English as a foreign language

EFL = English as a lingua franca

En_tu = end of the turn

ES = Erasmus student

Extr = extract

EVST = Eurocentres Vocabulary Site Test

Exe = exemplifier

Exp = expansion

F = female

FDCT = Free Discourse Completion Task

FI = foreign instruction

FL = foreign language

Foc = focuser

H_0 = null hypothesis

H_A = alternative hypothesis

Hed = Hedge

Hes = Hesitation

IaT = Initiating a topic

ICE = International Corpus of English

IL = interlanguage

IM = immersion setting

IPV = Index of Pragmatic Value

Jus = Justification

k = number of groups

L1 = mother tongue

L2 = second language

LCP = Language Contact Profile

LnI = Launching new information

LoS = Length of stay

M = male

MET = Multimedia Elicitation Task

N_info = new info

NNS = non-native speaker

NS = native speaker

O_corr = other correction

Obj = objection

OPI = Oral Proficiency Interview

Opn = opener

PFA = Perceived foreign accent

PM= pragmatic marker

Prop. = Propositional

Q = question

Quo = quotative

R = rate (normalised frequency)

RA = residence abroad

Rep = Repair

RQ = research question

S_corr = self-correction

SA = study abroad

SALA = Study Abroad and Language Acquisition

SeT = Self-evident truth

Sign. = Significant

SK = appeal to shared knowledge

SLA = second language acquisition

SOPI = Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview

T1 = time 1

T2 = time 2

TL = target language

Top_ch = topic change

Tra = Transition

Turn = turn taker

VOCI = Video Oral Communication Instrument

VOT = voice onset time

vs = versus

WS = word search

μ = mean

Introduction and overview of the dissertation

A period of residence in another country has a very long tradition in education and has traditionally been seen as a means of enhancing foreign language (FL) skills, as well as encountering new cultures and encouraging intercultural awareness. At the turn of the millennium, the promotion of student mobility in most tertiary education institutions was gaining momentum (Coleman 2013) "as a consequence of globalisation and the push for internationalisation on campuses across the globe" (Jackson 2013: 1). In today's globalised world, student mobility has also been aided by a growing number of different types of exchange programmes (e.g. Erasmus, Science without borders, Comenius), which allow participants to spend part of their studies in another country, where the language studied in the classroom context is often spoken by the target language (TL) community. As the number of individuals who embark on study abroad (SA) sojourns has continued to increase, it is not surprising that the interest of scholars in these learning contexts has continued to grow and this research strand has now become a well-established area of investigation and a "major subfield of SLA [Second Language Acquisition] research" (Ferguson 1995: xi).

However, while SA research extends to wide-ranging types of SA experiences, research to date, as Chapter 1 and 2 will show, has predominantly focused on language learning outcomes of university students. Hence, a question which needs more investigation concerns the different types of SA experiences and their role in pragmatic development of SA learners. Learner status concerns the learners' *raison d'être* during SA sojourns, whereby educational studies, employment or simply leisure activities may affect the type and characteristics of interactional opportunities. Thus, differences in the learners' status can have potential implications for TL contact in terms of type and frequency of exposure conditions. This dissertation will explore this issue by comparing the SA experiences of Erasmus students (n=15) and au pairs (n=15) during a six-month sojourn in Ireland.

The learners' sociopragmatic competence will be analysed with specific reference to their use of pragmatic markers (PMs) in oral production. If folk-linguistic belief holds that SA constitutes an optimal combination of instructed and naturalistic exposure, then the analysis of such linguistic items raises key questions on the potential of SA on the learners' sociopragmatic competence. Indeed, PMs have been claimed to be frequent in the language of native speakers (NSs), whereas their use by instructed learners appears to be limited (Liao 2009). Previous research has shown that the production of these linguistic

features can be aided by NS contact (Sankoff *et al.* 1997) and, by extension, their use in the L2 has been considered as an index of language exposure (Migge 2015).

PMs and the factor of learner status will be analysed by referring to the literature review on SA research to date. More specifically, Chapter 1 will provide an introduction to SA research and will examine the role of this learning context by presenting the main trends and tendencies in recent SA research on learner oral skills. Special attention will be given L2 Proficiency, the most prolific area of investigation within SA research. Chapter 2 will be devoted to L2 pragmatics and sociolinguistic competence and will present the main findings of recent SA studies conducted in these directions. As will be developed further, PMs incorporate features belonging to sociopragmatic and sociolinguistic competence. Indeed, they require appropriate contextual knowledge to be used appropriately and they can index membership of a particular social group or exposure to a certain language variety. However, their study according to an SLA perspective is rather limited and a number of studies will be outlined in the last section of the chapter.

Chapter 3 will pave the way for the description of the study. More specifically, it will present an overview of the factors which may intervene in language learning outcomes and will relate the analysis of each factor to the study design as well as the criteria in the selection of the participants. Special attention will be given to social and contextual factors since the key research question of this study aims to investigate the role of learner status in sociopragmatic development by correlating the linguistic outcomes with the type of exposure to the TL. Chapter 4, starting from the outline of the main research questions, will describe the sample, the tools and the methodology used for data collection and extraction. It will also present the criteria for the selection of the linguistic items under analysis as well as the methodology used for coding and encoding each single occurrence. The pragmatic functions considered for the analysis will be presented in Chapter 5, by referring to examples taken from the theoretical framework as well as extracts from the NS corpus.

Results will be discussed and analysed in chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 6 will focus on the quantitative analysis and will attempt to analyse the effect of the learning context and the role of learner status on the production of PMs in conversation by examining the production of PMs of each group. More specifically, the analysis will be threefold: first, the production of these linguistic items will be tracked longitudinally in terms of frequency and characteristics of use in each learner corpus, then the results for the learners

will be compared, and will also be analysed in relation to production of Irish NSs. Chapter 7 will interpret the findings with a quali/quantitative approach by focusing on the SA experience of a number of participants as well as by referring to their responses in the interviews and the questionnaires. Chapter 8 will summarise the findings, review the contribution of this study to the field as well as discuss the limitations of the study and implications for future research.

Chapter 1- Common Threads in Study Abroad (SA) Research

As already mentioned in the introduction, studying abroad has become a popular choice among students. The popularity of SA experiences seems to be linked to the possibility of improving a FL while living abroad as well as the internationalisation of most third-level institutions, which promote mobility among their students. As a result, SA programmes are witnessing an upward trend in numbers as well as in the diversification of the programmes. Over the last two decades, these experiences have attracted the scholarly interest of SLA researchers and SA research is now recognised as a prolific area of investigation within SLA research. This chapter, starting from a series of definitions of SA context(s), will provide insights into this research stream by referring to a number of studies conducted with the aim of assessing the effects of this learning context on FL skills. Special reference will be given here to L2 Proficiency, which has been traditionally the main area of investigation within SA research.

1.1. Study abroad context(s): towards a definition

As Coleman (2013) mentioned, the first, and somewhat disarming, challenge in defining SA contexts is to discern what the label "study abroad" actually implies. In fact, as will be analysed in the following sub-sections, this label embraces related but disparate experiences and the context itself where the learning process takes place appears to be far from an easy categorisation.

1.1.1. The context

There seems to be a general agreement among scholars that the context where learning takes place plays a pivotal role in the process of learning a second language (L2) (Llanes 2011). As Collentine (2009) mentioned, the context of learning is "one of the most important variables that affects the nature and the extent to which learners acquire an L2" (Collentine 2009: 218). Juan-Garau (2014) echoed Collentine (2009) by stating that the context exerts "an influence on the route and rate of L2 acquisition" (Juan-Garau 2014: 87). Indeed, the context plays a decisive role in language learning for several reasons, to name but a few: the quality and quantity of the input, the opportunities learners have to practice the L2, and the type of instruction in the L2. Thus, the learning context is a

determining factor in L2 acquisition because, given the context in which the L2 learning takes place, the learning outcomes in the L2 will consequently vary.

As Howard (2011) maintained, the learning context has been one of the main foci of investigation in SLA research with the dichotomy between acquisition of an L2 in a naturalistic environment and learning a foreign language (FL) in the instructed context of the classroom as "the fundamental concept at the heart of SLA enterprise" (Howard 2011: 71). Such a distinction is based on the different types of TL exposure and the possibilities of interaction that each context therein appears to provide the learner. The naturalistic environment often implies no classroom contact and is considered to be more communication oriented (Batstone 2002), whereas the instructed one appears to be more skills' development oriented. In other words, learning has traditionally been considered to happen within the confines of classroom walls where input and learner output are often fashioned with the assistance of a teacher, whereas naturalistic learning is not guided by a teacher (Dewaele 2005).

However, as Freed (1995b) indicated, such a distinction is no longer in vogue and its relevance would appear to be even questionable in today's globalised world. Indeed, an alternation between both environments is more than often the case with SA students, who may previously have learnt the language in an instructed context, and consequently they assume "the status of the naturalistic learner during a period of residence in the TL community" (Howard 2005: 496). Thus, SA contexts appear to be unique learning settings because of their intrinsic hybridity. They are neither only classroom settings nor only naturalistic but, as maintained by Regan (2013), appear to incorporate the features of the naturalistic contexts of learning and the instructed contexts of the classroom.

In addition to the SA settings, research to date has also shown the existence of other "mixed contexts" (Dewaele 2005: 542). Among these in-between settings, it is worth mentioning the so-called immersion setting (IM), where the L2 is studied intensively throughout the curriculum, and a particular type of immersion program, the CLIL (the Content and Language Integrated Learning), has been developed in the last two decades with the aim of creating a new approach for learning content through an additional language. Therefore, rather than an absolute dichotomy between naturalistic and instructional contexts, it may be assumed that these two learning settings may be considered as the two ends of a continuum between which many mixed contexts of learning may actually take place.

1.1.2 Definitions of study abroad

SA is often used as an overarching category to include very different and disparate experiences in an abroad setting, from a North American student spending a number of weeks in another country to the Erasmus experience of a university student spending an academic semester or a full academic year in another country in Europe. According to Coleman (2013) even referencing 'the study abroad context' as a singular noun with a definite article can be misleading as it fails to recognise the heterogeneity of this learning environment and the plurality of learning experiences that students may avail themselves of whilst abroad. Indeed, contexts for study/residence abroad vary organisationally in terms of accommodation, social context, role (work placement, formal study, teaching assistant), and host university study (language courses, content courses alongside local students).

A number of scholars have attempted to provide a definition of SA contexts and in this sub-section, some of the most widely accepted definitions in Applied Linguistics research will be provided. As will be shown, these definitions tend to focus on some particular aspects of SA experiences and do not encompass the heterogeneity and complexity of this learning context with a sole definition. Coleman (1999) and Kinginger (2009), for instance, tended to stress the value of this educational context. According to Coleman (1999), SA can be defined as the "extended L2land residence as an integral component of a university degree programme involving one or more foreign languages" (Coleman 1999: 1). By defining SA as such, Coleman (1999) emphasised the status of the participants as university students and the educational value of the experience in terms of linguistic outcomes.

In line with this definition, Kinginger (2009) defined SA as "a temporary sojourn of pre-defined duration, undertaken for education purposes" (Kinginger 2009: 11). Kinginger (2009) highlighted another important feature of SA experiences: length of stay (LoS), which is often considered to be short and temporary. Not only is the SA experience temporary, but the duration of an SA appears to be extremely variable. According to Regan *et al.* (2009) SA implies "a period of residence of varying duration in the TL" (Regan *et al.* 2009: 20). This feature is also echoed by Block (2009), who stressed that this learning setting involves "university level FL students in stays of one month to two years in length in countries where the FL is the primary mediator of day-to-day activity" (Block 2009: 6). Block's definition also hints at the naturalistic exposure to the TL. As

previously mentioned, SA contexts are unique learning settings where the learner can avail themselves of different types of input, which can be ample in quantity, but also and especially diverse in quality. Block also pointed to this feature by positing that "study abroad contexts represent a mix of the adult migrant and FL classroom contexts" (Block 2009: 6). Similarly, Regan *et al.* (2009) argued that SA settings allow "the instructed learner to acquire 'pseudo-naturalistic' status by engaging in more informal acquisition in the TL community, through naturalistic contact with the L2 in everyday social situations" (Regan *et al.* 2009: 20).

Thus, from the definitions outlined above, SA experiences analysed by SA research to date appear to share the following features:

- they are temporary, and, according to Coleman (2013), this feature is also evident in the standard terminology in other European languages (Auslandaufenthalt, séjour à l'étranger, periodo all'estero, estancia al extranjero, estadia no estrangiero, etc.) each of which implies a short and temporary LoS;
- they are mainly addressed to a particular part of the population, i.e. students at a tertiary level spending part of their degree in another country;
- they are often undertaken due to their intrinsic educational value, which may also provide interesting learning outcomes in terms of FL skills. With regard to onset proficiency level in the FL, it is often assumed that SA participants are previously instructed FL learners.

As previously mentioned, 'study abroad' is an umbrella term which encompasses different experiences abroad and the use of 'study abroad' to categorise them all is, according to Coleman (2013), mainly connected with the dominance of North American students in SLA research (Kinginger 2009). In recent years, more studies targeting European students have started to appear. However, the SA experiences of these learners are extremely different, both in terms of LoS and numbers but also in terms of aims and expectations. As Coleman (2013) maintained, a larger portion of American students tend to go abroad; however, these experiences also appear to be shorter in terms of LoS (6-8 weeks). Conversely, the numbers of the European counterpart appear to be relatively lower, although the SA lengths tend to be relatively longer (on average 6 months). With regard to aim and expectations, the European students may probably expect language gains, whereas American students may not exactly have the same type of expectations

due to the marginal role that FL learning has in the US (Kinginger 2009) and the role of English as a lingua franca (LF) for intercultural communication (McManus *et al.* 2014).

Due to this intrinsic variability of experiences abroad, researchers (Coleman 2013, 2015; Mitchell *et al.* 2015; Tracy-Ventura *et al.* 2016) have recently proposed the use of 'residence abroad'(RA) together with the traditional one of 'study abroad'. RA appears to be a more generic and inclusive term which encompasses the different conditions and constraints that living for an extended period in a foreign country may imply. This perspective appears to be extremely revealing in the case of the current study for it is based on a comparative analysis among third-level students and workers of the same age range and, in particular, au-pairs, FL learners who temporarily work for, and live as part of, a host family. Despite similar expectations and aims, i.e. FL improvement, the experience of these two groups greatly differed due to their different *raison d'être* (cf. Regan *et al.* 2009: 45) in the TL community.

1.1.3 Folklinguistic theories

As Churchill and DuFon (2006) maintained, for SLA researchers, there are perhaps few contexts as potentially rich and complex as study abroad. The richness, as was discussed in the previous section, is linked to the different opportunities of learning that this context appears to provide, to which Sanz (2014) pointed:

> while abroad, learners imbibe the language, soak it in, they feel like sponges, they are surrounded, covered with the language […] they learn by doing, by living, until one day they discover themselves thinking in the language (Sanz 2014: 1).

This widespread belief led education folklore to consider this context as superior over the formal instructed (FI) one of the classroom (Kinginger 2009). It has also been viewed as a sort of magic formula for "easy learning" (DeKeyser 2010: 89) and a cure-all for language problems (Kinginger 2011). However, if indeed SA holds the potential to enhance language abilities, this improvement is unexpectedly complex to assess. In fact, residing in the TL country is not a homogenous experience for all learners, as Serrano *et al*. (2012: 155) maintained:

> [T]he SA context potentially provides an advantageous experience for students to improve L2 skills. Nevertheless, the word 'potentially' must be emphasised here since not all learners will necessarily find such a context beneficial, as studies with larger groups of participants and different measures of socio-cultural and individual variables may reveal.

Thus, SA contexts offer excellent potential for learning, whose optimal exploitation is not simply ascribed to speakers' motivation or attributes but also to the way learners are

received by the host community and their degree of engagement in local community practices. As Kinginger (2011) maintained, language learning in SA is an extremely complex affair which requires effort and engagement on the part of those concerned and where the subjectivities of students and hosts are also deeply implicated. As the third chapter will show, many variables come into place when assessing benefits and gains of an SA experience. However, before outlining all intervening factors, a brief review of the state of art of SA research will be provided here.

1.2 SA Research: an overview

1.2.1 Early studies

The roots of contemporary approaches to language learning abroad may be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s, when "a series of sporadic and unrelated studies" (Freed 1998: 33) started exploring language learning experiences of students who had been abroad. These studies were not specifically aimed at assessing the role of context in language learning, rather they were mainly concerned at assessing the range of proficiency attained by third-level students. However, they may still be considered as forerunners of SA research, which developed to a greater extent in the 1990s. These early studies all share a number of features. They were all linked by the underlying assumption of the positive role that the in-country experience may play in language learning. In terms of the instruments used for investigation, they tended to rely, almost exclusively, on test scores, which, as also stressed by Freed (1998), did not investigate qualitative changes in participants' proficiency.

Prominent among these was Carroll's (1967) study of the language proficiency of 2,782 college seniors taking a degree in French, German, Italian and Russian. Carroll found that time spent abroad was one of the major predictors of overall language proficiency. As Freed (1998) argued, for many subsequent years the results of this study augmented the belief that students who spend time in SA situations tend to acquire greater proficiency in the TL than those who do not. The encouraging results of the study also led Carroll to claim the superiority of SA experiences and offhandedly criticise the home-bound teaching practices of the time.

Subsequent to Carroll (1967), Willis *et al.* (1977) examined the development, once again by the use of test scores, in the speaking, listening and reading skills of 88 British students who spent more than a year either studying or working in France or Germany. By drawing on pre- and post- test results, the study showed considerable growth in the learners' aural skills. Similarly, Dyson (1988) reported on a longitudinal investigation of the effect of a year abroad on 229 British learners of French, German and Spanish. The pre- and post-tests indicated a significant increase in listening and speaking skills, particularly among the weaker participants, whereas reading and writing skills showed, respectively, some and no progress. As it is possible to see from the aforementioned figures, these studies mainly relied on a quantitative approach.

However, a limited number of qualitative studies were also conducted in the 1980s. In diaries of their own experiences, Schumann and Schumann (1977) and Schumann (1980) analysed their own experiences as learners of Arabic in Tunisia, and as learners of Farsi in a classroom setting in the United States and in Iran. As Kinginger (2009) mentioned, the authors were living this learning experience at the time when J.H. Schumann was attempting to develop a model of SLA based on a combination of social and psychological factors which may explain the success or lack thereof in L2 learning. These studies added a new perspective to this model, i.e. individual variables, since the findings revealed "idiosyncratic patterns of behaviour" (Schumann and Schumann 1977: 243) that seriously affected language learning for both subjects. With regard to Francine, these factors were ascribed to a non-compliance to the classroom method. John Schumann also witnessed a sense of unease with some practices of the classroom, which were at odds with his personal learning strategies.

In a reanalysis of this study, Francine Schumann (1980) reconsidered the results in the light of her experience as a female learner of Farsi in Iran and anticipated a number of themes which would later come to prove a constant in SA qualitative studies. More specifically, she witnessed constraints in language learning due to her allegiance to a local expatriate community which voiced negative feelings about Iran. She also experienced difficulties in using the language outside the classroom as she was an English NS. Finally, she also realised that being a woman hindered contact with local people, as she illustrated: "I've come to believe […] that the task of learning a language of a country like Iran is far greater an endeavour for a woman than for a man" (Schumann 1980: 55).

Throughout the 1980s researchers mainly used the ACTFL/ILR Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), a standardised and global assessment of oral proficiency that involves a conversation between an examiner and a test-taker. This test is devised as a context-neutral instrument to assess how well a person speaks a language by assessing their performance against specified criteria (Sandlund *et al.*, 2016). Among these studies, it is worth mentioning O'Connor (1988) and Milleret (1990), quoted in Freed (1998). All these studies were conducted with American students, who spent a period of time in overseas educational programmes. The results of these studies suggested an increase in language proficiency as a result of the SA experience. A number of pioneering studies also started looking at the interaction between SA and FL classroom contexts. Among these studies, it is worth mentioning Magnan (1986) and Foltz (1991)[1], which, based on a comparative analysis between SA and AH students, assessed more beneficial results for the SA learners.

Thus, as Freed (1998) maintained, these early studies pointed to the general linguistic advantages that may be derived from an academic stay abroad and contributed to provide some preliminary knowledge for a better understanding of the interaction between a stay abroad and formal classroom study. However, a number of limitations were present as these studies relied exclusively on test scores. In recent years, there has been a move away from using instruments such as the OPI, as it provides only "a global holistic score" (Freed 1998: 35) for language use and it appears to foster the production of formal speaking style because the speaker has the impression of being under examination. Moreover, these studies often lacked control groups and were conducted over a short time span. Thus, these shortcomings, according to Freed (1998), further limited their significance in describing linguistic benefits and gains in SA contexts. However, they served to spur scholarly interest in the topic and provided the groundwork for recent SA research.

1.2.2 Main trajectories and trends of SA Research since the 1990s

SA has become a legitimate area of SLA research after the publication of the volume *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context* (Freed 1995), which marked an important milestone in the establishment of this research strand as a "major subfield of

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[1] Quoted in Freed (1998).

SLA research" (Ferguson 1995: xi). The volume offered interesting insights into different areas of SA research, such as, to name but a few, predictors of language gains (Brecht *et al.* 1995), fluency development (Freed 1995b), communication strategies (Lafford 1995) and sociolinguistic competence (Regan 1995). Since this publication, the amount of SA research has increased not only exponentially in numbers (DeKeyser 2014), but also in the diversification of the themes under scrutiny (Devlin 2014). As SA contexts are such diverse learning settings, research in this area has started exploring different aspects of the SA experience, from linguistic gains in terms of lexicon and grammar (Howard 2005; Isabelli and Nishida 2005; Juan-Garau *et al.* 2014) and fluency development (Freed 1995b, Freed *et al.* 2004; Valls-Ferrer and Mora 2014) to the development of pragmatic (Barron 2003; Schauer 2009; Ren 2015) and sociolinguistic competence (Regan 1995; Barron 2006; Regan *et al.* 2009).

Apart from a diversification of interests, a number of recent SA studies started considering the dichotomy between FI and SA contexts with a different perspective. Indeed, traditional study designs often implied an opposition between SA and 'at home' (AH) setting and assessed SA linguistic gains by comparing the findings with FI learners. However, as Sanz (2014) maintained, this type of study design leads to a number of uncontrolled variables. The first variable may be linked to the different type and amount of input of each context, discussed in the previous sections. Moreover, SA and AH learners inevitably differ in terms of motivation, attitudes and learning strategies. Therefore, rather than an opposition between the two contexts, recent SA research has actually endorsed a complementarity of the two learning settings, with the prior foreign language instruction being an essential parameter to assess beneficial outcomes in terms of language skills, as Juan-Garau *et al.* (2014) affirmed.

Another important new trend in contemporary SA research has been the shift towards a more longitudinal approach in the study design (Davidson 2010; Llanes and Muñoz 2009; Serrano *et al.* 2012; Pérez-Vidal *et al.* 2012). This tendency responded to the call for more longitudinal studies in this area of research (Ortega and Byrnes 2008), which has been for a long time mainly dominated by cross-sectional studies. If indeed cross-sectional studies prove to be invaluable in the observation of language gains and outcomes on the basis of proficiency, on the contrary, they appear to be inappropriate to study developmental patterns, which are instead crucial to assess the effects of SA contexts. Moreover, a number of recent studies have also investigated the delayed post effect of SA exposure

and the retention of language gains after the experience abroad (Howard 2012; Juan-Garau 2014; Mora 2014; Llanes 2016). These studies show that the effects tended to be stable after the SA experience. However, the list of these types of studies is woefully short and this phenomenon may be linked to the difficulties in recruiting and, above all, retaining participants in longitudinal studies in general.

Finally, SA research over the last two decades has also highlighted the importance of individual variables when assessing students' outcomes and has started assessing the experience of SA students from a more ethnographic perspective. By placing the learner at the centre of the SA experience, researchers such as Kinginger (2004), Pellegrino Aveni (2005), Isabelli-García (2006) and Jackson (2008) have started investigating other elements which may aid or hinder L2 acquisition. Among those factors, they shed light on the identity of the speaker, the role of social networks and the host environment in the learning experience. Indeed, as illustrated by Kinginger (2009), SA presents the SLA researcher with "a bewildering array of variable features, from the identities, motives, or desires of the learner to the range of chance or deliberate encounters presenting opportunities to learn" (Kinginger 2009: 5). All these variables will be investigated further in the third chapter. In the next sections, instead, a brief review of the main sampling methods and instruments used in SA studies will be provided.

1.2.3 Sampling methods and main data collection instruments

SA research has been characterised by either exclusively qualitative or solely quantitative approaches and the high individual variation has often been considered as "a nuisance factor undermining the neat patterns which quantitative SLA research seems to require" (Coleman 2013: 17). As previously outlined, with a limited number of exceptions, early SA research mainly relied on quantitative approaches and the use of holistic instruments, such as the OPI, which did not consider qualitative changes in FL learning outcomes. However, SLA in SA contexts appears to be plagued by a highly individual variation (Kinginger and Blattner 2008) and this has led researchers to shift towards a more qualitative approach as the exclusive reliance on statistical analyses does not allow for the observation of learners' perceptions of the experience and their individual differences. Researchers (Kinginger 2004; Pellegrino Aveni 2005) have, for instance, relied on the use of interviews or language learners' diaries in order to provide a more in-depth qualitative analysis of SA experiences.

While interviews and diaries have allowed to investigate the role of extralinguistic features in learning with a more qualitative approach, quantitative studies have mainly relied on the use of questionnaires which have been popular means to document language contact and use in SA settings. Among these, the most widely used is the Language Contact Profile (LCP), developed by Freed *et al.* (2004). This questionnaire is comprised of two parts: a pre-test version to be used at the beginning of a study, and a post-test version to be given at the conclusion of an SA project. In the pre-test version, subjects are asked to provide background information about their language learning as well as to self-assess the use of the TL prior to the experience abroad on a Likert scale (from 0 = never to 4 = daily). The post-test version expands the pre-test with questions about living arrangements during the period of RA and a self-assessment of the L2 use in a series of circumstances in terms of 'days per week' and 'hours per day', as is possible to see from Image 1, taken from Freed *et al.* (2004: 354), which shows a part of the post-test version:

Image 1. Post-test version of the LCP developed by Freed *et al.* (2004)

Circle the appropriate numbers.

2. On average, how much time did you spend speaking, *in Spanish*, outside of class with native or fluent Spanish speakers during this semester?
   Typically, how many *days per week*?   0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
   On those days, typically how many *hours per day*?   0–1   1–2   2–3   3–4   4–5   more than 5
3. This semester, outside of class, I tried to speak *Spanish to*:
3a. my instructor
   Typically, how many *days per week*?   0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
   On those days, typically how many *hours per day*?   0–1   1–2   2–3   3–4   4–5   more than 5
3b. friends who are native or fluent Spanish speakers
   Typically, how many *days per week*?   0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
   On those days, typically how many *hours per day*?   0–1   1–2   2–3   3–4   4–5   more than 5
3c. classmates
   Typically, how many *days per week*?   0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
   On those days, typically how many *hours per day*?   0–1   1–2   2–3   3–4   4–5   more than 5
3d. strangers whom I thought could speak Spanish
   Typically, how many *days per week*?   0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
   On those days, typically how many *hours per day*?   0–1   1–2   2–3   3–4   4–5   more than 5

This questionnaire has been used by many as a reference model in SA research and over the years, several adapted forms of this questionnaire have appeared. For instance, Hernández (2010) and Martinsen *et al.* (2010) excluded the pre-test version of the LCP and amended the list of activities. Hernández (2010) also changed the frequency scale and opted for assessing learners' use of the TL while abroad in terms of 'hours per week', providing a range from 0.5 to 30+ hours. Martinsen *et al.* (2010) asked their participants to complete a language log, where learners were asked to assess their daily use of the language in minutes. Briggs (2015) radically changed the way of assessing contact by converting the 5-point Likert scale of frequency into a "how true to me" (Briggs 2015:

134) rating scale. A combination of LCP and language logs is the computerised Language Activity Log (LAL) developed by Ranta and Meckelborg (2013), who assess language use in terms of 'hours per day' with regard to general activities and 'minutes per day' for the sub-categories of each general activity.

Thus, SA research has been characterised by a multitude of approaches and instruments and[2], although the knowledge has certainly grown and become more inclusive since Freed's (1995) volume, the outcomes of an SA experience still appear to be extremely complex and difficult to ascertain. Taking into account the SA new trajectories and trends, the most common sampling methods and the main instruments used in this new SLA stream, a brief overview will be provided in section (§)1.3 on the literature review of the traditionally main area of investigation of SA research, namely L2 Proficiency. Specific reference will be given to the spoken production since the linguistic items under investigation mainly pertain to the spoken language.

1.3 L2 Proficiency Development

SA researchers, keen on proving the effectiveness of SA for language learning started investigating learners' L2 proficiency at the end of the SA experience. However, despite its widespread use in SLA, language teaching and testing, the term 'proficiency' proves very elusive and one of the challenges that researchers, teachers and language testers face is undoubtedly defining what exactly being proficient in the L2 means (Leclercq and Edmonds 2014). Many proposals have been put forth over the years. Higgs (1984: 12, cited by Leclercq and Edmonds 2014: 6), for instance, defined proficiency as "the ability to function effectively in the language in real-life contexts", whereas Thomas (1994: 330) claimed that proficiency corresponds to "a person's overall competence and ability to perform in the L2". The latter has been further elaborated upon by Hulstijn (2011) who defined proficiency as:

> the extent to which an individual possesses the linguistic cognition necessary to function in a given communication, in a given modality (listening, speaking, reading, writing). Linguistic cognition is the combination of the representation of linguistic information (knowledge of form-meaning mappings) and the ease with which linguistic information can be processed

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[2] This section has briefly introduced a number of commonly used instruments to assess linguistic development (i.e. OPI) and language contact (i.e. LCP) in SA research to date. Forthcoming sections will present other instruments (i.e. sociolinguistic interviews, role plays, discourse completion tasks) by relating them to the SA sub-area of investigation where they have been frequently used.

(skill). Form-meaning mappings pertain to both the literal and pragmatic meanings of forms (in decontextualised and socially-situated language use, respectively) (Hulstijn 2011: 242).

Thus, 'L2 Proficiency' is a complex and multifaceted concept, which implies both language abilities but also sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge. SA research has mainly investigated L2 Proficiency development in terms of oral fluency, which may be connected with the widespread idea that SA learners mainly develop oral skills while they live abroad. In addition to oral fluency, the main foci of SA research in relation to the development of L2 Proficiency have also been grammatical competence, vocabulary growth and pronunciation. In the next sections, a brief review of the main studies conducted in these research areas will be provided.

1.3.1 CAF (Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency)

One recent and influential SLA-oriented approach on L2 Proficiency stresses that it can be assessed according to the components of 'Complexity', 'Accuracy' and 'Fluency', or simply CAF (Housen and Kuiken 2009; Housen *et al.* 2012). Intuitively, Complexity can be defined as the use of advanced and elaborate language. Accuracy, instead, is a synonym for 'error-free' language, whereas fluent language is often considered as 'effortless' and 'flowing'. However, although these components appear to be easily comprehended concepts, their use as proficiency measures, as Leclercq and Edmonds (2014) maintained, remains controversial due to intrinsic features. For instance, with regard to accuracy, L2 speech is often compared to oral production of NSs, which is often considered to be the norm. However, the 'NS norm' is also an extremely fuzzy notion as the speech of NSs is characterised by extreme variability and, as will be further investigated in §2.2.3, also includes non-standard forms.

Complexity is also multifaceted and the notion of complex language also proves elusive, as the production of elaborate language may be the result of a series of conditions. In SLA, the term is generally used (Housen *et al.* 2012) at least in two different ways: as cognitive complexity and linguistic complexity. The former refers to the relative difficulty with which language elements are processed during L2 performance and L2 learning. It is a relative and subjective notion which is partly determined by the learner's individual background (stage of L2 development, motivation, aptitude). Linguistic complexity, instead, refers to the intrinsic formal or semantic-functional properties of L2 phenomena and, therefore, is independent from the learner. Similarly, Pallotti (2009)

distinguished 'objective complexity', which is inherent to the task, from 'subjective complexity', which "arises from the encounter of a subject's (in) competences with a task" (Pallotti 2009: 253).

With regard to fluency, it has been historically, and in general use, considered as a synonym of global language proficiency (Housen *et al.* 2012), owing to the ease and smoothness with which the speaker produces the language. It is mainly a phonological phenomenon (Housen *et al.* 2012), whereas the other two components of the triad can also be manifest at other levels of language structure and use (i.e. morphological, syntactic, sociopragmatic). This component also appears to be multi-layered and composite (Ishikawa 2015) and several studies have noted that the overall L2 oral fluency is often the sum of a series of sub-skills. Fillmore (1975) quoted in Ishikawa (2015), for instance, claimed that fluency is: 1) the ability of speaking with few pauses or filling them appropriately with talk; 2) the ability of producing coherent and semantically dense speech; 3) the ability of being appropriate according to the situation and context; 4) the ability of being creative with the language.

A more recent distinction, within cognitive theories of language learning, was proposed by Segalowitz (2010). According to Segalowitz, fluency can be understood as 'perceived fluency', 'cognitive fluency' and 'utterance fluency'. Perceived fluency is linked to the inference or "impression" (Freed 1995b: 123) that the listener has on the fluency of the speaker. Cognitive fluency refers to the cognitive processing during speech planning and utterance fluency concerns the characteristics of an utterance. As Valls-Ferrer and Mora (2014) argued, within utterance fluency three components have been identified (Tavakoli and Skehan 2005): breakdown fluency (e.g., time filled with speech, number of pauses, number of filled pauses), speed fluency (e.g., speech rate measured as words per minute, speech rate measured as syllables per minute), and repair fluency (e.g., pause frequency, number of false starts, number of repetitions).

In addition to these intrinsic features, these components have also been found to be "competing areas of L2 performance" (Housen *et al.* 2012: 3) because, in interlanguage (IL) development, they may tend to interfere with one another. In other words, the focus that learners place on their development of fluency may be detrimental to accuracy or complexity, or vice versa. Indeed, learners who wish to sound more accurate or who

attempt to use more complex and sophisticated structures may, consequently, pay more attention to what they are uttering and this may result in a slower and less fluent speech. Conversely, the improved fluency may negatively affect accuracy or complexity, as, in the attempt to speak at a faster rate, learners may produce inaccurate language or may rely on basic structures. Therefore, CAF are not easy to define and their use as proficiency measures seems to be quite controversial. Nonetheless, as Housen and Kuiken (2009) maintained, CAF are the most investigated variables in SLA research.

With regard to SA studies, research has mainly focused on oral fluency or on the outcomes of L2 fluency in relation to the two components of the triad. In fact, as also maintained by Freed (1995b), fluency has played a central role in SA research for being "the term most frequently evoked in discussions of the linguistic benefits of study abroad" (Freed 1995b: 123). This study (Freed 1995b) was also one of the first to investigate the development of fluency through a comparative analysis of two different learning contexts and, more specifically, an SA learning context and a formal AH setting. Freed (1995b) reported on a project involving NS judgement of fluency based on extracts of OPIs administered to 30 students, of whom 15 had studied French abroad in France and the other half had remained on campus for one semester. The former group was found to outperform the latter in fluency and, in particular, Freed (1995b) concluded that the SA learners "spoke both more, and at a significantly faster rate than did those whose learning had been restricted to the language learning classroom at home" (Freed 1995b: 137).

Freed *et al.* (2004) included the context of immersion domestic programs (IM) in their analysis on oral fluency. The study was conducted with 28 American students of French and, more specifically, included eight students who studied in France (SA), eight students who studied French in 'regular' FL classrooms in the US (AH) and twelve who studied in IM in the US. The results of the study showed no significant improvement for the AH students, whereas IM learners significantly improved their fluency. At the same time, the SA students showed less improvement than those who participated in IM. These findings were explained by the amount of L2 use, which was higher for the IM than the SA group and led the scholars to conclude that it is not "the context per se that promotes various types of learning but rather […] the nature of the interactions, the quality of the experiences, and the efforts made to use the L2 that render one context superior to another with respect to language gain" (Freed *et al.* 2004: 298).

In addition to comparative studies conducted with different groups, a number of studies investigated oral fluency on the same group of learners who were formerly studying in AH context, then benefitted from an SA experience and finally returned to the previous learning context. These studies have been conducted within the framework of the SALA (Study Abroad and Language Acquisition) Project, whose main merit lay in its long-term longitudinal approach. The project was conducted with Catalan/Spanish undergraduate students, who spent a three-month stay in an English-speaking country, in the second year of their degree in Translation and Interpretation. In general, all studies reported increased oral fluency after the SA experience. Trenchs-Parera (2009) found that the oral performance of the 19 participants in the study developed towards NSs' norms as learners tended to rely less on unfilled pauses and self-repetitions and more on lexical fillers after the SA experience. Valls-Ferrer (2011) observed the development of fluency (both utterance fluency and perceived fluency) and rhythm before and after FI and SA periods. SA was found to be more beneficial for both utterance and perceived fluency, whereas findings on rhythm were less consistent. More recently, Valls-Ferrer and Mora (2014) found that the SA learning context had a positive effect on breakdown fluency measures and speed fluency measures, leading to the production of a more fluent speech.

As previously mentioned, a number of SA studies also tried to relate the outcomes of oral fluency with at least one of the other components of the CAF triad. However, while research in the area of oral fluency area has proven significant benefits, with regard to accuracy, "the existing documentation on speaking proficiency indicates that in general no substantial development occurs in the domain of accuracy after SA" (Juan-Garau 2014: 89). Likewise, Longcope (2003) pointed out that the outcomes of the learners' experience abroad may have an immediate reflection on their fluency but, with regard to grammatical accuracy and syntactic complexity, beneficial outcomes may not take place. Similarly, Serrano *et al.* (2011) reported increased oral fluency and lexical complexity, but not accuracy or syntactic complexity. Finally, Mora and Valls-Ferrer (2012) also found a significant increase in fluency during SA and no gains in accuracy or complexity.

This section, starting from a definition of the components of CAF, provided a brief review of the studies conducted within this theoretical framework. In particular, as has been previously outlined, SA research has mainly focused on oral fluency by comparing AH

and SA students. Within the framework of the SALA Project, instead, studies assessed the development of oral fluency on the same group of students through a longitudinal analysis. What seems to emerge from the scientific literature to date is that SA students outperform their counterparts who remain at home in terms of fluency. These results may lead one to extol the virtues of SA contexts and may contribute to the idea of superiority of this learning context. However, as Freed *et al.* (2004) showed, rather than the characteristics of the contexts, it is the range of possibilities of L2 use, in terms of quantity and quality that each context offers that may play a central role in the development of certain skills.

The last part of this section was devoted to the studies which investigated the correlation among the outcomes of the three components of the CAF triad. Results of the studies show that, while an SA experience appears to enhance oral fluency, it does not appear to provide the same results on the other two components of the triad, with no or limited results in terms of complexity and accuracy. Accuracy has been often investigated in terms of grammatical accuracy. However, as the next section will show, results of the studies conducted within this SA research strand have been extremely controversial.

1.3.2 Grammar

As Freed (1998) maintained, research to date has often provided conflicting results in terms of the effects on L2 grammar of an SA experience. In her state-of-art article on SA research, she affirmed that "significant changes do not take place in the study abroad context" (Freed 1998: 50). Her conclusions were probably drawn from a series of studies, which showed that SA learners were on par with, if not even inferior to, their AH counterparts in terms of grammatical development. For instance, DeKeyser (1991) found that the residence abroad had very little impact on the overall grammatical abilities of using the copulas 'ser' and 'ester' among the American learners of Spanish. Drawing on a comparative analysis between twelve learners of Spanish, seven of whom spent a semester in Spain and the rest stayed AH in an instructed context, the scholar concluded that there was no evidence for more benefits for the SA learners.

More recently, Torres (2003) gauged the acquisition of Spanish clitics by learners of Spanish over a semester and found that the SA context did not have beneficial effects if compared to the outcomes of the AH learners in terms of accuracy and use. Similarly, Collentine (2004), also relying on a comparative analysis of American students of

Spanish, assessed no significant increase in grammatical skills among the SA students. On the contrary, the AH learners (n= 20) fostered their knowledge in lexical and grammatical aspects, whereas the SA students (n= 26) showed greater discursive and narrative skills (wider variety of use of structures and tenses). Finally, Isabelli-García (2010) found no advantage of the SA over the AH context in the acquisition of Spanish gender agreement for her intermediate level participants over a four-month period.

In contrast to these findings, other researchers have provided a more favourable view on SA grammatical outcomes. Herschensohn (2003), for instance, relying on a comparative analysis between two learners of French, one in a classroom environment in the United States, and the other spending a semester in France, found that the SA learner attained a superior level of accuracy, approaching near-categorical levels after six months. Similarly, Howard (2005), in a study on L2 French conducted with 18 Irish university students, found that SA learners attained a higher level of accuracy in their expression of past time relations, and in particular, of the 'imparfait' (=imperfect tense), which posed less difficulty to SA students. Additionally, a lexical analysis of the uses of past time morphology showed that SA learners extend such morphology to a larger range of lexical verbs.

More gains for the SA learners were also assessed by Isabelli and Nishida (2005), who studied the subjunctive mood in Spanish. The study was conducted with 29 American advanced (third year) learners of Spanish during a one-year stay abroad in Barcelona and two AH groups: 16 American intermediate learners in their fifth semester of Spanish and 16 American intermediate learners in their sixth semester of Spanish. The study showed that the SA group outperformed the AH groups with respect to the Spanish subjunctive ability in oral productions. Additionally, the AH groups hardly produced complex sentences where they needed to select an appropriate mood. Finally, within the SALA project, Juan-Garau *et al.* (2014) showed that AH and SA contexts were both beneficial in terms of grammatical abilities, with the third-month period in an English speaking context providing significant gains in terms of grammatical competence.

Additional research conducted in this research strand has also pointed to the complementarity of the two learning contexts and, more specifically, claimed that a previous AH learning context may be advantageous to a subsequent SA experience. Rifkin (2005), for instance, claimed that previous lexico-grammatical competence can be the "the best predictor of attainment of advanced level proficiency during SA" (Rifkin

2005: 12). Isabelli (2007) also suggested that complex grammatical features, often not acquired during SA, can be mastered following a period of instructed learning upon return. Moreover, DeKeyser (2010) claimed that a successful SA experience may depend on the declarative and procedural knowledge, often acquired during a FL context. A similar view is also shared by Juan-Garau *et al.* (2014), who claimed that "the declarative and proceduralised knowledge that learners were equipped with in FI contexts at their home university possibly endowed them with the necessary tools to benefit from the three months spent in a naturalistic context" (Juan-Garau *et al.* 2014: 252).

Thus, grammatical gains in SA settings may also be related to instructed learning experiences and the proficiency level prior to the SA experience. However, as this section has outlined, SA research to date on L2 Grammar has provided discrepancies in the findings. While some studies (DeKeyser 1991; Torres 2003; Collentine 2004; Isabelli-García 2010) did not find an appreciable advantage for the SA learners, other studies (Hershensohn 2003; Howard 2005; Isabelli and Nishida 2005; Juan-Garau *et al.* 2014) assessed beneficial effects for the SA learners. These discrepancies may be ascribed to, as Howard (2005) mentioned, the type of investigation which has often focused on the level of structural accuracy attained by the SA learner, rather than "providing a more in-depth picture of the underlying differences that may characterise how the study abroad learner and the purely instructed learner differ in their use of the TL grammar" (Howard 2005: 498).

Thus, more fine-grained studies have started to provide an alternative view to the traditional weak grammar effects on SA learners. However, as Churchill and DuFon (2006) stressed, the different findings should not be regarded as conflicting; they rather provide even "further evidence that grammatical development patterns are tremendously complex" (Churchill and DuFon 2006: 9) and vary considerably depending on a plurality of variables, such as onset proficiency, linguistic features under scrutiny and the data collection method as well.

1.3.3 Pronunciation

Due to its wider range of opportunities for exposure to authentic L2 speech, SA contexts are expected to be more effective learning settings in terms of phonological competence and the acquisition of vocabulary. With regard to phonological acquisition in an SA setting, Kinginger (2009) and Mora (2014) affirmed that research to date in this area is

extremely scanty and, in general, does not seem to support the widespread belief that learning in an SA context enhances L2 speech production and perception. More specifically, research to date shows that SA learners do not appear to outperform their AH counterparts in terms of phonological competence. For instance, Simões (1996) reported no consistent gains in the production of vowel quality by a group of L2 Spanish learners after a short-term experience in Latin America. Similarly, Avello (2010) also failed to find significant improvement regarding vowel production after a three-month SA experience.

However, a number of comparative studies show some modest advantages for the SA learners. For instance, Stevens (2001), by comparing the acquisition of Spanish phonology by L2 learners of English, ascertained that both the SA and the AH groups improved their pronunciation of English sounds, but the SA group made greater progress in acquiring more target-like pronunciation. Højen (2003), quoted in Mora (2014), in a longitudinal study conducted with Danish adult learners of English, found significant improvement in perceived foreign accent (PFA) for the SA group. However, no differences were ascertained between the SA and AH group with regard to identification and discrimination perception tasks testing English consonantal and vocalic perceptual category boundaries (/s/-/ʃ/ and /ɒ/-/ʌ/), and production tasks testing accuracy in the pronunciation of English (/ʃ/, /ɒ/ and /ʌ/). Llanes (2016), in a study conducted with 14 Catalan/Spanish speaking teenagers (8 SA students and 6 AH learners) on PFA, found that the SA pupils significantly improved their pronunciation between the pre- and post-tests. The study also aimed at investigating delayed post- test effects and the gains were found to be quite durable.

Conversely, other comparative studies showed that AH learners achieved more gains. Díaz-Campos (2004), for instance, gauged the effects of the learning contexts on the pronunciation by English learners of a number of Spanish consonants. More specifically, the study assessed the accuracy in the pronunciation of sounds such as short-lag word-initial stops [p, t, k], fricative variants of voiced oral stops [β, d, ɣ], non-velarised alveolar laterals [l] and the palatal nasal [ɲ]. Despite both groups having shown beneficial outcomes over time, the AH learners were found to be stronger. Similar conclusions are drawn by Lord (2010). This researcher, with the aim of assessing the role of previous formal instruction on Spanish phonetics, analysed the production of Spanish plosives by two groups of NSs of English who went on an SA to Mexico. The former group had

previously attended the course on phonetics before the SA experience, while the latter did not. Although both groups made significant improvements over the course of the SA experience, the AH learners improved their accuracy in pronunciation to a greater degree.

Finally, within the SALA project, Mora (2014) and Avello and Lara (2014) investigated the development of phonological competence on groups of learners who went abroad for a short-term SA experience after a period of formal instruction in their own university. Mora (2014), in particular, investigated the differential gains on perceptual competence in AH and SA contexts through a considerable large sample size, i.e. 66 participants. The study also considered long-term retention and the effects of onset proficiency on perceptual phonological competence. The results of the study corroborated the main findings in this research area, in that the SA experience did not substantially affect the phonological competence of the participants in the study. Gains in discrimination ability for the vowel quality and consonant voicing contrasts appeared to be significant after the formal instruction and remained stable with no significant improvement throughout the SA experience and after the SA post-test. With regard to the onset proficiency level, Mora (2014) argued that improvement in phonological competence is heavily dependent on participants' initial level, with learners with lower onset levels achieving more gains.

Avello and Lara (2014) conducted a study on two groups of Spanish/Catalan learners of English who went abroad for, respectively, three and six months. The study analysed learners' realisation of the quality and durational features that distinguish the English vowel contrasts [i:, ɪ] and [a, ʌ], and the production of the voice onset time (VOT) values in English long-lag voiceless plosives [t, k]. Learners did not present an increased accuracy in the production of these sounds after the period of residence abroad. However, the comparative analysis between two groups with different LoS also allowed an investigation of the effects of this variable. Results of the study suggest that even after the six-month experience abroad, there were no significant differences between the vowel and consonant values produced by the two learner groups after the SA experience. Thus, "even a [*sic*] SA of up to six months may not be long enough for development towards more native-like patterns to accrue in the specific and fine-grained phonological categories analysed in this study" (Avello and Lara 2014: 161).

In conclusion, results in SA phonological development do not appear to provide evidence which supports the popular belief that students who go abroad can improve their pronunciation. The majority of studies to date have found no or very little improvement

for the SA learners in comparison to their AH counterparts. A number of studies (Díaz-Campos 2004; Lord 2010) have found that AH students may outperform SA learners. However, as Mora (2014) and Avello and Lara (2014) have shown, other factors may come into play when analysing the outcomes in terms of pronunciation gains. Mora (2014), for instance, gauged the onset proficiency, whereas Avello and Lara (2014) considered the effects of LoS. Therefore, as Churchill and DuFon (2006) maintained, social and individual factors may account for different pronunciation outcomes. These variables will be further developed in chapter 3.

1.3.4 Lexicon

With regard to lexicon, research to date seems to corroborate folklinguistic theories about the positive outcomes of SA on the expansion of learners' vocabulary. This trend is clearly evidenced by Milton and Meara (1995), a large-scale study conducted with 53 students from different European countries attending a British university. Using the Eurocentres Vocabulary Size Test (EVST), a computerised Yes/No test to estimate learners' knowledge of the most frequent 10,000 words in English, Milton and Meara longitudinally assessed an overall remarkable improvement in terms of vocabulary size and native-like lexical repertoires. Ife *et al.* (2000) reached similar conclusions and found significant lexical progress for the participants in their study. The study was conducted with 36 British learners of Spanish of varying initial proficiency levels who were tested before and after a sojourn in Spain using the A3VT (Three Word Association Test), an instrument where the test taker was asked to identify the misfit word in a set of three words.

Positive findings were also found by DeKeyser (1991), Howard (2002), Foster (2009) and Llanes and Muñoz (2009). In a comparative study between American learners of Spanish who studied in Spain and those who stayed AH, DeKeyser (1991) assessed considerable lexical gains by the American learners who temporarily lived in a hispanophone country. With a focus on the use of sophisticated verbs on L2 French, Howard (2002) assessed a more expansive lexical verb repertoire for the SA learners in comparison with AH students. Moreover, the SA participants also reported to be more adept at using inflectional morphology with such an increased lexical verb range. More recently, Foster (2009), also relying on a comparative analysis between SA and AH learners, found that the 40 participants who lived in the TL environment showed an enriched lexicon and sounded more native-like than the 60 learners who stayed in Tehran.

The study, conducted with Iranian learners of English at intermediate level, relied on the use of cartoon picture prompts for data collection. Llanes and Muñoz (2009) found that vocabulary gains for the SA learners were ascribed to fewer lexical errors, which were found even after a short stay abroad.

Other studies (Segalowitz and Dewey 2004; Dewey 2008) also included IM contexts in the research focus. Segalowitz and Dewey (2004) found significant gains for the IM students, who outperformed the SA ones and ascribed those findings to the greater exposure to the language of IM students, who were forced to speak Japanese even with their peers throughout the program. Dewey (2008) found more gains for SA and IM students. This study, conducted on L2 Japanese, involved 56 students, out of whom twenty were in Japan, fourteen were participating in an immersion program in the United States, and twenty-two were studying in regular programs at various universities in the United States. Results of the study showed that "SA tends to facilitate vocabulary acquisition" (Dewey 2008: 137) and, among the three groups, students who showed fewer gains were the AH learners. With regard to SA and IM learners, gains in vocabulary were found to be fairly similar and IM students were found to be stronger with less frequent words.

However, while the majority of studies showed beneficial outcomes for learners living in SA contexts, a limited number of studies (Dewaele and Regan 2001; Collentine 2004) also reported that these advantages were not always extensive. Dewaele and Regan (2001), for instance, did not find outstanding gains on acquisition of colloquial language by advanced Flemish-speaking and Anglophone learners of French. Likewise, Collentine (2004) did not significant lexical differences between the two groups of North American undergraduates learning Spanish AH and during SA. This study was based on a comparison of the lexical frequencies of a range of grammatical word types. Collentine (2004) found that, with the exception of adjectives, both groups of learners demonstrated similar lexical scores. However, SA learners' speech was characterised by an increased occurrence of semantically dense lexemes.

Thus, the review presented so far has pointed to general benefits for the lexical development of SA learners. These gains can be seen both as the acquisition of enriched lexicon and the reduction of lexical errors. The majority of studies conducted in this research strand seem to corroborate the folk belief that an experience abroad may result in advantageous outcomes in learners' lexical abilities. However, as Freed *et al.* (2004)

argued, this assumption is not always proven because it is not the context *per se* which may have a beneficial effect in the development of language skills, rather it is the range of possibilities of using the TL which can play a role. In fact, studies which included IM contexts (Segalowitz and Dewey 2004; Dewey 2008) in their analysis showed that IM students outperformed both SA and AH learners in terms of lexical knowledge of the L2, due to greater exposure to the TL of these learners.

1.4 Common Threads in SA Research: concluding remarks

This chapter provided an introductory view on SA Research considering, in particular, two main threads of discussion. In the first part, by referring to a number of definitions of SA contexts, a number of characteristics of this learning context as well as the main trajectories and trends of SA research have been presented. As it was discussed in §1.2.2, there has been a call for more longitudinal studies in this area of investigation in order to assess the effects of this learning context and the evolution of learner abilities over their temporary sojourn in the TL community. However, it was also stressed that the assessment of language outcomes, subsequent to an SA experience, are quite difficult. Indeed, a number of individual variables may come into play when analysing the outcomes of an SA experience. Thus, SA has started to be more ethnographically and qualitatively oriented, with a focus on the people who lived the experience and the qualities of the experience itself in order to provide a better understanding of the underlying reasons of a particular linguistic phenomenon or trend.

However, in qualitative studies, the sample size is generally small and although the findings can provide an initial understanding and sound base for further decision making, they cannot be used to make generalisations about the population of interest, as it occurs for quantitative studies, which rely on a larger number of cases. Hence, rather than relying exclusively on qualitative or quantitative analysis, it appears that a mixed approach (combination of quantitative and qualitative) may lead to a better understanding of the linguistic outcomes subsequent to an SA experience. Indeed, it may allow to provide an in-depth analysis in the experience of the participants as well as the neat patterns that quantitative analysis seems to require. However, an analysis, especially through longitudinal lenses, often implies considerable effort on the part of the researcher in recruiting and, in particular, in retaining participants over time. These difficulties may

consequently be a hindrance to the number of participants that quantitative and statistical analyses appear to require. This study, as will be developed further in chapter 4, will also use a quali/quantitative approach as it will analyse quantitatively the linguistic phenomena under scrutiny and will then relate the results to the SA experience of the participants.

In addition to the methodological approach, this chapter has also evidenced some considerations with reference to traditional study designs, which often implies a comparative analysis between SA and AH learners. Sanz (2014) claimed that this study design can lead to a number of uncontrolled variables, as the two groups greatly differ from each other and are inevitably exposed to different amounts and quality of input. This perspective has been found particularly revealing for the current study, because it relies on a comparative analysis between two groups of SA learners, namely Erasmus students, who may be considered students *tout court*, and au-pairs, L2 learners who spend a period abroad to learn the TL community while being hosted by and working for a local family.

The second thread of discussion of this chapter has been devoted to linguistic development in SA contexts, with specific reference to oral skills. It was stressed that SA researchers, keen on assessing the linguistic benefits of the experience and proving the so-called folk-linguistic theories, started to investigate the effects of an SA with particular reference to L2 Proficiency. The literature to date on the subject is rich, prolific and insightful, probably too vast to be covered adequately in this literature review. However, this chapter attempted to provide a thorough but lean review, by mentioning a number of studies for each area of investigation aimed at assessing language gains in SA contexts. L2 Proficiency has often been assessed through different perspectives, especially, through the three components of CAF (Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency). In terms of findings, SA research to date appears to corroborate folklinguistic theories about enhanced fluency, whereas significant differences between SA and AH learners for complexity and accuracy have not been found.

Other important areas of investigation have been grammar, lexicon and pronunciation. While vocabulary growth appears to be aided by the SA experience, results concerning grammatical development still seem inconclusive. These discrepancies may be ascribed to the different methodological approaches, the grammatical items under scrutiny and the different scholarly perspective of the researcher. With regard to pronunciation, the overarching findings do not show significant differences for the SA learners. However,

this tendency may also be linked to the dearth of studies in this SA sub-field, and more studies in this area may contribute to draw a more nuanced picture on the effects of an SA experience on phonological competence.

In conclusion, results of an SA experience appear to be manifold and extremely diverse. Results of research to date show that a number of FL skills appear to improve during an SA experience, while others do not appear to be extensively affected. The next chapter will be devoted to the analysis of the outcomes of an SA experience from a pragmatic and sociolinguistic perspective. Indeed, the linguistic phenomena under investigation, namely discourse/pragmatic markers[3], appear to incorporate features belonging to sociopragmatic and sociolinguistic competence. Moreover, the following chapter will also provide a framework for these linguistic items and an overview of studies conducted on their use in the L2.

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[3] These items are often referred to by a multitude of labels. The most widely used ones are 'discourse markers' (DMs) and 'pragmatic markers' (PMs), whose difference will be discussed in §2.3. Thus, the two labels will be used interchangeably until a solid theoretical framework, which supports the use of either 'discourse' or 'pragmatic', is provided.

Chapter 2 - Pragmatic and sociolinguistic development in SA contexts.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, SA contexts have been considered as promising venues for the development of L2 skills. This popular belief has been even stronger for the development of L2 pragmatics and sociolinguistic competence. Indeed, as also stressed by Taguchi (2015), the superiority of SA contexts in the development of these competencies lies in the possibility of partaking in numerous and diverse "socioculturally-organised activities" (Taguchi 2015: 4), i.e. daily occurrences where learners can interact with members of local communities in a wide range of communicative settings. Therefore, while abroad, learners can use and foster their linguistic knowledge when they perform socially-bound linguistic functions and, in doing so, they can also grasp the socio-cultural knowledge associated with it.

While SA settings have been considered by SLA researchers, teachers and lay people as ideal contexts for pragmatic and sociolinguistic development; on the other hand, the role of classroom contexts has often been underestimated in the development of these competencies. Indeed, as stressed by Mougeon *et al.* (2002), in the classroom, the range of registers is restricted and the situation is relatively artificial, as interaction is often limited to "the theatrical use of sanitised and preselected language forms" (Kinginger 2011: 62), often tailored by a teacher. Moreover, as Dewaele (2005) argued, due to this lack of diversified input, the pragmatic and sociolinguistic knowledge of classroom learners is inevitably partial as they may not be aware of the precise emotional force and illocutionary effects that words and expressions have in the L2.

This chapter, starting from a definition of L2 pragmatics and sociolinguistic competence, will assess the beneficial effects of SA learning contexts by providing an outline of recent studies conducted in these directions. Special attention will be also given in §2.2.2 to language variation and the most common tool used to investigate it, i.e. the sociolinguistic interview. As will be further developed, the interest in language variation in SLA research is very recent and a number of studies conducted within the variationist perspective have started to address the use of non-standard linguistic variants in the L2 (§2.3.3). In terms of acquisition, discourse/pragmatic markers can be associated with these linguistic variants because they are rarely considered in a classroom context and they are often acquired through extensive TL contact. They are also features of the oral conversation and their use contributes to a more informality in the L2.

Moreover, as will be explained further in §2.3, these linguistic items have a pivotal role in conversation at the pragmatic level and they can also be sociolinguistically salient. However, the interest in their use in the L2 is also quite a recent phenomenon in SLA research and the majority of studies hitherto conducted relied on cross-sectional designs. Thus, the overview of longitudinal studies on the development of pragmatic competence in SA contexts will allow an investigation into the main trends and tendencies of this SA research area and the overarching findings will be then compared to the results of this study. Although these items can also be considered as indices of sociolinguistic competence, they will be investigated in this study predominantly according to the pragmatic functions they perform in conversation. However, the social aspect of their use will be still considered by analysing the findings in relation to a number of social and contextual variables.

2.1 L2 Pragmatics

Pragmatics has been defined as "the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on the other participants in the act of communication" (Crystal 1997: 301). This definition points to a number of features of this discipline. Firstly, pragmatics deals with actual language use and the social conventions determining it. Secondly, it stresses that both perspectives, the speaker's and the listener's need to be considered. Thus, pragmatics involves both productive and receptive skills and the study of L2 pragmatics, often referred to as interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), aims at studying how "non-native speakers comprehend and produce action in a TL" (Kasper and Rose 2002: 5). However, as Ren (2015) maintained, studies within L2 Pragmatics have mainly focused on production, with limited studies addressing comprehension.

Pragmatics is generally distinguished in two sub-components: pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics (Leech 1983; Thomas 1983). Pragmalinguistics addresses the relationship between linguistic forms and their functions. In other words, it is the knowledge of "resources for conveying communicative acts and interpersonal meanings" (Dewaele 2007: 165). Sociopragmatics, on the other hand, addresses the relationship between linguistic actions and the social perceptions underlying the interpretations of communicative actions. Thus, as Barron (2003) summarised, pragmatic competence can be defined as "knowledge of linguistic resources available in a given language for

realising particular illocutions [... as well as] knowledge of the appropriate contextual use of the particular languages' linguistic resources" (Barron 2003: 10).

Pragmatics plays a pivotal role in the process of acquiring an L2, since it allows the learner "to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context" (Thomas 1983: 92). However, despite years of FL instruction, adult L2 learners may still struggle with the production of appropriate pragmatic language (Koike 1989). More specifically, as Kinginger (2015) maintained, it is often the L2 sociopragmatic knowledge which appears to be inherently complex. Indeed, as Devlin (2014) also stressed, an erroneous use of language at sociopragmatic level is often the cause of cross-cultural misunderstandings and negative stereotypes because NSs may misinterpret sociopragmatic errors as impolite behaviour.

Thus, as Roever (2009) highlighted, these two aspects of pragmatic knowledge (pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic) need to be effectively mapped onto one another to produce pragmatically appropriate language: without this ability, learners are in danger of sociopragmatic failure (Thomas 1983) where pragmalinguistic strategies are incorrectly mapped onto social situations. Consequently, sociopragmatic competence appears more difficult to acquire. In fact, as Kinginger (2015) maintained, the mastery of pragmalinguistic resources does not necessarily correspond to sociopragmatic knowledge, which may lag behind. In other words, while students who go abroad often expand their linguistic repertoires to express their pragmatic intentions, they may not fully grasp the societal and cultural norms behind the use of the acquired forms and expressions. Thus, as Thomas (1983) illustrated, while "pragmalinguistic failure is basically a linguistic problem […] sociopragmatic failure stems from cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour" (Thomas 1983: 99).

Despite the pivotal role of pragmatic competence for successful communication, how pragmatic competence can develop towards SLA has been a rather new concern in L2 studies (Infantidou 2014). However, despite the novelty, it has become a prolific and wide-ranging area of investigation within SLA. As Taguchi (2012) argued, target pragmatic features investigated to date include speech acts, honorifics and politeness terms, terms of address, conversational implicatures, rituals of small talk, formulaic expressions and conversation management devices, such as discourse/pragmatic markers and turn-takings. However, the majority of studies conducted within L2 Pragmatics have

been mainly devoted to investigate speech acts in the L2, often by comparing the production of the learners with that of NSs.

In the next sub-sections an outline of the main findings on a number of speech acts in the L2 will be presented. Special attention will be given to requests and refusals. The former belongs to Searle's (1976, 1979) category of directives, illocutionary acts where the speaker attempts to have something done by the hearer, whereas the latter belongs to the category of commissives, as they are used to signal that the speaker will not commit to some future course of action. They can be both face-threatening and they require extensive sociopragmatic knowledge to be performed appropriately. Moreover, due to the longitudinal focus of this dissertation, this literature review will mainly focus on L2 Pragmatics longitudinal studies conducted within SA research (Barron 2003; Félix-Bradsdefer 2013; Schauer 2009; Ren 2015; Woodfield 2015). As mentioned in §1.2.2, the use of longitudinal analyses is a recent phenomenon in SA research in general and even in L2 Pragmatics research. Indeed, there has been a call for more longitudinal studies because "pragmatic development is a long-term process" (Taguchi 2012: 2), which requires time to manage the complex interplay of language, language users and context of interaction.

2.1.2 Requests

One of the most exhaustive studies conducted on speech acts in the L2 is by Barron (2003), who examined the effect of an SA environment on requests, offers and refusal of offers. The study was conducted with 33 Irish learners of German, who spent an academic year in Germany, by using a Free Discourse Completion Task (FDCT), a "descendent of the discourse completion task (DCT)" (Barron 2006: 70). The task required respondents to imagine themselves in a series of situations and to write both sides of an open role play. Results of the study showed that participants moved towards the NS norm in several ways. For example, they used fewer ritual re-offers, increased their reliance on German pragmatic routines, and discontinued the use of routines transferred from English (e.g., *Ich wundere mich* [I wonder]). They also increased their use of syntactic and lexical downgraders. However, Barron (2003) also affirmed that in their year abroad, students did not access meaningful interaction that would be required to develop truly native-like competence in speech act performance.

Schauer (2009) examined the pragmatic development of nine German university students in English using the Multimedia Elicitation Task (MET) (Schauer 2004), a computer-based questionnaire to which learners need to respond orally. Data were collected three times over an academic year and were compared to a baseline group of NSs and AH learners. With regard to the two control groups, data were collected only once. Results of the study suggest some beneficial effects for the SA learners as they did not use direct request strategies to the same extent that they did in the earlier data collection sessions. Moreover, SA learners increased their repertoires of modification devices during their sojourn, although some modification devices, such as consultation devices, imposition minimisers and tag questions, remained underdeveloped even among SA learners.

Another study on request strategies was conducted by Shively (2011), who examined seven American students' L2 Spanish pragmatic development in service encounters during a semester abroad. The merits of this study lay in its design feature as the recordings were made by learners themselves who carried a digital recorder while visiting local shops, banks, and other facilities. Thus, data were examples of natural occurring situations. The results showed that the students' requesting behaviour changed over time from the predominance of speaker-oriented forms (Can I..?) to a greater use of hearer-oriented requests (Can you..?). Findings also included a decrease in the use of indirect and syntactically complex verb forms and a corresponding increase in the use of direct and less syntactically complex structures. These findings were explained by the repeated participation in everyday service encounter exchanges, which allowed learners to observe other customers' request forms and to adapt them to their practice.

A recent study conducted on request modification (Woodfield 2015) also found some differences in the organisation of requests after the SA experience. The study, conducted with eight learners of English and an equal number of NSs, investigated the use of internal and external request modification in two situationally varied social contexts (status equal/unequal). Data were generated by open role plays, aimed at eliciting the type of language produced when 'asking for an extension' to the tutor (unequal status) and 'asking for notes' to a classmate (equal status). Although learners tended to use request modification more at the end of their SA experience especially in situations of unequal relationships, they did not approach the NS's frequency of modification.

With regard to the perception of speech acts, the literature to date appears to be rather scanty (Ren 2015) as developmental pragmatic research is "heavily outweighed by the

proliferation of studies on pragmatic production" (Kasper and Rose 2002: 117). Despite that, a number of studies were conducted to assess the perception of requests. Among these, Rodriguez (2001) compared a group of North American students of Spanish with students who continued their Spanish classes in Spain to investigate the effects of a semester abroad. The data were collected by a judgement task and the participants were asked to decide whether utterances were appropriate or inappropriate. In case of inappropriate requests, participants were asked to rate the inappropriateness according to a four-point scale. The results showed that over time both groups improved and approximated NSs' judgements more closely on the post-test. However, no statistical difference between the two groups was found, suggesting no advantage for the SA learners.

2.1.3 Refusals

With regard to refusals, research in this area is also a recent phenomenon, especially through longitudinal lenses (Ren 2015). Refusals are extremely complex in nature since they demand a very high level of pragmatic performance for successful communication. If the ability to say 'no' may be difficult even in the L1, it can be even more complex in the case of the L2, due to the different cultural expectations of the speakers. Indeed, as also stressed by Barron (2003), different cultures may have different degrees of directness and in some cultures, a negative response to an offer, for instance, may be a mere polite way of responding to the invitation (i.e. ritual refusals), while awaiting a second offer. Conversely, societies characterised by a high level of directness may find it awkward, if not rude, to be asked twice to accept or decline a particular offer.

Among the most recent longitudinal studies, Félix-Brasdefer (2013) examined the effects of a short SA on the production of refusals among L2 US learners of Spanish during an eight-week summer program in Mexico. Data were collected using the MET twice, at the beginning and towards the end of the experience. The study included two control groups: a group of NSs and a group of AH learners. Data revealed that both groups of learners increased their use of direct refusals; however, the frequency of direct refusals among learners was higher than the frequency in the NS data. With regard to the difference between SA and AH learners, the study pointed to a larger use of indirect refusals among SA learners, suggesting an effect of SA contexts on the development of mitigating strategies.

While Félix-Brasdefer (2013) focused on speech production, Taguchi (2008) assessed the comprehension of indirect refusals with a comparative analysis between SA and AH learners of Japanese. Comprehension was measured by a multiple-choice listening test administered twice over a five-to-seven-week period. Both groups made significant gains in comprehension accuracy and speed. As comprehension accuracy was concerned, the AH group had a higher achievement than the SA group. For the AH group, the degree of gain was much larger for accuracy than it was for response times, but the pattern was reversed for the SA group as they showed greater gains in comprehension speed, but only marginal improvements in accuracy. The performance of the AH group was interpreted from their instructional arrangements: the learners were enrolled in an immersion program that offered content based, integrated skills classes taught in English.

A combination of both perspectives (production and perception of refusals) was analysed by Ren (2015). The study was conducted with 40 Chinese learners of English (20 SA learners, 20 AH learners) over an academic year. Results of the study showed that, in terms of production, both groups displayed a wide range of pragmatic strategies in expressing refusals. However, SA learners used these strategies more frequently. With regard to refusal perception, both groups were able to judge the pragmatic appropriateness/ inappropriateness of the different scenarios; however, the SA experience appeared to have influenced the pragmatic perception in rating the severity of the pragmatic inappropriateness.

In conclusion, in terms of pragmatic development, both SA and AH contexts may lead to beneficial outcomes, and in particular, they somewhat disproved the idea that only SA experiences foster pragmatic production and comprehension. Indeed, the overall findings of L2 pragmatics research to date do not seem to provide significant differences between SA and AH learners especially in terms of learners' pragmatic receptive strategies where AH and SA students seem to be almost on par. However, with regard to the production of speech acts, SA learners were found to use more indirect speech acts and mitigating strategies at the end of their SA sojourn. Thus, although research to date does not seem to fully corroborate the conventional wisdom of the superiority of an SA learning context in terms of L2 pragmatic development, a number of beneficial outcomes can still be posited upon completion of an SA experience.

This section also briefly mentioned a number of data collection methods used in L2 Pragmatics. While, as shown in chapter 1, the investigation of L2 Proficiency relied

mainly on the OPI, L2 Pragmatics methods appear to be rather varied and diversified. Indeed, scholars have used, to name just a few, a) (free) discourse completion tasks[4] (Barron 2003), b) role plays (Woodfield 2015), c) recording of natural data (Shively 2009), d) computer- based questionnaires (Schauer 2004, 2009; Ren 2015); e) multiple-choice questionnaires (Taguchi 2008) and f) meta-pragmatic judgment questionnaires (Rodriguez 2001). This variety of data collection methods is not surprising due to the need to "optimally answer the research questions" (Kasper 2008: 280) of such a wide-ranging discipline like L2 Pragmatics.

The next section will be devoted to sociolinguistic competence, a learners' ability which is closely linked to their pragmatic competence and sociopragmatic competence. Indeed, the speakers' pragmatic competence was, according to previous theoretical framework (Canale and Swain 1980), subsumed under 'sociolinguistic competence'. However, these two speakers' competencies, despite being closely and strongly intertwined, are not exactly synonyms. As will be further investigated in the following section, the former generally implies a binary opposition (or a limited range of choice) of TL forms (i.e. pronouns or standard *versus* (non-standard forms), whereas for the latter, there appears to be a diverse and much wider choice of expressions available to the speaker to realise a particular illocution in a specific context of use.

2.2 Sociolinguistic competence

Sociolinguistics is a well-established branch of linguistics that focuses on the impact of the social context on the way language is used. As Davies (2003) stated "knowing what to say is never enough, it is also necessary to know how to say it. And by 'how' it is […] meant […] using the appropriate register, variety, code, script, formula, tone and formality" (Davies 2003: 23). Thus, a sociolinguistic approach to SLA studies the relationship between such social contextual variables and the formal features of learner language or IL production. The ability to use the language according to sociolinguistic factors is an integral part of learning because it allows efficient communication in the L2. Sociolinguistic competence is an interesting area of investigation from an SA perspective, due to the intrinsic features of SA learning contexts. Indeed, as Dewaele (2004a) highlighted, the frequent authentic interactions with NSs allow learners to gradually

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[4] Barron (2003) developed the free discourse completion task (FDCT), an amended version of DCT.

extend their stylistic range in written and oral production and may consequently result in a fully-fledged sociolinguistic competence.

This section will analyse sociolinguistic competence in SA contexts by referring to:
a) studies conducted to analyse the use of terms of address and honorifics (§2.2.1), which have been one the traditional foci of investigation in SLA research on sociolinguistic competence;
b) studies conducted within a variationist approach (§2.2.3), a research area which has recently attracted the interest of SLA researchers interested in analysing language variation (§2.2.2) in the L2.
As will be mentioned in §2.2.4, the acquisition of certain linguistic variants can be an index of TL exposure and contact and, consequently, their analysis can be relevant for the current study, aimed at correlating language contact with the production of discourse/pragmatic markers in the L2.

2.2.1 Terms of address & honorifics

As Barron (2006) stated, time spent in the TL community appears to represent an ideal opportunity to acquire sociolinguistic competence in aspects of the L2 such as the address system or the use of formal and informal styles, given the accessibility to aspects of the language that are the most intimately associated with social norms and situations. Indeed, the choice of address forms depends upon social variables such as age, gender difference, formality of settings and social distance or familiarity between a pair of speakers. As Dewaele (2004b) argued, address forms such as pronouns, kinship terms, names, titles and honorific terms are frequently used and easily observed in everyday conversations; however, their appropriate use may still pose difficulties for L2 learners. In fact, despite previous theoretical knowledge on their correct use, learners may still struggle with "complexity and ambiguity of 'real' life" (Dewaele 2004b: 387) communication.

SA research to date on address forms seems to have reached similar conclusions in that learners, despite some sociolinguistic gains, did not extensively change their way of using these linguistic items after the SA experience. In a study conducted on L2 German, for instance, Barron (2006) investigated the use of informal and formal use of 'you', i.e. the use of 'du' and 'Sie', through a longitudinal analysis. The study was conducted with 33 Irish learners of German who spent ten months in a German university. Data were collected three times using the free discourse completion task (Barron 2003): prior to (T1

data), during (T2 data) and towards the end (T3 data) of the sojourn abroad. The learners' data were complemented with data elicited from 34 German NSs, who constituted the control group. Results of the study pointed to sociolinguistic gains for the SA learners; however, participants' use of address forms in L2 German was found to retain "a strong learner-like quality at the end of the study abroad period" (Barron 2006: 85).

Pronouns of address are also salient sociolinguistic markers in L2 French. Dewaele (2004b) analysed the effects of situational and sociobiographical variables on the self-reported and actual use of the informal 'tu' and formal 'vous' in native and non-native French. A corpus of interviews between NSs and non-native speakers (NNSs) of French provided data on the actual use of these address pronouns. These data were complemented with self-reported pronoun use in five situations collected through a written questionnaire. The two groups were found to use 'tu' differently and, more specifically, the NSs used 'tu' more frequently with known interlocutors but almost never with unknown interlocutors. The NNSs followed this pattern, but not as consistently, in fact, they reported occasional use of 'vous' with known interlocutors, but also 'tu' with unknown interlocutors. While the two groups differed in their use of 'tu', both groups reported a strong interlocutor effect, with female and younger interlocutors being addressed more often by 'tu' than male and older interlocutors. Thus, SA learners differed in the use of 'tu' from NSs but the use of address forms by both groups appeared to be affected by similar situational and sociobiographical variables.

However, the learning of formal/informal styles is not merely a matter of acquiring the forms and associating them with certain contextual features but also depends on the L2 learners' own choices as to which forms to use based on their understanding of the forms' social meanings. This idea of choice and the deliberate use of more informal forms was stressed by Kinginger and Farrell (2004) in a study on the 'T/V system' ('tu' versus 'vous') in L2 French. The study was conducted longitudinally with eight participants, who were enrolled in a variety of SA programs in France. Data were collected using a Language Awareness Interview, an instrument by which participants were asked to select the most appropriate term of address in six interpersonal situations and explain the rationale behind their choice. By the end of their sojourn in France, participants' views on address form use in service encounters changed. In particular, participants ascertained a more widespread use of 'tu' among same age French peers and, consequently, demonstrated a higher use of this form of address after the SA experience, although the

use of these address forms did not converge with their previous meta-pragmatic framework acquired in the classroom.

A shift towards more informal address forms has been also found in studies on honorifics in L2 Japanese. In Japanese, speakers have to choose a particular honorific style when addressing an interlocutor. As Marriott (1995) stressed, there are three honorific styles in Japanese: a) the plain style, sometimes described as the informal style; b) the polite style, also known as the formal style; c) the very formal form, sometimes referred to as the deferential style. While the first style is used within families and among good friends, the formal one is normally used in out-group situations, for example, among adults who are mere acquaintances, or in conversations when students address their teachers. With regard to the deferential style, it is the most polite and formal speech style, and it is used in very formal communication settings, such as public speech or business-related meetings. The aim of Marriott's (1995) study was to assess the effect of an SA experience on the use of honorifics by eight Australian learners of Japanese. Data were longitudinally elicited through OPI before and after the SA experience. Results of the study suggested that learners, who previously relied on more polite forms as a consequence of mainly instructed learning, upon return tended to rely mainly on the plain style.

Similar results were found by Iwasaki (2010), who examined the use of polite and plain styles in L2 Japanese among five male university students from the United States, comparing their use of these styles before and after they studied abroad for a year. Data were elicited through the OPI. The scholar also hinted at more informality of address in the L1 of the participants as an important variable of investigation, which may clash with the need for more formality in the L2. Results of the study suggested a shift towards more informality even in situations when a more formal style would have been more appropriate. However, this tendency, rather than being interpreted as a pragmatic regression, revealed a more active use and a deeper understanding of the terms of address in L2 Japanese. In fact, L2 Japanese learners are generally introduced to the polite forms first in the classroom and they tend to simplistically associate the polite forms with formal contexts and the plain forms with informal ones. During their stay in Japan, as they socialise and interact with NSs, they may realise that the plain style is not bound to certain contextual features (e.g. talking with close friends), but that the form has social meanings which may also index intimacy or friendliness.

The clash between a more egalitarian use of pronouns of address in the L1 and the use of honorifics in the L2 was also investigated by Brown (2013). Brown carried out four case studies of male students of various national origins (UK, Japan, Austria, and Germany) as they attempted to consolidate their knowledge of the Korean honorific system in interactive settings in Korea. Although all participants demonstrated that they were able to manipulate the system appropriately in a written DCT, Brown (2013) concluded that the use of Korean honorifics by the participants in the study did not approach the native-like use and ascribed the findings to some aspects linked to the speakers' identity. As previously stressed, some learners were not always willing to adopt native-like patterns of use when these were in conflict with their identities as Westerners and the more egalitarian use of language that this entailed. Moreover, as learners of Korean, their misuse did not appear to be a serious issue for Korean NSs, who as a sign of friendliness towards the 'foreigner', kept using informal honorifics even when a more formal style was required. Thus, the overindulgence in informal forms of address by L2 learners may be also linked to non-linguistic variables[5], such as the L2 learners' identity.

In conclusion, terms of address are not an easy aspect of the L2 sociolinguistic competence to acquire. Although learners may have some meta-linguistic knowledge about their correct use, they may still struggle with the degree of formality to be used in some real-life situations. Longitudinal studies on the use of these linguistic items have shown that, despite some improvements, SA learners do not approach native-like use of forms of address in the L2. However, there was a tendency towards more informal structures after the SA experience. This phenomenon was mainly ascribed to two reasons: a) learners chose to conform to the use of address forms of their same age counterpart in the L2 land, although they realised that this use is against the metapragmatic knowledge they had previously received in a FL context (Kinginger and Farrell 2004; Iwasaki 2010); b) learners were mainly addressed with informal terms of address due to their status of FL learners and, may consequently have opted for a more informal style, which was often more in line with their Western identities (Brown 2013).

The next sub-section will address the acquisition and development of the phenomena of sociolinguistic variation. As will be developed further, a similar tendency has been found even in this aspect of sociolinguistic competence. More specifically, the overarching

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[5] These variables will be discussed in Chapter 3.

findings suggest that there is tendency towards the use of more informal linguistic elements[6] upon completion of the temporary sojourn in the TL community. However, despite the increase, their frequency appears to be rather below the rate of use by NSs. Moreover, what also appears to emerge is the different previous metalinguistic knowledge about these linguistic items. Indeed, while the use of terms of address and honorifics often implies previous metapragmatic knowledge about their use, with regard to language variation, it is an aspect of sociolinguistic competence that learners anecdotally learn, by "imbibing" the language in their temporary sojourn abroad. Starting from a brief outline on language variation and its main instrument of investigation, i.e. the sociolinguistic interview[7] (§2.2.2), the following sub-sections will draw on a number of SLA studies conducted within the variationist perspective to SLA (§2.2.3) and will discuss their relevance to TL exposure and the linguistic items under investigation in this study (§2.2.4).

2.2.2 Language variation and the sociolinguistic interview

Language variation is an intrinsic feature of human language and can be observed in all of its components (syntax, morphology, lexicon and phonology). By language variation, it is often implied an alternation between different elements of a given language whose meaning (or phonological status) is identical. In other words, as stressed by Bell *et al.* (2016), a variable presents the speaker with the choice between two (or more) alternative linguistic forms, which have the same denotative meaning but different social significances. In linguistics, these different forms that speakers alternate are often referred to as "variants" (Mougeon *et al.* 2010) or "alternants" (Crystal 2008). The interest in what is variable in a language received initial impetus by the work of William Labov in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The research conducted by Labov was mainly concerned with the analysis of language variation in the varieties of English spoken as an L1 in urban settings in the United States (Labov 1966, 1972). This trailblazing research spurred scholarly interest in this discipline during the 1970s and 1980s and contributed to make 'variationist sociolinguistics' a prolific area of investigation in the subsequent decades.

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[6] They will be referred to as 'variants' in §2.2.2.

[7] As will be further developed in the following sub-section, the sociolinguistic interview was one of the instruments chosen for data collection for this study.

Before variationist studies, it was felt that these alternatives produced by the speakers were in free variation, i.e. that the choice of form was rather random (Regan 2013). Conversely, variation studies conducted since the 1960s have demonstrated that the choice of variants by the speaker is not arbitrary but it is conditioned by the simultaneous effect of multiple factors, both linguistic and social. Social factors may include, among the others, age, sex, social class, style of speech, ethnicity. Linguistic factors could include aspects such as the position of the speech segment. Moreover, the interest of variationist studies was not solely to determine the types of variables, but also their context of occurrence and their frequency, together with an analysis of the possible factors (social and linguistic) intervening in the occurrences of a specific variant.

A specific goal of Labovian research has been to gain access to the "vernacular". According to Labov (1972), the vernacular can be extremely revealing in the analysis of language variation because it is a style where "the minimum attention is given to the monitoring of speech' (Labov 1972: 208). However, vernacular data may be difficult to collect because when subjects are recorded, they may tend to be aware of the type of speech produced and may, even unconsciously, tend to use a more formal register. Thus, there is the need for a compromise between the aim of studying how people speak when they are not systematically observed and the necessity of collecting data through systematic observation (Labov 1972), given that for the observation and analysis of any linguistic item, a recording of this phenomenon is inevitably required.

In order to achieve this aim, Labov (1984) designed the 'sociolinguistic interview', audio-recorded conversations using a network of "conversational modules" (Labov 1984: 33), i.e. a series of designed questions related to the same topic, aimed at eliciting and fostering spontaneous speech production. Indeed, as stressed by Tagliamonte (2006), the word 'interview' is a misnomer, because the 'sociolinguistic interview' does not imply the interviewer asking a series of questions to the participant and, especially, should be anything but a desultory conversation. Rather, as Labov (2013: 8) mentioned, "a sociolinguistic interview is considered successful if […] the subject is heard and not the interviewer. One way of achieving this result is for interviewers to let the subject know as quickly as possible that they are interested in what he or she has to say". Thus, rather than being directed by the interviewer, the conversation is interviewee-led and it is successful if the interviewer follows what the interviewee says with the principle of "tangential shifting" (Labov 1984: 37).

Moreover, although the modules include both general and personal topics, the interviewer has to guide the participants towards a more personal and emotional telling because when subjects retell situations of the greatest emotional intensity, they are likely to be overtaken by their memories and will pay less attention to their manner of speech, yielding to a casual style register. Hence, the sociolinguistic interview presents itself as a valid instrument to overcome the "observer's paradox" (Labov 1972: 209), the eventual possibility of a shift towards a more formal register or style because the subject is aware of being observed and recorded. Figure 2, taken from Labov (1984: 35), shows the characteristic network of conversational modules of the sociolinguistic interview, as devised by Labov (1984):

Figure 2 - Network of conversation modules in Labovian sociolinguistic interview
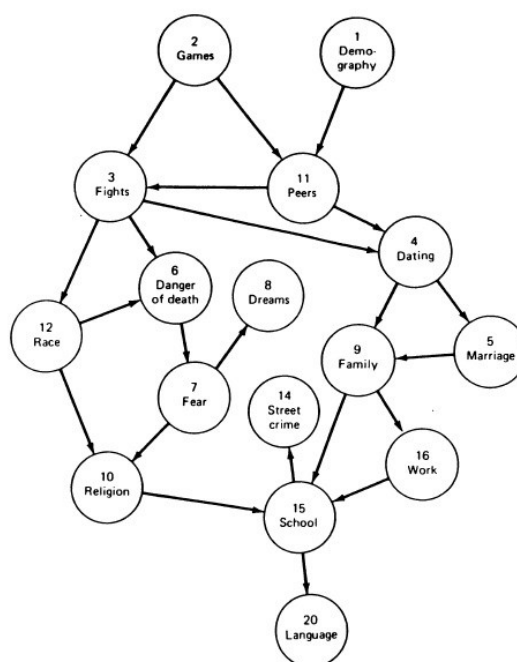
Because of its feature of eliciting spontaneous conversation, the sociolinguistic interview, as will be further explained in chapter 4, has been chosen in this study as one of the tools for data collection. Indeed, it allows to reproduce, in somewhat laboratory conditions, quasi-authentic conversations without the disadvantage of having "noisy" recordings, difficult to transcribe and analyse. Moreover, from the perspective of the analysis, the sociolinguistic interview allows the gathering of oral data in interviews which, although not based on a series of questions, are at least structurally similar. Indeed, extracts of naturally occurring situations are sometimes recorded by the participants themselves and, therefore, they may be gathered in different social situations. Conversely, the

sociolinguistic interview allows the participants to speak freely but, at the same time, the interviewer manages to keep some control on the instrument and can trigger the conversation by guiding the interviewee towards a series of topics to be discussed. This instrument has been one of the most frequently used in the studies targeting language variation in the L2. A brief review of the literature to date conducted in this direction will be provided in the following sub-section.

2.2.3 Variationist perspectives on SLA

Until recently, sociolinguistic variation has been primarily examined with reference to the L1 of the speakers. SLA studies conducted within a variationist perspective have attracted the interest of SLA academic community since the 1990s. The pioneering study was conducted by Adamson and Regan (1991), aimed at investigating the phonological pattern of *-ing* versus *-in'* variation in Cambodian and Vietnamese immigrants in the US. The result of this study suggested that the variation patterns of the L2 speakers approximate the patterns of the NSs and, more specifically, that the L2 speakers were found to adopt patterns similar to NSs in relation to their gender. Indeed, male speakers were found to prefer the non-standard form and women informants were found to prefer the standard one. Thus, Adamson and Regan hypothesised that the male participants were unconsciously attempting to sound like native-speaking men, whereas the Cambodian and Vietnamese female participants, like female NSs, were more status conscious and preferred the standard form.

Subsequent to Adamson and Regan (1991), a number of studies were conducted with the aim of analysing the acquisition of sociolinguistic variation in the L2 (Bayley and Regan 2004; Mougeon *et al.* 2010; Regan *et al.* 2009). Not only did the studies in this research strand increase in number, but they also expanded their object of investigation. Indeed, together with studies aimed at investigating phonological variants (such as the opposition between *-ing* and *-in'*), which have for long been the classic focus of variationist approaches (Beeching and Woodfield 2015), studies also started to investigate other types of variants, such as morpho-syntactic (e.g. omission or retention of the negative proclitic "ne" particle in L2 French, such as in Regan 1995) and lexical ones (e.g. the use of restrictive "juste" in L2 French, such as in Blondeau *et al.* 2002).

Additionally, these studies also started tackling language variation and the development of sociolinguistic competence by students who were learning the language in contexts

other than naturalistic ones. For instance, Mougeon *et al.* (2010) focused on Canadian French immersion learners, Dewaele (2004c) worked with university students of French who learned the language in instructed learning contexts and a number of studies (Regan 1995, 2004; Regan *et al.* 2009) were also addressed at assessing the effects of a temporary sojourn in the TL community on the sociolinguistic competence of the learner. Although the pioneering study in the field was conducted on L2 English, the majority of these studies, as Howard *et al.* (2013) affirmed, have been conducted on L2 French and variation in L2 English, as also concurred by Durham (2014), has not been extensively investigated.

However, the proliferation of studies interested in this more social aspect of L2 development has been particularly significant as they complemented the more traditional focus in SLA research. Indeed, variation in learners' IL is not a totally new object of investigation in SLA research, and a number of studies aimed at investigating it started to appear in the late seventies (see Tarone 1988). However, SLA research of the seventies and eighties was mainly concerned with investigating variation on a diachronic dimension, namely as developmental patterns and the acquisition of categorical features. Recent studies (Bayley and Regan 2004; Mougeon et al. 2010; Regan et al. 2009) have started to investigate variation according to a more social focus and, therefore, have claimed that it is possible to identify two types of variation in the L2 (Mougeon and Dewaele 2004; Rehner 2005).

The former, which has been the traditional focus of SLA research, has often been referred to in contemporary SLA studies as "Type 1 variation" (Rehner 2005), "diachronic variation" (Mougeon and Dewaele 2004), "linguistic variation" (Mougeon *et al.* 2010) or "learning-related variation" (Durham 2014). This type of variation is mainly concerned with the convergence to or divergence from native-like forms, as Rehner (2005: 14) illustrated:

> Type 1 variation manifests itself via an alternation between […] forms that conform to target language native norms and […] forms that are not observable in native speech, commonly referred to as 'errors'.

Such variation occurs on the vertical continuum (Corder 1981) and it is constrained categorically by the linguistic context in which it occurs.

The latter, which has recently attracted the interest of the SLA scientific community, has been referred to as "Type 2 variation" (Rehner 2005), "sociolinguistic variation"

(Mougeon et al. 2010) or "target-based variation" (Durham 2014). This variation represents progression on the horizontal axis (Corder 1981) and involves choice between forms that are used by NSs of the TL. In other words, while the first type of variation implies an alternation between native and non-native-like forms, the second type of variation involves an alternation between native-like forms that are not categorically constrained. Rather, the probability of one form being chosen over another depends on a series of extra-linguistic factors (e.g. the degree of (in)formality of the topic under discussion, the social status of the speaker and of the interlocutor, the setting in which communication takes place, etc.).

The study of this type of variation in the L2 is of special interest to SA researchers because type 2 variation can be used as markers of style or register, social status, group membership, etc. However, measuring success and progress in relation to 'Type 2' variation in the L2 is not simply related to the acquisition of increased knowledge in the L2. Indeed, as stressed by Dewaele and Mougeon (2004), the acquisition of sociolinguistic variants can also be connected to the differential knowledge of the L2 among learners at a given point (i.e. characteristics of the situation in which the language is used), as well as the enduring characteristics of the L2 learners (e.g. gender, personality, age).

Thus, sociolinguistic variation may present a special challenge to L2 learners. Moreover, in educational input, as Mougeon *et al.* (2010) stressed, the frequency of use of informal variants in the oral production of the teachers and in textbook materials is rather limited. Classroom learners are overwhelmingly exposed to formal variants even in the pseudo-representations of informal speech in manuals (e.g., a conversation at home or with a friend). Thus, instructed learners appear to be monostylistic (Dewaele 2004b) and may struggle when they have to vary between different speech styles in authentic situations in the TL community. The next sub-section will investigate further the issue of TL contact with reference to the acquisition of informal variants. It will also briefly outline the relevance of TL exposure and social participation in the TL community for the linguistic items under analysis.

2.2.4 Informal variants as an index of TL contact

SA research to date has demonstrated that frequent authentic interactions with NSs of the TL allow L2 learners to gradually extend their stylistic range in the oral production

(Dewaele 2004b) and generally point to a positive impact of naturalistic exposure on L2 sociolinguistic development (Howard *et al.* 2013). More specifically, Howard *et al.* (2013: 346) summarised the effect for educational *versus* naturalistic exposure on L2 acquisition of informal variants as follows:

Naturalistic context > study abroad > immersion > regular classroom

Thus, naturalistic contexts appear to aid the acquisition of informal variants and are immediately followed by SA contexts, which also appear to help the acquisition of these variants, although to a lesser extent. Conversely, the impact of immersion contexts and classroom exposure on informal variants is marginal and reflects the more reduced frequency of informal variants in these two learning contexts.

However, notwithstanding the impact of naturalistic/SA contexts on sociolinguistic variants, their use by L2 learners does not appear to approach NSs' use. Indeed, exposure to sociolinguistic variants is not enough to bring about NS levels of frequency (Howard *et al.* 2013). The majority of NNs fail to fully attain the stylistic range of NSs and have been found to overuse formal variants (Durham 2014). As a result, although time in the TL community has been found to foster the acquisition of informal variants, the use of formal ones appears to be "a permanent feature of the learners' speech" (Durham 2014: 22) even after a sojourn abroad.

Nonetheless, it appears that there is a correlation between the use of the sociolinguistic variant in the L2 and the degree of social and stylistic markedness of that variant. Indeed, in terms of markedness, two different types of informal variants have been found (Mougeon *et al.* 2010):

1. the former ('marked informal variants' or 'vernacular variants') is typical of informal speech and inappropriate in formal settings. It is often strongly connoted and also often stigmatised;

2. the latter ('mildly marked informal variants') is also typical of the informal register, but may also be used in formal situations. Unlike the former, it demonstrates considerably less social or gender stratification and is not stigmatised.

Research to date has demonstrated that the use of vernacular variants appears to be quite limited among L2 users (Mougeon *et al.* 2010). These findings have been corroborated

by a series of studies (Dewaele and Regan 2001; Kinginger 2008), which found that the use of colloquial lexical items seems to be rather limited among L2 learners. This tendency may be ascribed to significant amount of sociopragmatic risk-taking (Dewaele and Regan 2001), which may be an impediment to the use of such variants in learners' oral production, as a result of a cautious approach on the part of the learner. Conversely, with regard to the mildly marked informant variants, Mougeon *et al.* (2010) found that L2 users tend to use them, although their rate of frequency is generally lower in comparison to NSs' usage. Evidence of this effect is found in research by Dewaele (2004c), Regan (2005) and Regan *et al.* (2009) which show that after a one-year stay abroad in France, L2 learners' omission of the proclitic negative particle "ne" showed a tendency towards NSs' norms.

With regard to discourse/pragmatic markers, the object of investigation of this dissertation, Mougeon *et al.* (2010), when referring to the study conducted by Sankoff *et al.* (1997) included the use of informal markers such as 'well', 'you know' and 'like' in the category of marked informal variants. The inclusion in the vernacular category may not be surprising considering their sociolinguistic salience. In fact, as Beeching (2015) also pointed, discourse/pragmatic markers may index group inclusion, age, social class or even "Irishness" or "Britishness". Given that the sociolinguistic significance of discourse/pragmatic markers may differ across the English speaking world, generalised prescriptive remarks about their use appears problematic, and their acquisition by L2 learners may pose a number of difficulties because they involve pragmatic and sociolinguistic knowledge, which is often acquired through contact with NSs.

Therefore, these linguistic items may allow an investigation into language exposure and social participation in the TL community for students who spent a temporary period in the TL community. Indeed, discourse/pragmatic markers can function "as an index of learners' level of exposure to […] the language and, by extension, their relative degree of integration" owing that the acquisition of these linguistic items "unlike that of structurally embedded items is highly dependent on exposure to interactions in the language as they are generally not easily accessible to conscious reflection" (Migge 2015: 391). Similarly, Sankoff *et al.* (1997) stated that their use is an ideal indicator of integration into the local community. Nestor and Regan (2015) echoed these claims by affirming that these linguistic items can be considered as "a quick route to 'sounding' like a native speaker due to the salience and frequency in the input available to the L2 speaker" (Nestor and

Regan 2015: 409). Therefore, in addition to their sociopragmatic value, their use in the L2 can also be considered as an indication of the acquisition of sociolinguistic variation and sociolinguistic competence in another language (cf. Nestor and Regan 2015: 409).

In conclusion, this section has provided an overview on the SLA studies conducted on the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence. Two main areas of investigation have been presented: studies focusing on terms of address and research addressing language variation in the L2. As previously mentioned, the study of sociolinguistic variation is a recent phenomenon in SLA research, which has attracted the interest of SLA researchers since the nineties. This social wave of SLA research complemented the traditional focus on "Type 1 variation" (Rehner 2005), mainly concerned with assessing the development towards native-like norms. Research to date has demonstrated that exposure to real conversation situations in the TL community and contact with NSs may aid the development of sociolinguistic competence and the acquisition of sociolinguistic variants. However, the frequency of these variants still appears to be lower if compared with baseline corpora of NSs. More specifically, it appears that marked informal variants tend to be less frequent in L2 speech than mildly marked variants (Mougeon *et al.* 2010).

The following section will be devoted to discourse/pragmatic markers. More specifically, starting from a brief overview on the terminology in use, a number of approaches which attempted to classify them will be presented. However, a general classification and taxonomy appears to be lacking. Special attention will be given to the macro-functions of a number of functional-pragmatic approaches, because these linguistic items will be then analysed at the macro and micro-level. With regard to SLA studies, §2.3.3 will present a brief overview on the main findings regarding their use in the L2. However, the majority of research to date has focused on their use in the L1 and their use in the L2 appears to be quite under-researched. Moreover, as Liao (2009) also stressed, the majority of these studies have hitherto relied on a cross-sectional design. This study will, instead, investigate their frequency and use through longitudinal lenses, in order to assess whether the learning context and the exposition to a plurality and diversification of input may have affected their production over time.

2.3 Discourse/pragmatic markers in the L2

2.3.1 A plethora of labels

Discourse/pragmatic markers have been interestingly described by Crystal (1988: 48) as "the oil which helps us perform the complex task of spontaneous speech production and interaction smoothly and efficiently". They are also commonly used to signal a change in the direction in which the conversation is going or to react to what is said by our interlocutor, providing "instructions to the hearer [about] how to integrate their host utterance into a developing mental model of the discourse in such a way as to make the utterance appear optimally coherent" (Mosegaard Hansen 2006: 25). However, a clear-cut definition of discourse/pragmatic markers seems to be quite a controversial issue in linguistics, with no common agreement among scholars (Bazzanella 2006) who, as Migge (2015) stressed, have tended to highlight the heterogeneity of these elements rather than generating precise definitions.

As Beeching (2015) illustrated, research to date on the status and function of discourse/pragmatic markers "is immense and yet still in its infancy. A sound basis for the classification of markers - or even what to call them - has not yet been fully established" (Beeching 2015: 178). Indeed, the names given to these linguistic items have greatly varied and the different labels in place have often been the result of different scholarly approaches. The most widely used labels, among others, seem to be 'discourse markers' (henceforth DMs) and 'pragmatic markers' (henceforth PMs). The debate over whether to call such linguistic phenomena DMs (Schiffrin 1987; Schourup 1999; Müller 2005) or PMs (Brinton 1996; Denke 2009; Aijmer 2013, Beeching 2016) has been heated, reflecting a variety of theoretical stances and methodological approaches.

Schiffrin (1987) was arguably the first work which analysed these linguistic items. More specifically, in her book, the functions of '*well*', '*now*', '*so*', '*but*', '*oh*', '*because*', '*or*', '*I mean*', '*y'know*' and '*then*' were assessed. She referred to these linguistic items as DMs, defining them as "sequentially dependent elements that bracket units of talk" (Schiffrin 1987: 31), which give instructions to the hearer about how the next piece of talk "fits" into the previous one. However, according to Beeching (2016), this definition can only partially encompass the different usages of these linguistic items. In fact, apart from expressing textual relations, the same items can also express politeness, as they can mitigate what is being uttered, and consequently they may be associated with friendliness

and naturalness. Moreover, they are sociolinguistically marked and can create social indices, such as membership of a particular social or age group.

Fraser (1996) used the term 'pragmatic marker' to englobe both DMs and PMs, considering the former as a subtype of the latter, whose function is mainly to signal the relationship between a particular segment and what precedes it. Aijmer and Simon-Vanderbergen (2006) echoed Fraser (1996)'s definition and defined DMs and PMs as follows:

> Discourse marker is the term which we use when we want to describe how a particular marker signals coherence relations. Pragmatic markers as we see them are not only associated with discourse and textual functions but are also signals in the communication situation guiding the addressee's interpretation. (Ajmer and Simon-Vanderbergen 2006: 2).

This dissertation, following Fraser (1996), Aijmer and Simon-Vanderbergen (2006) and Beeching (2016), will refer to linguistic items such as 'like', 'y'know', 'well' and 'I mean' as PMs. The breadth of this umbrella term for these linguistic items appears to be more encompassing, owing to the fact that these linguistic items rarely perform exclusively either a structural role or convey a particular speaker's stance. Rather, they can perform several functions, which can go beyond transactional coherence and may also include interpersonal attitudes. This polyfunctionality, as Bazzanella (2006) stressed, may operate *in absentia* (paradigmatic)*,* i.e. the same marker fulfils different, even opposing functions in different contexts, but also *in praesentia* (syntagmatic), i.e. several functions are performed by the same marker in a given text.

2.3.2 An attempt at categorisation

As Bazzanella (2006) affirmed, although there is a general consensus on the multifunctionality of these linguistic items, there is no absolute agreement on the specification of the various functions that these linguistic phenomena may perform. Moreover, the inventory of elements to be included under the umbrella term of 'pragmatic markers' or the linguistic properties that unite all these linguistic items them as a category seems to be sketchy. In other words, they do not fit into an existing word class, rather various grammatical entities (such as adverbs, verbal syntagms, interjections, etc.) can be used as PMs, thus creating a highly heterogeneous class. As Pichler (2013) also stressed, their categorisation appears to be methodologically challenging also from a syntactic and semantic perspective. With regards to syntax, they are positionally flexible. Thus, they cannot be described as constituting a homogeneous word class which shares a set of

syntactic properties. In relation to lexicon, they eschew lexical definition since they do not generally communicate referential content but function to encode pragmatic and procedural meaning, which are not easy to specify in lexical terms.

Moreover, as Fedriani and Sanso' (2017) also stressed, even with linguistic items which mainly have procedural meaning, it does not seem to be straightforward to affirm what can be considered a PM and what is not. Those who adopt an inclusive approach tend to stretch their definitions so as to include both connectives and non-lexicalised expressions such as the French "au risque de me répéter" or "if you don't mind" in English (cf. Fischer 2006). Whereas, those who adopt a more exclusive approach, tend to consider PMs the linguistic items that respond to a number of formal criteria such as fixedness, detachability/mobility (cf. Fraser 2006). Indeed, pragmatic detachability has been a very common and practical way to assess what is a PM from what is not. Since these items can be deleted without semantically and syntactically affecting the propositional content of the utterance, all items that can be detached from propositions are often believed to perform procedural functions and, consequently, may be PMs in the context in question.

However, although a generally accepted definition and a common agreement on the inventory of those items are still lacking, it appears that scholars agree on a number of properties which characterise these linguistic items. As previously mentioned, they have been presented as syntactically and semantically optional elements which make little or no contribution to the truth-conditional meaning of their host units. Thus, as Pichler (2013) also stressed, they have often been described in negative terms and they have, consequently, been marginalised in traditional frameworks of linguistic analysis. Moreover, as Aijmer (2011) stressed, the stigma associated to them was related to the widespread idea that PMs were symptoms of dysfluency, often associated with the speaker's 'performance' (Chomsky 1965: 4), rather than 'competence'. Recent research has redeemed these linguistic items from the stigma associated to them and has shown that they are an important part of the grammar of conversation (Aijmer 2011) and oral fluency (Beeching 2016).

With regard to the macro-functions that these linguistic items appear to perform, a number of studies (Maynard 1989; Jucker and Smith 1998; Romero-Trillo 2002; Nittono 2004; Bazzanella 2006; Aijmer 2011; Pichler 2013) have attempted to classify them. Maynard (1989), quoted in Iwasaki (2013), with specific reference to fillers, identified two main categories: language-production-based and socially motivated markers. The first was

found to appear when smooth communication is hindered, whereas the latter occur when there is the need either to fill potential silence or to show less certainty and hesitancy (Iwasaki 2013: 246-247). Jucker and Smith (1998) also provided a two-fold classification: reception markers and presentation markers. The former signals a reaction to information provided by another speaker (e.g. *oh*, *okay*), whereas the latter accompanies and modifies the speakers' own production (e.g. *like*, *y'know*, *I mean*). According to the two scholars, presentation markers can be further classified into 'information-centred presentation markers', which modify the information itself (e.g. *like*) and 'addressee-centred presentation markers', which are related to the presumed knowledge of the addressee (e.g. *you know*).

Romero-Trillo (2002) also identified two main functions: involvement and operative markers. The former category encompasses elements which imply an involvement of the listener in the "thinking process of the speech" (Romero-Trillo 2002: 777), whereas the latter is aimed at making the conversation flow without disruption. Similarly, Nittono (2004), also quoted by Iwasaki (2013), with reference to hedges, classified these linguistic items as propositional (i.e. aiming at conveying information) and interpersonal. Müller (2005) also found that the markers analysed in her study can perform a textual and interactional function. Likewise, Aijmer (2011), in her analysis of '*well*' used by Swedish learners of English, also provided a binary opposition. In her study, the examples of this marker were grouped in two general categories, namely 'speech management functions' and 'attitudinal functions'. 'Speech management' involves notions such as planning, searching for words, self-interruptions, reformulation, clarification, etc. and they all share the trait of causing a break in utterance. However, PMs can also express an attitude to the hearer or to the preceding part of speech. They may signal disagreement or they may correct a misunderstanding or they can be strategies to avoid a direct response.

Conversely, Fung and Carter (2007), Bazzanella (2006) and Pichler (2013) provided a different number of general categories. According to Fung and Carter (2007) these linguistic items may perform an interpersonal, referential, structural or cognitive function. The first category includes markers which are related to affective and social functions, such as marking shared knowledge (e.g. *you know*, *see*). The referential category encompasses all markers which express textual relationships (e.g. *so*, *but*). The structural category is connected with the distribution of turn-takings and transition between topics (e.g. *now*, *well*). The last category, the cognitive one, englobes markers which highlight

the cognitive status of the speakers, such as marking the thinking process (e.g. *I think*, *I see*) or expressing hesitation (e.g. *well*, *sort of*). On the contrary, Bazzanella (2006) and Pichler (2006) provided a three-fold macro classification. Pichler (2013) affirmed that PMs, which she called discourse-pragmatic features, mainly perform three general functions: they express the speaker's stance, they aid utterance interpretation and discursive structure.

According to Bazzanella, these items may also perform three main macro-functions: cognitive, interactional and metatextual[8]. The cognitive functions involve both the relationship between what is uttered and the common knowledge of the two speakers and the correlation between the textual content and the speaker's stance, as shown in Table 1 (Bazzanella 2006). The interactional functions signal the conversational turns of the speakers and the hearers, as is possible to see from Table 2. The metatextual functions aim at structuring what is being said to aid the reception process, as well as the formulation of linguistic elements which highlight the relationship between the speaker and what is being uttered, as Table 3 shows.

Table 1. Cognitive macro function[9]

	Cognitive functions
1	Procedural markers (related to cognitive processes, e.g. inference)
2	Epistemic markers (related to speaker's subjectivity and commitment)
3	Modulation devices (related to the propositional content and illocutionary force)

Table 2. Interactional macro function

Interactional functions	
Speaker	**Addressee**
1.Turn-taking devices	1. Interrupting devices
2. Fillers	2. Back-channels
3. Attention-getting devices	3 Attention confirmed
4. Phatic devices	4. Phatic devices
5. Hedges and boosters	5. -----------------------------
6. Checking comprehension	6. Comprehension confirmed, requests for clarification
7. Requesting agreement, confirmation	7a. Agreement, confirmation, support 7b. Partial or complete disagreement
8. Yielding the turn	8. -----------------------------

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[8] This taxonomy was based on Italian L1 and as the scholar affirmed it was proposed for comparison with other languages (cf. Bazzanella 2006).
[9] Adapted from Bazzanella 2006: 456-457.

Table 3 Metatextual macro-function

1. Textual markers	
	1.1 Structuring the parts
	1.1.1 Introduction (as a frame device)
	1.1.2 Transition
	1.1.3 List
	1.1.4 Digression
	1.1.5 Ending
	1.2 Quotation and indirect speech markers
2. Focusing devices	
	2.1 Local
	2.2 Global
3. Reformulation markers	
	3.1 Paraphrase markers
	3.2 Correction markers
	3.3 Exemplification markers

In comparison with the other studies previously outlined, the merits of Bazzanella's taxonomy lie in the identification of macro-functions as well as an in-depth outline of a series of micro-functions, which can be related to a number of PMs by classifying them according to a particular pre-set function. In this regard, Bazzanella's approach can be considered onomasiological, i.e. it starts from a series of functions and attempts to determine how they can be expressed linguistically by PMs. Conversely, the majority of studies mentioned in this literature review, such as Müller (2005), Aijmer (2011), Beeching (2015, 2016), Buysse (2015), to name but a few, appear to rely on a semasiological approach, e.g. their point of departure is a selection of linguistic forms and the aim of the analysis is to investigate the range of functions that these forms may fulfil. With regard to the functions at the micro-level, the majority of studies mentioned in this literature review, relied on other theoretical classifications for the PM under investigation.

In conclusion, although there is not a definitive agreement on a taxonomy of these linguistic elements nor on the functions that they perform in conversation, a number of similarities are present at least at the macro-level. Indeed, the majority of studies presented in this section provided a binary opposition, albeit referred to differently, in the macro-functions of these linguistic phenomena, namely a cohesive-textual function and a pragmatic-attitudinal one. This study will also embrace a two-fold classification at the

macro-level and, more specifically, will use the use the labels of 'propositional' for the former macro-function and 'attitudinal' for the latter. More specifically, this theoretical focus will be the starting point of the analysis of number of high-frequency PMs in the oral production of Italian L2 learners of English. A detailed description of the methodological approach in the selection will be provided in chapter four. The next section, instead, will be devoted to the outline of the research to date on PMs by L2 learners.

2.3.3 The use of pragmatic markers in the L2: research to date

Speech style choices are not solely conveyed through the use of a particular register (formal *versus* informal), but also through a number of pragmatic devices, which can "express a polite demeanour or index affective stance" (Iwasaki 2013: 246). PMs are a case in point, due to their sociolinguistic salience as well as their role at the pragmatic and conversational level. Although these linguistic items have been extensively investigated in the L1 of speakers, little research has been conducted on the use of PMs by language learners (Müller 2005; Beeching 2015), which is somewhat surprising considering the pragmatic value that they perform even in the L2. As illustrated by Svartivik (1980), a pragmatic failure (Thomas 1983) in the use or even the omission of a particular marker may not be considered as an error by the interlocutor, who, instead, may misinterpret what the L2 user is attempting to convey as impolite or inappropriate behaviour:

> If a foreign language learner says five *sheeps* or he *goed*, he can be corrected by practically every native speaker. If, on the other hand, he omits a *well*, the likely reaction will be that he is dogmatic, impolite, boring, awkward to talk to etc, but a native cannot pinpoint an 'error'. (Svartvik 1980: 171).

However, despite the crucial role of PMs for successful communication, as Müller (2005) and Liao (2009) affirmed, there seems to be a dearth of studies on the use or development of these linguistic items in the L2. Likewise, PMs do not appear to be extensively used by FI learners. According to Liao (2009), the lack of PMs in the L2 is due to the fact that they are not explicitly taught in an FL setting. Thus, the pragmatic value that is associated with them is rather "invisible" (Liao 2009: 114) for instructed learners, as they feel that they can be perfectly understood without using them. Other scholars (de Klerk 2005; Beeching and Woolfield 2015) have also highlighted the absence of PMs in classroom curricula and ascribed this phenomenon to a number of intrinsic features of these items. According to de Klerk (2005), the absence of PMs in formal language teaching is due to

their "lack of semantic denotation […] which makes formal and explicit commentary on their use fairly difficult" (de Klerk, 2005: 1201). Beeching and Woolfield (2015) stressed that their oral feature may hinder explicit formal teaching. Indeed, as in the classroom, learners are mainly exposed to standard and prestige forms, PMs may be stigmatised because they mainly belong to the sphere of conversation (Beeching and Woodfield 2015).

A number of recent research studies[10] (Lafford 1995; Romero Trillo 2002; Fuller 2003; Müller 2005; Rehner 2005; Fung and Carter 2007; Gilquin 2008; Denke 2009; House 2009, 2013; Liao 2009; Aijmer 2011; Iwasaki 2011, 2013; Polat 2011; Wei 2011; Liu 2013; Beeching 2015; Buysse 2015) have investigated non-native usages of a number of PMs in speakers of different L1s, at different levels of competence, in different contexts and using different methods of data collection. These studies are summarised in Table 4[11].

Table 4. Overview of the literature review to date

Study	Informants	L2	Control group	Onset proficiency	Context of acquisition/ learning	Instrument(s)	PMs/ types of PMs
Lafford (1995)	- US students in Mexico - US students in Spain - US students 'at home'	Spanish	✓	Different levels	SA & AH context	Simulated role plays	A number of conversation strategies[12]

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[10] To the best of hitherto found knowledge.

[11] This literature review focused on the use of PMs by L2 learners. Studies aimed at analysing these linguistic phenomena by different types of L2 users (i.e. migrants) were excluded, unless considered relevant to the purpose of this study. The selection of studies was ascribed to the type of learning experience which, in the case of migrants, is not in line with the definitions of 'SA context(s)', discussed in §1.1.2. Moreover, L2 learners and other types of L2 users inevitably differ in terms of aims and expectations of the experience as well as the reasons behind their mobility. In this regard, SA learners may be more similar to 'cultural migrants' (cf. Forsberg Lundell and Bartning 2015), rather than migrants in the narrow sense. However, the experiences abroad of cultural migrants differ from SA learning experiences as length of stay (LoS) is inevitably longer in the case of the former.

[12] Expressed also by a number of PMs.

Romero-Trillo (2002)	- NS and NNs[13] of English - Adults and children	English	✓	Intermediate /advanced[14]	Classroom context	Natural occurring conversations	look, listen, you know, you see, I mean, and, well
Fuller (2003)	-NSs (US) and NNs of English (France, Germany, Spain)	English	✓	Advanced	RA context, after years of FL instruction[15]	Interviews, elicited narratives + casual conversation	Well, oh, y'know, like, I mean
Müller (2005)	German speakers	English	✓	Advanced	9-12 years of formal instruction	Silent movie stimulus (narrative + opinions)	so, well, you know, like
Rehner (2005)	High school students of different L1s[16]	French	✓	Intermediate /Advanced[17]	IM context	Semi-directed interviews	comme/like; donc; alors; (ça) fait que/so; bon; là
Fung and Carter (2007)	Cantonese learners	English	✓	Intermediate / Advanced	Classroom context	Tape-recorded group role play recorded in Hong Kong in a pedagogic context	A number of markers

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[13] The L1 of the NNSs is Spanish.

[14] It can be assumed that their level was quite high as the adult learners were students of English Philology in their 3rd and 4th year, whereas the data regarding the children were actually from the spoken production of pupils in a bilingual school in Madrid.

[15] Graduate students or assistant professors.

[16] The author referred to the language spoken at home in the study.

[17] This level may be assumed as the participants in the study were high school students who had had previous education in immersion contexts as well.

Gilquin (2008)	French learners	English	✓	Advanced	University learners	Informal interviews + cartoon description	'well', 'you know, 'like', expressions including the word 'thing', 'sort of' and 'I mean' (part of a larger study n hesitation phenomena)
Denke (2009)	Swedish speakers	English	✓	Advanced	University learners	Oral presentations	'you know', 'well', 'I mean'
House (2009)	Speakers of different L1s	English	✗[18]	Advanced	University learners	Authentic interactions among EFL learners, stimulated by an article + Retrospective interviews	'you know'
Liao (2009)	Chinese Speakers	English	✗[19]	Advanced[20]	SA context	TA[21]-led discussion + sociolinguistic interview	'yeah', 'oh', 'you know', 'like', 'well', 'I mean', 'ok', 'right', 'actually'[22]

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[18] She relied on other corpus-based studies for information about use, distribution and collocation potential.

[19] PMs' use and frequency in relation to NS norms were assessed by relying on the results of previous studies.

[20] Participants were native Mandarin speakers from Taiwan or Mainland China who had studied English formally for more than 8 years. They had been in the U.S. for between 2 and 4 years. Thus, an advanced level of proficiency was assumed.

[21] Teaching assistant.

[22] The author drew from two previous studies for the selection of PMs to investigate. *Yeah, oh, you know, well, I mean,* and *like* were selected because they appeared to be more frequently in Fuller's (2003) NSs' corpus. *Ok* and *right* were selected because of their frequent use in academic discourse especially in lectures and seminars (Schleef 2004).

Aijmer (2011)	Swedish learners	English	✓	Advanced	University learners	Informal interviews + cartoon description	Well
Iwasaki (2011)	American students	Japanese	✗	Intermediate (on average)	SA context	OPI	A number of fillers
Polat (2011)	A Turkish-speaking adult learner of English	English	✓	Advanced	RA context	Informal conversations with the researcher	'you know', 'like', 'well'
Wei (2011)	Chinese speakers	English	✗[23]	Intermediate /Advanced	University students	Video Oral Communication Instrument (VOCI)[24], with situation based tasks	'I think', 'well', 'yes/yeah', 'you know'. 'please', 'actually', 'oh', 'I mean', 'OK', 'anyway', 'now'
House (2013)	Spanish students	English	✗	Presumably Intermediate /Upper-intermediate	ELF (German lecturers & Erasmus students from Spain)	Consultation hours' talk	Yes/yeah, so, okay
Iwasaki (2013)	American students	Japanese	✗	Intermediate (on average)	SA context	OPI	A number of fillers
Liu (2013)	Chinese learners	English	✓	Advanced	SA context (different LoS)	Sociolinguistic interviews	I think/ wo juede; Yeah/yes/dui; Ah/a
Beeching (2015)	- NNs living in the UK - AH Chinese learners of English	English	✓	Different levels	SA vs AH context	three-minute role play + ethnographic interviews	Well you know, like, sort of, I think, I mean

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[23] The scholar relied on Stenström's (1994) inventory of the most often used interactional signals and PMs in spoken English. This inventory was generated from the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English.

[24] As the author stressed, VOCI is a technologically mediated form of the Oral Proficiency interview (OPI).

Buysse (2015)	- NNSs of English of different L1s	English	✓	Advanced	University learners	Interviews + story telling using prompt pictures	Well
Pauletto and Bardel (2016)	- NNSs and NSs of Italian	Italian	✓	Different levels	University learners	Interviews + dyadic tasks	'Be'' (≅ [25] 'well')

The first study that can be considered relevant for this literature review is Lafford (1995). Although the study was not directly aimed at analysing PMs, it pointed to a number of considerations regarding the use of conversational strategies by FI learners and SA learners, which may be pertinent to the linguistic items under scrutiny in the current study. Lafford's study was aimed at investigating the way in which American students of Spanish in different learning contexts managed to "get in, through and out" conversations. Lafford found that SA students outperformed AH learners in several conversational strategies, such as channel openings and closing, as well as in confirmation signals. These findings were ascribed to the different type of exposure of the participants, with SA students using these strategies to a greater extent with the aim of making the conversation less artificial. In particular, with reference to the use of PMs, SA students were found to rely on a wide-ranging use of fillers. Moreover, results of the study also showed that SA students used more native-like fillers, such as '*este*', '*entonces*' or '*pues*'. Thus, Lafford concluded that "the study abroad experience broadens the repertoire of communicative strategies of L2 learners and makes them better conversationalists" (Lafford 1995: 119).

Romero-Trillo (2002) conducted a three-fold comparative analysis regarding the native and non-native use of a number of markers by adults and children. Using a corpus of adult NSs as a reference corpus, he first compared the use of these linguistic phenomena by adults NSs with 1) NS children and 2) NNS adults. Subsequently, he analysed the difference in the results of NS and NNS children. Results of the study suggested that the use of PMs is a rather limited phenomenon among NS children who used PMs almost four times less than adult speakers. These findings may be ascribed to the type of

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[25] As the two researchers mentioned, the use of '*be''* in Italian is similar to the use of '*well*' in English, especially to index dispreference or disaffiliation between the two interlocutors (cf. Pauletto and Bardel 2016: 97).

children's conversations which are more 'action-based' rather than be 'conversation-based'. Thus, the more widespread use of markers among the adults is coherent with the social nature of adult interaction, which often requires interactive scaffolding and embeds personal opinions and attitudes towards what is being uttered. With regard to the comparison between NSs and NNSs of English, Romero-Trillo found a lower frequency of PMs, with a number of markers completely absent from the adult NNS data. As far as the comparison between the two children's corpora is concerned, Romero-Trillo assessed that the use of PMs among NNS children was even lower. Additionally, NNS children also transferred a number of markers from their L1 or used a number of markers in a non-native-like manner. For both non-native groups, Romero-Trillo gauged a limited use of PMs and ascribed this tendency to the classroom learning environment.

Fuller (2003) also compared the native and non-native use of a number of PMs in English. The merits of this study lay in the different instruments of data elicitation, which allowed assessment of the use of these linguistic items in different social situations. Results of the study echoed findings of previous studies in that L2 users appeared to use PMs less frequently in comparison to the reference corpus of NSs and appeared to rely on certain specific markers in speech, using them in a formulaic manner and with a higher frequency in comparison to NSs' use. By relying on the classification proposed by Jucker and Smith (1998), Fuller ascertained that a number of similarities and differences in use between the native and non-native group. Specifically, she suggested that reception markers are used by NSs and NNSs alike in the conversation data and in symmetrical and familiar conversation speech events. With regard to presentation markers, the study assessed that a difference can be found between NS and the NNS use. More specifically, Fuller concluded that NNSs used presentation markers in conversations with people with whom they already share background knowledge, while NSs reserve such negotiations for interactions in which they need to create common ground.

Among the studies conducted on the use of PMs in the L2, Müller (2005)'s monograph is probably one of the most thorough and detailed. The scholar compared the use of four markers (i.e. *so*, *well*, *you know* and *like*) by American and German NSs performing the same tasks in experimental conditions, drawing on a large corpus of spoken data (the Giessen-Long Beach Corpus). She also provided an exhaustive analysis of the uses of these four markers and analysed two communicative functions: narrative and opinions. The results of the study showed some use of PMs on the part of the learners; however,

this use appeared to be restricted to a limited number of functions and only tended to approach NSs' use, as she illustrated (2005: 242):

> German speakers also employed the four discourse markers […]; however, differences occurred in the usage of the individual functions. While some functions found in the native speaker data seem to be completely unknown to the Germans, some functions are employed only by Germans.

With regard to distributional frequencies, occurrences of PMs are outnumbered in the NS data; however, with reference to '*well*', results of the study showed a more widespread use among the learners, both in terms of frequency, albeit not statistically significant, and plurality of functions. In addition to frequency and use, Müller (2005) also attempted to investigate the variables which may favour or hinder the production of these linguistic phenomena by L2 users. Results of the study pointed to a more widespread use of these elements by L2 speakers who learnt the language in an informal context. These findings led the author to concur with Sankoff *et al.* (1997), in that the contact with NSs favoured the production of these linguistic elements among SA learners.

Rehner (2005)'s monograph was aimed at investigating discursive and non-discursive uses of *comme/like, donc/alors/(ça) fait que/so, bon* and *là*, among 44 high school students learning French in an immersion context in Canada. The group was quite heterogeneous, with more than half of the participants speaking a language other than English at home, either exclusively or in combination with English. The aim of the study was to assess the frequency of these linguistic items in a semi-directed interview as well as the discursive and non-discursive functions fulfilled by the use of these linguistic phenomena. Data were compared with the production of NSs and immersion teachers. The results of the study posited that L1 transfer may have triggered the production of a particular expression in French. Other variables, such as gender or social class, appeared to have affected only the use of these expressions with English discursive equivalents. Frequency of exposure to the L2 was also considered a positive variable for a more widespread use of these linguistic elements in discursive functions; however, while the rank of order of frequency for the students matched that of immersion teachers, it resulted to be far from approximating NSs' norms.

Similar results were found by Fung and Carter (2007). The authors analysed the use of PMs in classroom interaction between secondary-school pupils in Hong Kong and

compared the results with a corpus of British NSs (a sub-corpus of CANCODE[26]). Quantitatively, a considerable discrepancy between learners' and NSs' use was assessed. A number of commonly used markers (*and*, *right*, *yeah*, *well*, *so*, *now*, *sort of*, *you know*, *actually*, *see*, *say*, and *'cos*) in the CANCODE sub-corpus were found to be less frequent among the classroom learners. With regard to the pragmatic functions, the authors assessed a widespread use of referential and structural markers, but a very restricted use of markers to mark shared knowledge and to signpost attitudes. Having been conducted in a classroom context, the study also presented a number of possible pedagogical implications. More specifically, the authors hinted at the classroom input as a possible impediment for the more widespread use of PMs on the part of the learners. Therefore, due to their pivotal pragmatic role, the authors stressed a need for incorporating PMs into language curricula:

> Incorporation of DMs into the language curriculum is necessary to enhance fluent and naturalistic conversational skills, to help avoid misunderstanding in communication, and, essentially, to provide learners with a sense of security in L2 (Fung and Carter 2009: 433).

Gilquin (2008), as a part of a larger study on hesitation phenomena studied the use of a number of PMs, which she referred to as "smallwords" (Gilquin 2008). Her analysis included the study of the use of '*well*', '*you know*, '*like*', and expressions including the word '*thing*', '*sort of*' and '*I mean*' among French learners of English. More specifically, the author used the French component of LINDSEI corpus (Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage)[27] and the LOCNEC (Louvain Corpus of Native English Conversation)[28] as a reference corpus. Contrary to the findings of most studies mentioned in this literature review, Gilquin assessed a more frequent use of 'well' among the learners, whereas the other 'smallwords' appeared to be in line with the findings of other studies mentioned in this literature review, as they were found to be

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[26] The Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE) is a collection of spoken English recorded at hundreds of locations across the British Isles in a wide variety of situations (e.g. casual conversation, socialising, finding out information, and discussions). The CANCODE corpus is the result of a joint project between Cambridge University Press and Nottingham University.

[27] The LINDSEI corpus is a collection of oral data produced by advanced learners of English. To date, 11 mother tongue backgrounds are represented: Bulgarian, Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Spanish and Swedish. All the components follow the same format so as to make the data comparable. Each component of LINDSEI contains the transcription of 50 interviews, for a total of over 100,000 tokens per component.

[28] The LOCNEC corpus is a mirror image of the learner corpus but with young NSs of English.

underused by the learners. The scholar ascribed this finding to the familiarity that learners had with this marker in comparison to other items.

Denke (2009) studied the use of a number of PMs (*well*, *you know*, *I mean*) in the oral presentations of Swedish learners of English with specific reference to the function of repairs and repetitions. NNS data were compared with a reference corpus of NSs. The comparative analysis pointed to a different use of markers by the two groups. On a general note, learners tended to use markers in a less varied way and, more specifically, they used them for editing purposes or to mark hesitation. With regard to repairs, the most noticeable difference between the two groups of speakers was found in connection with grammatical correction, with the NNSs making more frequent use of this type of correction. With regard to other types of correction (e.g. involving change of word, specification and modification), the results showed similar patterns between the two groups. With reference to repetition, they were found to be more frequent in the learners group, whereas repetition made to achieve certain rhetorical effects was a peculiar phenomenon pertaining mainly to the control group.

House (2009) analysed the use of '*you know*' by university students who were studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Hamburg. The authors relied on quasi-authentic natural occurring conversation, whose starting point of interaction was the discussion of an article. Results of the study pointed to a series of conclusions regarding the frequency and the macro-functions of this PM. With regard to frequency, House (2009) found out that even in her EFL corpus, '*you know*' tended to appear mainly in mid-position. Additionally, she ascertained that this marker appeared mainly in non-phatic and small talk, often at the beginning or the end of the encounter. She also noted a consistency in use, with learners who acquired this marker using it quite often in conversation. With regard to functions and use, EFL speakers used this PM predominately as a prefabricated and idiomatic chunk which learners employed to create coherence, to fumble for words and overcome difficulties in conversation, and to avoid embarrassing silence. Thus, '*you know*' in ELF talk is not a marker of intersubjectivity; neither is it a sociocentric construction nor a hedge appealing to knowledge shared between speaker and addressees. These finding were ascribed to the conversational needs of ELF speakers who are "too concerned with their own discourse production to be primarily ''intersubjectively'' oriented" (House 2009: 189).

Liao (2009) studied the use of a number of PMs in the oral production of teaching assistants (TAs) residing in the United States. Data was elicited using two different types of collection instruments, namely during a sociolinguistic interview with the researcher and during TA-led discussion. Results of this study are in line with the findings of the majority of studies mentioned. More specifically, Liao found that, although the TAs used many of the same PMs as NSs, they either did not fully adopt the functions of PMs used by NSs or they employed PMs differently than NSs do. In the case of '*well*' and '*I mean*', only two participants were found to comfortably use them. These results were ascribed to a lack of a direct equivalent in the L1, where the former may be expressed by '*um*' and the latter by the sentence '*wo de yisi shi*' (= my meaning is). The frequent occurrence of 'um' in the data of this study may lead one to assume that almost all the focal participants did not replace the use of ''*um*'' with the use of *well*. With regard to the equivalent of *I mean,* as Liao (2009) stressed, this is not considered a PM in Chinese and this may be the cause of its underuse as PMs in the L2.

However, participants were also found to overindulge in the use some markers (e.g. *yeah*). More specifically, the use of '*yeah*' as self-repair was found to be specifically learner-like, as this function was rare in NSs' oral production. Thus, Liao (2009) concluded that the use of each PM may be acquired by L2 users to a different degree, which confirms earlier research on variation in the use of PMs (Sankoff *et al*. 1997). In addition to the analysis of frequency and use, the comparative approach allowed the researcher to draw conclusions on the stylistic choices of each participant. More specifically, in the classroom discussion, participants had to portray themselves as professional TAs; therefore, they avoided using certain colloquial PMs in order to perform their professional personas. Not surprisingly, the only PMs used more frequently in discussions were *ok* and *right* because these two markers function as devices for instructors to check students' comprehension, ask for confirmation, and mark transitions to the next utterance. Thus, the different types of data elicitation instruments affected the different functions of the PMs used and explained why particular PMs were preferred in particular interactions.

In a study conducted with Swedish learners of English, Aijmer (2011) found that learners overindulge in the use of '*well*' as a fluency device, i.e. to cope with speech management problems and monitoring the progression of what is uttered, and tend to underuse it for attitudinal purposes or to express interpersonal feelings. Similar conclusions have been found by Buysse (2015), who assessed that learners used '*well*', although not to its full

potential. In fact, a discrepancy between functions related to speech management and those with an attitudinal role was assessed. The former was found to be more frequent in the learner data while the latter were not frequent to the same extent. However, Buysse also highlighted that, apart from the function performed and the frequency of the PM in question in the input of the learners, other factors need to be considered for future research. The first variable is the L1 of the speaker which may positively or negatively affect the production of a specific marker. Moreover, it is also necessary to consider the quantity and quality of exposure to the TL as well as the onset level of proficiency of participants, as they can affect the production of PMs in the L2 as well.

Two studies by Iwasaki (2011; 2013) were conducted with a group of five English NSs, who spent an academic year in Japan. The former study investigated the use of a number of fillers in L2 Japanese, whereas the latter focused on a number of hedges. The merits of these two studies lay in the longitudinal analysis and the SA perspective. Despite the different foci of investigation, the two studies reached similar conclusions. Iwasaki (2011) suggested that the SA experience favoured a more widespread use of fillers, with an increase of socially useful fillers (referred to as 'socially motivated' by Maynard 1989). Similar results were obtained for the repertoire and frequency of hedges (Iwasaki 2013) and the author ascribed these findings to exposure to "an abundant use of hedges among L1 speakers with whom they interacted" (Iwasaki 2013: 263). The author also pointed to the recognition of the pragmatic values of these linguistic items on the part of the participants in retrospective interviews, and the following quote, taken from Iwasaki (2013: 264) illustrates this:

> Greg: I think a lot of, in my experience, a lot of what's impolite in Japanese is what you don't say. So, for instance, you don't necessarily say, "I don't, I don't want that" or "I don't eat that". You say "*ano* (= well), *chotto* (= little/a bit) [literal translation added].

Polat (2011) also addressed the use of PMs in the L2 through longitudinal analysis. Polat (2011) conducted a case study with one single participant, who immigrated to the United States at age of 25. The characteristics of the experience of the participant in this study are slightly different from the SA sojourn of the focal informants of the current study, as this person had been residing for about 2.5 years in the US when the study began. However, this study has been included in this literature review because of its longitudinal focus, which allowed the researcher to assess the developmental use of the markers such as '*you know*', '*like*' and '*well*' over the time span of a year. Polat (2011) reported great fluctuations in the longitudinal use and frequency of these three markers. While '*you

know' was used with high frequency at the beginning of the study, its use steadily declined afterwards. With regard to '*well*', no occurrences of its use as a PM were assessed in the data. '*Like*' was not a frequent marker at the beginning, then it started being more frequently used and at the end of the study, its use appeared to be more limited. Thus, the use of a specific marker may change over time and does not necessarily imply a frequent use of PMs in general, as the results of this case for the use of '*well*' showed.

Wei's (2011) investigation of PMs in the L2 was mainly aimed at assessing the effect of onset proficiency on the frequency and use of these linguistic phenomena. Participants were asked to partake in information transmission tasks (e.g. talk about your hometown) as well as socially interactive tasks within specific situational contexts and with a specific addressee (e.g. make an apology in a voice mail; send a cassette message to a friend at home). Results of the study suggest there was also a tendency for advanced students to use PMs more often than intermediate students and to use a significantly greater variety of PMs than intermediate students. Additionally, a number of PMs were present only in the responses of advanced students, e.g. turn-medial uses of '*well*', '*anyway*', '*now*', '*oh*' for interview instruction; '*yes*', '*please*', '*actually*', '*well*' for recorded messages, and '*OK*' for apologies. With regard to the relationship between the task and the specific use of a marker, for information transmissions, advanced students used '*well*' more frequently to mark turn taking than intermediate students. '*Yes/yeah*' was used more interactively by the advanced group as a turn-taking device, while the intermediate group mainly used them as backchannel signals. For cassette messages, '*you know*' was used to mark more personal knowledge for the advanced group, while for the intermediate group, it signalled more general common knowledge. In addition, some PMs (e.g. '*OK*', '*well*', '*actually*', '*I mean*' and '*oh*') were present only in the production of the advanced students. As for apologies, there were higher instances of please, you know for the advanced students than for the intermediate students. Thus, on a general level, onset proficiency and the type of situational contexts appeared to have influenced the type and frequency of PMs.

House (2013) assessed the use of '*yes'/'yeah*', '*so*', '*okay*' in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). The researcher relied on 42 audio-recorded academic consultation hours of talk at the University of Hamburg between German lecturers and post-MA students from Spain. With regard to '*yeah*', the researcher relied on Spielmann's (2007) classification of the function of *yeah* (backchannel signal, agreement marker and discourse structurer). The

analysis of data revealed that the EFL speakers tended to use the token '*yes*' as an agreement marker, whereas '*yeah*' tended to be used mainly as a discourse structuring device. With regard to '*so*', the study relied on Bolden (2009), who claimed that 'so' could be used as a filler in conversation as well as a topic changer device. The analysis conducted on L2 learners revealed that learners tended to mainly exploit the former. Finally, learners were found to overindulge in their use of '*okay*' and tended to use it in a greater variety of functions than the ones documented in the literature about NS talk (House 2013: 65). These findings led the researcher to conclude that the learners "re-interpreted" (House 2013: 65) the use of the markers under scrutiny in order to respond to their communicative needs and their own discourse structure purposes.

Liu (2013) investigated the use of PMs by Chinese learners of English, with specific reference to transfer. Results of the study suggested that learners use PMs in syntactic positions and in a number of functions which do not find correspondence in the production of NSs. However, the specific uses of these markers corresponded to possible uses of their equivalents in the L1 of the participants. More specifically, three Chinese markers were found to have some possible influence on analogous English expressions: '*wo juede*' seemed to have affected the use of '*I think*', especially in relation to its position, which was different from the position of the same marker by NSs. The marker '*du*' affected the use of '*yeah/yes*', used only by the learners as a backchannel signal after the interlocutor's reaction '*uh huh*' or '*ok*'. Another Chinese marker which might have an effect on English PMs' use is '*a*' (= '*ah*'). The L1 Chinese speakers used '*ah*' clause-medially (followed by self-correction), while English NSs did not use '*ah*' in this context. Thus, a transfer from the L1 may be assumed. However, although the L1 may have played an important role in the use of PMs, their use is an idiolect and individuals may have had their preferences regarding PMs' use. In fact, L1 effect did not include all individuals in the study to the same degree. A number of speakers were influenced more by their L1 in their PMs' use while others did not. Therefore, individual preferences also need to be taken into consideration when analysing the results about PMs' frequency and use in the L2.

Beeching (2015) investigated a number of PMs, with particular reference to the use of '*well*'. She compared the PMs' use among three groups of informants: British NSs and two groups of NNSs: Chinese speakers learning the language 'at home' and a group of mixed L1 backgrounds residing in the UK (SA). Results of the study are in line with most

findings mentioned in this literature review because she ascertained that the frequency of use of PMs by NNSs was lower and the learners also showed greater variability in their use of PMs. For example, they tend to overindulge in the use of '*I think*' or '*I mean*' and this tendency was ascribed, at least for the Chinese L1 speakers, to a transfer with their L1. The use of '*well*' by the learners was found to be relatively low, especially for the Chinese speakers. Overall, the findings led the researcher to assume a positive role of the SA context in relation to PMs' production and frequency. In fact, although the usage by NNSs differed from the use by NSs, she claimed that "this gap can be closed when students live in an Anglophone country" (Beeching 2015: 195).

Finally, Pauletto and Bardel (2016) analysed the use of '*be"* in responsive turns in the oral production of Italian L1 speakers and Swedish learners of Italian of different level of proficiency. Data were collected through individual interviews with the participants as well as dyadic tasks between an L1 speaker of Italian and an advanced learner of Italian. Results of the analysis pointed that, in terms of frequency, the different level of proficiency did not extensively affect the use of this PM in conversation. Indeed, intermediate and advanced learners did not present substantial differences. Conversely, beginners did not present any occurrences of this PM. With regard to the characteristics of use in context, in all occurrences analysed, both in the native and the learner data, the use of '*be"* pointed to some problematic aspects of a question (be it yes/no, wh- or alternative question) and was a symptom of "either resistance to the terms of the question or a non-straightforward/ articulated answer" (Pauletto and Bardel 2016: 111). In terms of the dispersal of the PM in the corpus, the analysis also revealed a strong individual variation, both among the NS and the learner participants, with a number of informants who did not present any occurrence of this PM in conversation. Thus, the results of this study corroborated Liu (2013) in that the use of PMs are part of the idiolect of speakers, be they L1 or L2 users of that language.

In conclusion, studies on the use of PMs in the L2 have been rather scanty and that this research sub-sector has only recently attracted the attention of the academic community. However, notwithstanding the dearth of studies in this research area, a number of trajectories and tendencies, albeit tentative, can be drawn from the list of studies provided in this literature review. With regard to the context of acquisition, Lafford (1995), Müller (2005), Rehner (2005), Iwasaki (2011, 2013) and Beeching (2015) pointed out that NS contact can favour the production of PMs in the L2. In particular, the studies conducted

on PMs with a longitudinal focus (Iwasaki 2011, 2013; Polat 2011) pointed to a number of beneficial effects over time of the SA/RA learning contexts on the use of PMs by L2 learners. However, in relation to NS frequency of use, the frequency of these linguistic items by L2 learners does not approach NSs' rate. This tendency may be ascribed to the poverty of input in FL classrooms, where PMs have a marginal role (Fung and Carter 2007; Liao 2009). With regard to their use and functions, NNSs seem to rely mainly on cohesive and textual functions and they seldom exploit these linguistic phenomena to express a speaker attitude (Romero-Trillo 2002; Denke 2009; House 2009, 2013; Aijmer 2011; Buysse 2015).

A number of studies also pointed to the role of L1 transfer on the frequency (Rehner 2005; Gilquin 2008; Liao 2009) or inaccuracy of use (Liu 2013; Liao 2009) of these linguistic phenomena in the L2. However, L1 transfer is not the only factor which can aid or hinder the production of these linguistic items in the L2, but the idiolect of the person may also play a pivotal role (Liu 2013, Pauletto and Bardel 2016). Thus, this can explain the absence of a particular marker in the speech production of a person who produces PMs frequently in conversation, even in the L2, or the change in the use of a specific marker over time (Polat 2011). Another variable could be the level of proficiency, as a more advanced level has been found by Wei (2011) to play a pivotal role on the use and the frequency of PMs in learners' oral production. Conversely, Pauletto and Bardel (2016) did not find extensive differences in terms of frequency between intermediate and advanced learners. However, a threshold proficiency level[29] can be still posited, as beginners were not found to use the PM under analysis in their oral production. Finally, Romero-Trillo (2002) also suggested the factor of age as a variable which can affect PM production and, more specifically, the study showed that NS children produced PMs to a lesser extent[30].

In conclusion, although this section has attempted to draw a number of trajectories on the use of PMs in the L2, research in this sector is extremely scarce and more research is needed to have a better understanding of their use and development in the L2. Moreover, as Table 4 shows, research to date has relied on different study designs and data collection instruments. Thus, clear and definitive conclusions about the effects of an SA experience

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[29] This factor will be further investigated in §3.1.1.

[30] This finding will be particularly relevant for the analysis of the results of one group of participants, i.e. au-pairs, as they mainly interacted with children during their stay in the TL community.

and the use of PMs in oral production cannot easily be drawn. This study, by relying on a comparative and longitudinal analysis, will attempt to assess the effects of a temporary (i.e. six months) stay abroad of two groups of learners, namely Erasmus students and au-pairs. Despite similar onset proficiency level and expectations in terms of FL outcomes, the two groups greatly differed in terms of their *raison d'être* in the TL community, with potential implications for the opportunities for NS contact as well as the scope, type and characteristics of interaction. The study will be described in depth in chapter 4.

2.4 Pragmatic and sociolinguistic development in SA contexts: concluding remarks

This chapter, starting from a definition of L2 Pragmatics and its subcomponents of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics, provided a brief literature review of recent SA research conducted to investigate learner pragmatic development in this learning context. As previously mentioned, L2 Pragmatics, despite being a recent area of investigation, has been quite wide-ranging and prolific. Therefore, this chapter analysed the role of SA learning contexts on sociopragmatic development by providing a brief overview of studies conducted on a number of linguistic phenomena.

With regard to speech acts in the L2, §2.1 showed that, contrary to commonly held belief, SA learners do not always and extensively outperform their AH counterpart in terms of pragmatic competence. Indeed, although SA learners were found to rely on more pragmatic routines (Barron 2006), more indirect or hedging strategies (Barron 2006; Schauer 2009; Félix-Brasdefer 2013) and fewer transfers (Barron 2006), their pragmatic production did not reach the NS norm (Barron 2006). Likewise, in terms of pragmatic reception, SA and AH learners appeared to be almost on par, with a number of minor and subtle differences concerning the accuracy in the comprehension (Félix-Brasdefer 2013) or the judgement of pragmatic appropriateness (Ren 2015).

Conversely, SA learners appear to greatly benefit from SA experiences in terms of sociolinguistic development. Indeed, SA research to date has shown a tendency towards informality both with regard to the use of terms of address/honorifics (§2.2.1) and sociolinguistic variants (§2.2.2). This tendency has been found for terms of address/honorifcs even when a more informal use of these linguistic items clashed with previous metalinguistic knowledge about their use (Kinginger and Farrell 2004). These results have been linked to the desire of identification with NSs (Kinginger and Farrell

2004) or the input that learners have actually received from the host community (Brown 2013).

With regard to sociolinguistic variants, SA learners were found to use them more frequently in conversation, even though they did not approach NS norms. Moreover, the acquisition of these variants has been gauged to be connected to the social stigma associated to them. Indeed, Mougeon *et al.* (2010) mentioned that there are two types of informal variants: vernacular variants and mildly marked ones. While the first type does not seem easy to acquire, the second type appears to be developed and also retained upon completion of an SA experience. Mougeon *et al.* (2010) includes PMs into the category of vernacular variants. The inclusion in this category is not surprising considering the strong social connotation (i.e. social class, age, gender) that can be associated to the use of a certain marker. Moreover, PMs generally contribute to more informality in conversation since they mainly belong to the sphere of conversation.

With regard to SLA studies, PMs do not seem to have been frequently investigated. However, research to date appears to posit that L2 learners do not use PMs extensively in conversation and this finding may be ascribed to the input they received in the classroom. Thus, a longitudinal analysis from an SA perspective can provide better insights into PM's use in the L2 as well as the factors that may aid their production. Moreover, with reference to their use, learners seem to rely on a speech management function, rather than a personal attitude, which is probably in line with their conversational needs. It will therefore be interesting to assess whether these functions can change over time as a consequence of naturalistic exposure to the TL.

In conclusion, this dissertation, combining insights from the variationist perspective on SLA research and L2 pragmatics, will analyse the use of a selected number of PMs[31] in the oral production of 30 individuals before and after their sojourn in Ireland. As previously mentioned, these linguistic items can be investigated at the pragmatic level[32], in terms of the function they perform in communication, as well as they can be subject to sociolinguistic analysis (Beeching 2016; Fedriani and Sansò 2017). Before presenting a

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[31] These linguistic items, as it will be further developed in Chapter 4, have been selected using a corpus-based approach.

[32] As will be developed further in forthcoming chapters, this study will mainly focus on the pragmatic functions of these linguistic items and will relate the results of the analysis to a number of social factors, which may have helped their emergence or more widespread use in the learner language.

detailed description of the study design (Chapter 4), an overview of linguistic and extra-linguistic factors which may affect language acquisition and development during an SA experience will be provided in the following chapter. This analysis will be useful in order to ascertain whether some of these variables may have affected the linguistic outcomes of the participants who participated in the current study.

Chapter 3

Factors intervening in language learning

As previously discussed, SA Research has hitherto predominantly focused on assessing the role of the SA learning context in the results for L2 learners. However, as also stressed in chapter 1, SA research to date has also been characterised by inconclusive, and sometimes contradictory findings on the effects of this learning context on a number of language skills. This variety may be linked to, as Grey *et al.* (2015) claimed, learner internal individual differences that are likely to interact with the learning context and, subsequently, with L2 learning outcomes. Indeed, SA-related gains are not always shown to be evenly distributed among students (Kinginger 2008) and the SA context itself even appears to intensify "individual differences in achievement" (Kinginger 2011: 58). Therefore, together with an analysis of possible language gains, recent SA research has also attempted to respond to the intriguing question of why some learners are more successful than others while abroad by considering the conditions which may lead "certain students [to] thrive while others [to] founder" (Kinginger 2011: 58).

These factors may be related to their previous background knowledge of the TL or the exposure to it in their sojourn abroad (linguistic factors), characteristics of the learning context itself (contextual features), as well as a series of individual variables. As Coleman (2013) also maintained, "individual variability" is a wide-ranging notion which embraces a number of cognitive, affective, and biographical factors that vary "from one individual to another, from classroom to naturalistic use, from task to task, and from moment to moment" (Coleman 2013: 26). Thus, a detailed analysis on the role of these factors in learning and pragmatic development inevitably leads to the unpacking of the theoretical abstraction of 'language learners'. Indeed, as stressed by Kinginger (2013a), participants' identities in SLA research have been often reduced to the single dimension of 'language learners' and SLA researchers have tended to pay "more attention to the process of acquisition than to the flesh-and-blood individuals who are doing the learning" (Kramsch 2009: 2) Consequently, a more comprehensive and nuanced account of their SA sojourns gives deeper insight into the totality of their SA experiences and, more specifically, permits researchers to consider these individuals as "whole people" with "whole lives" (Coleman 2013: 33).

In the next sections, an outline of a number of linguistic and extralinguistic factors, which may aid or hinder SLA in an SA context, will be presented, by referring to a number of studies conducted within this learning context. The analysis of these factors will provide insight into the effects of each variable on the linguistic and pragmatic development of learners in SA contexts and will lead to a better understanding of the variables considered for the study design of this dissertation. As will be further explained in chapter 4, the study has relied on constant variables in order to ascertain the effects of a specific number of factors in relation to the oral production of PMs in the L2.

3.1 Linguistic factors

3.1.1. Onset proficiency

The outcomes of the SA experience may depend on the level of proficiency in the L2 upon arrival in the TL community. Indeed, one of the key issues of contemporary SA research is whether the SA may occur at any stage of L2 development or whether there is an optimal onset level of proficiency required to aid the exploitation of the potential of this learning context. Collentine (2009) referred to the growing consensus around the notion that students' gains during SA are influenced by their initial L2 level and, more specifically, there appears to exist a threshold level that learners need to possess prior to their SA experience for substantial acquisition abroad to take place. This assumption has been investigated both in relation to linguistic gains as well as with reference to learners' development of pragmatic competence. This section will briefly mention the results of a number of studies conducted in both areas of these language skills.

With regard to linguistic gains, several studies (Segalowitz and Freed 2004; DeKeyser 2010; Kang 2014; Grey *et al.* 2015) claimed that students with a more advanced onset proficiency level are well poised to benefit the most from the SA experience. Segalowitz and Freed (2004), in a study conducted with 40 speakers of English studying Spanish in an SA and AH context, found that an initial threshold level of basic word recognition and lexical access processing abilities may be necessary for oral proficiency and fluency to develop. According to DeKeyser (2010), a solid background knowledge of L2 grammar is essential for many language learners to develop fluency once they begin frequent interactions with NSs because a certain level of declarative knowledge can maximise the potential to proceduralise language skills during an SA experience (cf. DeKeyser 2010,

2014). Grey *et al.* (2015), in a study on L2 Spanish, found that advanced learners improved their accuracy and speed of judging morphosyntactic patterns and lexical items even after a short SA stay (i.e. five weeks in Barcelona).

Findings of another recent study by Kang (2014) also seem to offer support for the threshold-level. The study was conducted with Korean learners of English of different levels of proficiency (high, intermediate, low level) in an eight-week SA sojourn in an English-speaking country. In line with studies mentioned above, the intermediate-level students benefitted particularly in terms of their speaking abilities, whereas low-level learners' oral skills remained largely unchanged. However, the researcher also found that high-level learners, notwithstanding a number of improvements, did not substantially enhance their aural language skills after the SA sojourn. These results were in line with other studies (Llanes and Muñoz 2009; Juan-Garau 2014), which found that in pre- and post- tests SA advanced level learners do not show extensive and significant changes because they already have considerable linguistic resources before the SA experience.

Kang ascribed these results to the goals of the learners and their conversational needs. Indeed, participants at a more advanced level affirmed to be more concerned with familiarising themselves with grammar, discourse structures and vocabulary relevant to authentic communication in the TL community, which led them to mainly rely on the receptive rather than the productive aspect of learning. On the contrary, the students at an intermediate level sought active participation with members of the TL community, which resulted in a more self-confident use of the language and gains in the aural skills upon completion of the SA experience. Whereas, students at a lower level did not avail of the same exposure due to their limited language resources and the consequent language anxiety associated with it. Thus, although learners do not need to be advanced L2 users to fully benefit from the SA experience, a threshold level can be theorised, as limited language resources can be a hindrance to TL contact. At the same time, a very advanced level of proficiency cannot be postulated as a crucial factor for language gains, as learners may tend to focus on a number of specific skills, rather an overall improvement in language skills.

With regard to the role of onset proficiency on pragmatic competence, results have been also quite diverse. A number of studies on requests (Félix- Brasdefer 2007; Otcu and Zeyrek 2008; Göy *et al.* 2012) assessed a proficiency effect on the pragmatic competence of the speakers. More specifically, Félix- Brasdefer (2007) found that the directness of

requests was strongly correlated with an increase in proficiency. Otcu and Zeyrek (2008) gauged that low proficiency learners tended to rely mainly on formulaic utterances, whereas with an increase in proficiency level, learners' use of requests became more creative and expressive. Moreover, the advanced group was found to use more lexical (i.e. please, I'm afraid, possibly) and syntactic downgraders (i.e. Could you…?, Would you mind if…?). Similarly, Göy *et al.* (2012), suggest that the beginner learners underuse syntactic and lexical/phrasal downgraders in their requests' production, with the exception of the politeness marker 'please'. With regard to PMs, Wei (2011)[33] posited a link between a more advanced level of proficiency and a more widespread use of PMs in the learners' oral production.

However, other studies presented different findings in relation to the proficiency effect. With reference to politeness markers, for instance, Hernández (2016) found no extensive differences in the use of politeness markers between intermediate and advanced students of L2 Spanish in a short-term SA sojourn of four weeks. Similar results were reached by Shively and Cohen (2008) in their study on requests and apologies in L2 Spanish. With regard to receptive pragmatics, Taguchi (2009) found no significant in the comprehension of indirect opinions and refusals difference between intermediate and advanced learners. However, a proficiency effect was still found in relation to beginner-level students, because advanced and intermediate students scored significantly higher.

In conclusion, the overarching findings of the studies mentioned in this sub-section may lead one to conclude that, although students with higher levels of proficiency are often anecdotally thought to be the ones who can make the most progress abroad, the majority of studies mentioned in this sub-section appear to contradict this widespread belief. More specifically, students with a more advanced level of proficiency upon arrival in the TL community did not show significant and extensive differences in terms of language gains at the end of the SA experience. This tendency may be explained by a) the extensive linguistic resources (Llanes and Muñoz 2009; Juan- Garau 2014) which make their progress appear less striking; b) their goals and conversation needs during the SA experience (Kang 2014), which may not necessarily be aimed at active participation within the TL community.

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[33] The study was described in §2.3.3.

At the pragmatic level, the results to date seem to share a number of features typical of the studies conducted on aural language gains. The overarching findings show extensive differences in terms of pragmatic competence between low level students and more advanced students in relation to the formulaic use of language (Octu and Zeyrek 2008), internal modification of requests (Octu and Zeyrek 2008; Göy *et al.* 2012), directness of requests (Félix-Brasdefer 2007), as well as the comprehension of indirect opinions and refusals (Taguchi 2009). However, striking differences between students at intermediate and advanced level have not been found (Shively and Cohen 2008; Taguchi 2009; Hernández 2016). Thus, the assumption of a threshold level which may favour the noticing (cf. Noticing Hypothesis, Schmidt 1990, 1993) and development of pragmatic knowledge can be still posited.

A correlation with a more advanced proficiency level was found for the production of PMs (Wei 2011). The results of this study can also be interpreted in light of the findings of the study by Kang (2014). Indeed, advanced learners already possess extensive linguistic resources of the TL and their main aim is to acquire skills for more authentic communication. This may lead them to avoid embarrassing situations in which their requests may sound a bit brusque or inappropriate, as well as to use linguistic items which are not necessarily linked to certain linguistic needs but for the effect of sounding more natural and spontaneous in conversation. Therefore, advanced learners may be more inclined to acquire and use L2 PMs in conversation.

In conclusion, although learners do not need to be advanced L2 users to fully benefit from the SA experience, a threshold level may be still theorised in order to fully exploit the potential of an SA learning context. Therefore, as will be discussed further in chapter 4, the participants chosen for this this research were neither too weak nor too strong and had an overall onset proficiency level of intermediate/upper-intermediate upon arrival in Ireland. Although no test was administered to assess participants' proficiency level upon arrival, an idea of their overall proficiency level was available by the English language course that the participants attended. Indeed, all participants registered for part-time English language courses while in Ireland, and the registration process involved a short written and oral test to determine their entry level. The Erasmus students were attending these courses, in addition to credit courses, at an Irish university, whereas au pairs were attending courses in different Irish language schools. This information about the

participants was indicative of their general proficiency level upon arrival and allowed some homogeneity among participants in terms of onset proficiency.

3.1.2 Mother tongue (L1) and cross-linguistic influence (CLI)

In addition to the learner's onset proficiency level, the speaker's mother tongue (L1) may also play a role in the learning outcomes upon completion of an SA experience. Hence, when analysing all linguistic factors that may intervene in the learning outcomes, the learners' L1 is indeed a variable that needs to be considered and taken into account. Languages can be typologically related or distant and the relationship between L1 and L2 may affect the acquisition of the second language, as Ringbom (2006: 1) stated:

> If you learn a language closely related to your L1, prior knowledge will be consistently useful, but if the languages are very distant, not much prior knowledge is relevant. What matters to the language learner is language proximity, i.e. similarities, not its negative, language distance, i.e. differences (Ringbom 2006: 1).

The relationship between L1 and L2 has been traditionally referred to in SLA as cross-linguistic influence (CLI) or language transfer. In SLA, the knowledge of the speakers' L1 can indeed have a facilitative or inhibitive effect on the progress of the learners in acquiring or mastering a new language. Traditionally, the facilitative effect is commonly known as positive transfer, whereas the inhibitive effect is referred to as negative transfer or interference (Odlin 2013). The issue of what is likely to be transferred from the L1 and how the mechanism of CLI works has given rise to a series of linguistic models and hypotheses. In this sub-section, a number of theories will be briefly mentioned. The literature on the topic has been prolific and probably too vast to be adequately covered in this sub-section, which is primarily meant to provide an overview of a series of intervening factors in the language learning process, rather than focusing on a specific variable.

The notion of transfer was arguably first invoked by the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) (Lado 1957), a theory which attempted to predict the likelihood of linguistic transfer in SLA considering the correlations and dissimilarities between various aspects of the two languages taken into consideration. Essentially, the two main tenets of this theory were that a) the principal barrier to L2 learning was the interference of the L1 system with the second system and b) that the major source of errors in learners' L2 performance was directly attributable to interference from the L1 of the speaker. This

theory was in vogue in the 1950s and 1960s and was deeply rooted within the behaviourist approach, whereby learning was equated to 'habit forming'. According to behaviourists, as Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) maintained, habits were constructed through repeated association between stimulus and response. Consequently, according to the CAH, in SLA the habits of the L1 were believed to be transferred and regarded as interfering with the newly acquired ones of the L2. If the systems were similar, positive transfer was supposed to occur. Conversely, differences between the two systems were believed to negatively affect L2 learning and production.

In the 1970s the CAH became theoretically untenable. The hypothesis fell into disfavour due to Chomsky's (1965) claims about the nature of learning within a cognitive perspective and the new orthodoxy in vogue at the time, which stressed that errors may be explained in developmental terms, rather than just being the result of L1 transfer. Hence, as Benson (2002) illustrated, linguists started considering other facets of this issue and, as a result, the notion of language transfer is currently a much more complex phenomenon than hitherto believed. It is neither the only reason for error, nor does it always lead to error. Conversely, as Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008) mentioned, the effects of transfer can also be positive and can furthermore accelerate language acquisition. Indeed, similarities and differences between L1 and L2 can lead to the underproduction, overproduction or simply the preference for certain linguistic structures, but not necessarily the errors (Jarvis and Pavlenko 2008: 11).

However, transfer effects are not only limited to language forms but also include the ways in which the language is used to perform pragmatic functions. This sub-section will outline a number of studies conducted on pragmatic competence in SA contexts. The overarching findings seem to posit that this learning context has been found to positively affect language learning in relation to L1 transfer. For example, Barron (2003) found that at the end of a one-year SA experience, learners tended to transfer less from their L1 when attempting to mitigate requests. Likewise, Chang (2009), in a study conducted with SA and AH students on refusals in L2 English, found that although transfer was still evident for both groups, L1 influence was less evident for the SA students. Hernández (2016) also made a number of insightful remarks about L1 transfer in her study on requests. More specifically, the researcher ascribed the lesser use of hearer-oriented requests to a possible L1 transfer owing that Spanish is characterised by a preference for speaker-oriented requests.

With regard to the acquisition of sociolinguistic variants, Mougeon *et al.* (2010), in a study conducted in an immersion setting, assumed that L1 transfer can play a role. More specifically, the overarching finding of their study showed that when the L1 of the speakers possessed a variant which had a morphological and semantic counterpart in French, the learners were found to use the sociolinguistic variant in question more frequently. Similar findings have been claimed by the study conducted by Rehner (2005) which was described in §2.3.3. More specifically, the researcher posited that L1 transfer was one of the main variables that triggered the production of PMs under examination in her study.

With regard to studies conducted on PMs, the results presented by Lafford (1995) also pointed to a number of relevant considerations regarding the role of transfer in the production of L2 PMs. More specifically, Lafford (1995), in a study on L2 Spanish already described in §2.3.3, found that speakers tended to mainly use fillers belonging to their L1. Indeed, together with the use of a number of Spanish fillers, such as 'este', 'entonces' and 'pues', the English speaking participants were found to mainly rely on the use of 'uhm' as a filler, that is "the prototypical utterance used by speakers of English when searching for the word they want or when taking time to compose their next thought" (Lafford 1995: 106). These results led the researcher to conclude that a semester abroad was probably not enough for her participants to rely solely on native-like stalling phenomena in the L2 and speakers had to rely on some linguistic items belonging to their L1.

In conclusion, the L1 of the speaker as well as the CLI between L1 and L2 may play a role in the outcomes of the learning process. This section, starting from a definition of CLI and an outline of a number of theories in vogue in the late 1960s, has assessed the role of transfer in relation to a number of SA studies, with specific reference to pragmatic competence and language variation. The main findings appear to highlight a positive effect of this learning context, both in relation to the production of requests (Barron 2003) and refusals (Chang 2009) as well as the emergence of sociolinguistic variants (Mougeon *et al.* 2010) and PMs (Rehner 2005) in conversation. However, other studies (Lafford 1995; Hernández 2016) also ascertained that there were negative effects of L1 transfer in the production of their participants. The former (Lafford 1995) concluded that a six-month SA experience was not long enough to develop native-like stalling phenomena and participants in this study tended to mainly use L1 fillers in their L2 production. The latter

(Hernández 2016) surmised that there exists a transfer effect in relation to the speaker- vs hearer-oriented aspects of speech because the participants tended to produce more speaker-oriented requests, which were typical of the speakers' L1.

Thus, because the transfer from the L1 may affect the production of linguistic structures and the use of pragmatic functions in the L2, the present study was conducted on speakers of the same L1, i.e. Italian. This choice, as will be further explained in the following chapter, was made in order to compare two groups of individuals with similar conditions except their *raison d'être* in the TL community in order to assess the effect of this variable on the linguistic phenomena under scrutiny here. The next sub-section will deal with language input and the instruments that have hitherto been used in order to assess language contact in SA settings.

3.1.3 Input & TL contact

As has been stressed in the first chapter, the notable difference between SA learning settings and classroom contexts is the higher quality and greater quantity of contextualised input which is possible to have in the former. Lightbown and Spada (2006) defined input as "the language the learner is exposed to (either written or spoken) in the environment" (Lightbown and Spada 2006: 201). In SA contexts, the quality of the input available to the L2 learner is inevitably much richer than that available to the L2 learner in the FL classroom, whereas in the AH setting, language learning is often related to a few hours per week within the walls of a classroom.

As Sanz (2014) maintained, classic SLA theories, such as Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985), Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1996) and Swain's Output Hypothesis (1995), appear to corroborate the widespread belief that SA contexts can provide optimal conditions for language learning and development. According to Krashen's hypothesis, SA contexts offer the learner rich and meaningful input and force the learner to keep focused on the message, which may consequently result in language learning. Moreover, the context provides more opportunities for interaction which can facilitate SLA as they connect "input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways" (Long 1996: 152). Finally, if analysed through the lenses of Swain's Output Hypothesis, this context appears to be beneficial as it "pushes the learner to produce, and consequently to move from semantic processing to syntactic processing" (Sanz 2014: 2), which may result in learning something new about the language.

Thus, as Juan-Garau (2015) also stressed, an SA learning context permits the learner to pay attention to relevant linguistic input, to embed common speech acts in daily routines and encounters, and, consequently, to contextualise learning in a vast array of authentic situations, enabling better memorisation and retrieval. However, while the SA context affords opportunities for learners to be exposed to comprehensible input from a plethora of TL speakers and to engage in TL use while interacting and negotiating meaning in the L2, learners need to seize the contact opportunities that the SA contexts offer in order to enhance their speaking abilities. Moreover, due to this plurality and diversity of input, assessing effective language exposure or TL contact in such a context has been a real challenge for SLA researchers.

The traditional forms of assessment, as mentioned in §1.2.3, have been questionnaires or daily/weekly journals, compiled retrospectively by the participants. Among those, the most common instrument used by SLA researchers has been the LCP, developed by Freed et al. (2004). This questionnaire, as stressed in §1.2.3, was mainly aimed at quantitatively assessing language contact in different contexts, with different interlocutors, and for different tasks outside the classroom. Over the last decade, it has been used as a reference model with a number of adaptations (Hernández 2010; Briggs 2015). However, a very recent appraisal of the LCP (Fernández and Tapia 2016) has evidenced a number of issues in the reliability of this instrument. More specifically, the two researchers posited that the LCP failed to assess the complexities of interactions as well as the fluctuations in terms of language engagement which may occur over time during the SA sojourn. In other words, according to the two researchers, the instrument failed to assess the qualitative aspect of interactions.

Moreover, a number of structural concerns have also been highlighted, such as the lack of clarity to a number of questions, which often resulted in a series of inconsistent answers. For example, Fernández and Tapia (2016) affirmed that the total number of hours in which learners were involved using the L2 for specific tasks were surprisingly higher than the overall language use which had been claimed. However, the new version proposed by Fernández and Tapia (2016) also presented some issues. As the researchers also stressed, this type of data collection required intense involvement on part of the participants who were asked to write down their comments or express them orally while filling in the questionnaire. Thus, it may be debatable whether the same type of data collection can be easily reproduced with volunteers and over a longer SA sojourn. Indeed,

the issue of the length and the time necessary to complete questionnaires has always been an issue for the SLA researchers, especially when dealing with volunteers and in longitudinal studies.

In addition to the difficulties in creating instruments which can take into account the plurality of theoretical issues as well as the feasibility of these instruments for the collection of empirical data, the overarching findings of the SA research aimed at assessing the effect of input on language gains also appear to be rather ambiguous and somewhat inconclusive. Indeed, linking local engagement to different measures of language development has not "always yield[ed] easily interpretable results" (Kinginger 2013a: 5). If, on the one hand, studies have found a positive correlation between engagement in the TL community and L2 development (Kim 2000; Hernández 2010), on the other hand, a number of studies assessed minimal or no significant relationship between the two (Segalowitz and Freed 2004, Magnan and Back 2007).

Kim (2000), quoted in Shively and Cohen (2008), quantitatively assessed the correlation between the input which learners are exposed to and L2 pragmatic development. Kim found that a relationship between the amount of time learners spent conversing with NSs and target-like performance in L2 requests and apologies. This finding led the researcher to conclude that the more time learners spent speaking with locals, the more pragmatically target-like they became. Hernández (2010) reported that, although a number of students struggled in establishing contact with members of the TL community, the majority of the participants managed to use the L2 outside the classroom in a different array of activities. More specifically, the students who reported having the most contact with the L2 culture developed their speaking abilities to a greater extent than the students who did not have as much contact.

Conversely, Segalowitz and Freed (2004) concluded that the "amount of in-class and out-of-class contact appeared to have only a weak and indirect impact on oral gains" (Segalowitz and Freed 2004: 192) and ascribed these findings to the fact that a semester abroad was not long enough for the participants in terms of substantial language contact. Moreover, the conversations were limited to 'chitchat', greetings and short formulaic exchanges rather than conversations where they had to hold the floor for a long time. Similarly, Magnan and Back (2007), in a study on L2 French, ascertained that, despite some speaking improvement during a six-month stay, social interaction with French speakers did not correlate with student gains in speaking proficiency. Based on the results

of a post program questionnaire, the two researchers argued that a number of participants might not have invested sufficient time in the kinds of social relationships with French speakers that were needed to support sustained speaking improvement.

Another issue that has been recently put forward is the effect of technology on social participation within the TL community. As Kinginger (2013) stressed, the mythical idea of 'cultural immersion' within the TL community is no longer valid and is mainly associated with the memories of the researchers and of their own successful sojourns of a few decades ago (Kinginger 2013: 6). According to this mythical idea, a sojourn abroad involved temporary separation from home-based social networks and a total immersion in the local language and culture. Conversely, the era when SA students are fully immersed in the TL culture has ended and today SA students retain strong ties with home because of readily accessible technology at their fingertips. Indeed, as stressed by Hofer *et al.* (2016), the potential to digitally connect with others has grown at such an unprecedented rate that it is possible to connect with anyone at any time, whether through calling or texting or various message systems, as well as utilising a vast array of social media. However, the researchers (Hofer *et al.* 2016) also stressed that, although there is a growing sense of concern about how this can potentially influence SA sojourns, the research on the subject is still rather limited and there is a need for more investigation in this regard.

In conclusion, as also stressed by Fernández and Tapia (2016), although the social networks that learners manage to establish during SA/RA experiences are crucial to their learning outcomes, the assessment of language contact and the amount and type of input of which learners can avail themselves during an SA/RA are still an area of SA research in need of further exploration. Indeed, research to date has reached inconclusive findings both in terms of the effects of this linguistic factor on language outcomes as well as in relation to the reliability of the instruments that have been hitherto used as a form of assessment. Moreover, another aspect that SA research has started investigating is the effect of technology on SA experiences. The technological devices which learners have now available permit them to keep strong ties with home, which may affect their social participation within the TL community and, consequently, the amount and type of language exposure that they can avail themselves of during their SA sojourn.

As previously mentioned, this dissertation will address the issue of input and language contact by examining the variable of learner status in the TL community. Indeed, this

factor can have potential implications for the scope, type, frequency and characteristics of interactions as well as the range of L2 interlocutors who engage with the learners. This factor is closely intertwined with contextual factors while abroad, as a different learner status may result in different contexts of learning. The next section will focus on a number of contextual features and, more specifically, will consider the issue of length of stay (LoS) abroad, type of living arrangements during the SA sojourns and the different types of social networks that a learner can have while residing temporarily in the L2 community.

3.2 Contextual features

The role of SA contexts in language learning outcomes has been frequently stressed throughout this dissertation and SA research to date has primarily analysed the linguistic outcomes of an SA sojourn in relation to another learning context, i.e. the classroom environment. However, as has been previously mentioned, SA experiences differ and the effects may vary depending on the type of SA sojourn. Therefore, an analysis of the contextual features which may result in different learning outcomes appears to be necessary in order to have a deeper understanding of the effects of the SA learning contexts themselves on certain language skills. This perspective appears to be particularly revealing for the current study as it is characterised by a non-traditional study design. Indeed, rather than relying on a comparative analysis between SA and AH students, this study has focused on SA contexts, by comparing two different experiences abroad within the same SA/RA context. Since the context of learning has such a pivotal role in the learning outcomes, this section will investigate a number of features of SA/RA contexts in order to provide an overview of the possible variables which may intervene in the learning outcomes. Special attention will be given to length of stay, living arrangements and social networks.

3.2.1 Length of stay (LoS)

As has been stressed in §1.1.2, SA experiences encompass sojourns that range from a limited number of weeks to a full academic year and, consequently, may produce different findings as a result. Given such differences in LoS, as mentioned by Jensen and Howard (2014), it is unclear whether there is a correlation between limited linguistic development that a number of studies observed and the short duration of the SA experience. More

specifically, it is still uncertain whether "the duration of SA was not sufficient for the learners to evidence significant gains, or whether SA genuinely did not impact development irrespective of the time period investigated" (Jensen and Howard 2014: 32) However, as also mentioned by Llanes (2011), despite the key role that this variable has in relation to SA linguistic development, the research conducted on this contextual feature is rather scanty and more research is probably needed for a fully-fledged understanding of the impact of this variable on language learning in SA contexts.

This section will deal with this issue by referring to a number of recent studies conducted according to an SA perspective. The main findings seem to endorse the idea that "the longer the stay the better", i.e. that extensive differences in linguistic and pragmatic competence can be evidenced solely after a long-term SA stay (Dwyer 2004; Segalowitz and Freed 2004; Isabelli-García 2006; Llanes and Muñoz 2009; Davidson 2010; Serrano *et al.* 2012). However, as Castañeda and Zirger (2011) affirmed, despite this general consensus, short-term programs offer the significant trade-off of attracting a greater number of students. Indeed, as mentioned by Donnelly-Smith (2009), quoted in Castañeda and Zirger (2011), short-term stays are instead very popular because "they are generally more affordable […], they appeal to students who might not be able or willing to commit to a semester or a year abroad, and they allow students […] to study abroad without falling behind" (Donnelly-Smith 2009: 12).

However, despite the steady increase in the participation in short-term stays (Castañeda and Zirger 2011), their effects on language skills have not been extensively investigated in SA research (Llanes 2011) and definitive conclusions regarding the optimal duration of SA sojourns cannot be easily drawn. Moreover, recent studies (Avello and Lara 2014; Lara *et al.* 2015; Hernández 2016) have started to fill the gap in this regard and seem to dispel the general consensus in that they posit that short-term SA sojourns can be fertile ground for the development of linguistic and pragmatic competence as well. This section will attempt to assess the effect of this variable by briefly outlining the results of the studies mentioned at the beginning of this section.

The results of the studies conducted by Dwyer (2004) and Segalowitz and Freed (2004) seem to support the folklinguistic belief that language gains are evident after long-term SA stays. More specifically, Dwyer (2004) concluded that "the greatest gains […] are made by full year students" (Dwyer 2004: 161). Similarly, Segalowitz and Freed (2004) posited that a semester abroad may be not enough for establishing contact with speakers

of the TL community. Isabelli-García (2006) explored the influence of students' motivation, social networks and attitudes during long-term. The researcher found that "being in a study abroad environment for an extended period of time allowed the learners opportunities to create, foster, and maintain motivation and social networks within the target culture" (Isabelli-García 2006: 256). Even a small difference in LoS has been found to affect the development of linguistic features. Llanes and Muñoz (2009) compared the oral fluency gains of two groups of SA participants who spent three *versus* four weeks abroad. Statistically significant differences were found between those participants who spent three weeks abroad and those who spent four weeks abroad, assuming that even a week difference in LoS affected oral fluency of the participants.

More recently, Davidson (2010) affirmed that "second language (L2) gain across skills is strongly correlated with longer duration immersion programming" (Davidson 2010: 6). The study was conducted with 1,881 U.S. learners of Russian, participating in formal language study programmes at Russian universities for periods of 2, 4, and 9 months. The study examined learner development in terms of speaking, listening and reading by means of pre- and post-programme test score differences. Finally, Serrano *et al.* (2012) employed a longitudinal design to analyse the spoken and written progress made by 14 Spanish-speaking learners of English during a full academic year at a British university. The researchers assessed that improvement in written production is more likely to occur over longer time periods, whereas gains in oral production may be evident after as little as a few months.

Although these findings may lead one to presume that longer programmes have the potential to benefit more (Churchill and DuFon 2006), recent studies seem to disprove the belief that "the longer the stay the merrier". Avello and Lara (2014) in a study conducted with two groups of Catalan/Spanish learners of English, did not find extensive differences in terms of segmental production accuracy between SA students who resided in the TL community for three months and students whose SA duration was six months. Hernández (2016), in a longitudinal study conducted with English NSs in a four-week SA sojourn in Madrid, found improvements in the development of requests over time. More specifically, the researcher concluded that the findings of the study were not dissimilar from previous studies conducted over a longer period of stay. Lara *et al.* (2015), in a comparative analysis between Catalan learners of English in a three-month *versus* a six-month stay, did not find more gains for the longer period in terms of CAF. Conversely,

contrary to general expectations, the shorter SA group was found to produce more accurate speech. However, this group had also a higher onset proficiency level and outperformed the other group in the pre- and post-test.

Thus, the effects of a single feature or variable cannot be taken in isolation and the factors that are being presented in this chapter are more often than not intertwined and dependent on one another. Similar assumptions were made by Castañeda and Zirger (2011). The two researchers found that during a short stay abroad their participants managed to interact with members of the TL community to a greater extent. The researchers ascribed these findings to the type of living arrangement which helped to establish social networks in a short stay. However, students were hosted by families who had never had such an experience before. Therefore, it may be assumed that the novice effect also played a role and may explain why social networks of these students were limited to their host families and their family members.

In conclusion, results on the optimal duration of SA experiences have oftentimes led to inconclusive and, more recently, even unexpected results. Thus, LoS is still an issue that needs further investigation from SLA researchers, being the factor of time such a crucial variable on the learning outcomes. Indeed, as Lara *et al.* (2015) surmised, an in-depth investigation on the optimal SA duration will deepen our understanding of the effect of this variable and will, consequently, allow practitioners to develop better practices to respond to the needs of the learners as well as to receive a worthwhile return on the investment made by institutions and policies. However, the quest for the optimal duration has to come to terms with practical issues, as not all students can avail of a long-term SA sojourn.

The majority of SA experiences seems to last on average one semester (Llanes 2011, European Commission 2015). This duration has also been considered for this study. This LoS, apart from arguably being the most common among European students, was also based on practical reasons, which concerned the comparability of two different SA programs as well as the retention of participants over a longitudinal study, as will be discussed in chapter 4. The next sub-section will be devoted to the analysis of another pivotal contextual feature, i.e. living arrangements. As will be further developed in forthcoming sections, the focal participants in this study were residing in different accommodation types during their SA/RA sojourn in Ireland.

3.2.2 Living arrangements

During their SA sojourn, learners mainly reside either in homestays or student residences and private houses. Homestays are often credited with aiding FL learning more than the other housing arrangements because conventional wisdom anecdotally has it that they can provide greater connection and integration within host communities and, consequently, lead to more language gains. However, SA research conducted in this regard does not appear to fully corroborate this folk belief. Indeed, as Kinginger *et al.* (2016) affirmed, "the putative home stay advantage has been notoriously difficult to prove" (Kinginger *et al.* 2016: 34) as results can vary on a case-by-case basis. As mentioned in the previous sub-section, for instance, homestays may result in being extremely helpful in short-term stays but the novice effect or the tranquil small-town environment (Castañeda and Zirger 2011) can also be variables which may affect how students are received by the host family and the types of interactions they are going to have with the family.

Indeed, the experience of living with a host family may be positive or negative depending on the type of relationship that is established with the members of these families. SA research hitherto conducted with reference to homestays has been extremely controversial. On the one hand, a number of studies concluded that the homestay setting aided learners to reap linguistic benefits (Allen *et al.* 2006; Hernandez 2010); on the other hand, studies also showed that this type of living arrangement did not extensively affect language outcomes upon completion of the experience (Magnan and Lafford 2012; Di Silvio *et al.* 2014). More specifically, research has pointed to a very limited use of the L2 language in the homestay environment (Rivers 1998; Segalowitz and Freed 2004; DuFon 2006; Iino 2006; Pryde 2014). This sub-section will briefly review a number of recent studies conducted to assess the effect of this variable on the language outcomes of SA students.

A correlation between language gains and homestay environment was found by Allen *et al.* (2006) and Hernández (2010). Allen *et al.* (2006), quoted in Pinar (2016), in a comparative study conducted among students of different languages who lived in different living arrangements (host families, shared bedrooms, or student residences), found that the homestay environment resulted in more language gains as well as a higher level of identification with the target culture than other types of accommodation. Hernández (2010) also claimed that this living arrangement may impact on the learning outcomes. More specifically, the researcher found that out of 16 students who improved

on the SOPI (Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview), 15 students lived with host families. In contrast, 3 out of the 4 students who did not improve on the pre-test to post-test SOPI lived in private apartments with co-nationals.

Although this accommodation option is considered the most suitable because it provides more opportunities for interaction with NSs, the language effects of staying with host families are not always positive. Magnan and Lafford (2012) and Di Silvio *et al.* (2014), for example, are not in line with the findings of the studies previously described. Magnan and Lafford (2012), quoted in Pinar (2016), noted that the negative effects of a homestay setting on language outcomes can be ascribed to factors such as the lack of patience to communicate with low level learners or the lack of time of host families, given their busy daily schedule. Di Silvio *et al.* (2014) examined the relationship between learners' levels of satisfaction with their homestays and oral language gains on the OPI, but found mixed results; only a relatively weak positive relationship between learners' satisfaction with homestay living and their oral language gains was found.

As previously mentioned, a number of studies also attempted to assess the frequency and type of interactions in a homestay environment. According to Rivers (1998), the homestay often involves mundane dialogue and television watching, with students spending the majority of their time alone doing homework. Segalowitz and Freed (2004) found that the participants engaged only in short and formulaic conversations with their host family. DuFon (2006) showed that conversations with the host family were quite sporadic and tended to occur mainly over a short period of time such as during meals. Iino's (2006) recordings of interactions in homestay settings demonstrated that conversations were not totally authentic as family members used simplified language to communicate with learners of Japanese in an eight-week summer programme.

More recently, Pryde (2014) found that conversations in homestay setting resemble, to some extent, the classroom-type interactions. Indeed, the hosts in this study were found to assume the role of teachers being the ones who often initiated and controlled a conversation. More specifically, the conversation between hosts and guests were found to follow the IRE (Initiation, Response, Evaluation) pattern, typical of the classroom. The hosts were often the ones initiating a conversation, often asking questions (i.e. what's

this?[34]). The guests answered with a short and accurate response (i.e. um, a pair of scissors), which were followed by a follow-up move by the host, which was in the majority of cases positive (i.e. a pair of scissors. Yes, good, a pair of scissors). Negative feedback was almost absent in the conversations analysed. However, this conversation pattern was also found to change over time, with fewer initiations on the part of the hosts. Despite more initiations from the learners, extensive pragmatic gains were not present because the learners' starting moves were mainly restricted to formulaic initiations (i.e. how are you?).

In relation to student residences, Yang and Kim (2011) found that sharing a room with another student who is a NS does not mean more opportunities to interact and to improve communicative competence. These researchers showed the case of a Korean student who studied in the United States and who stayed in a dormitory at the university, where he assumed having more opportunities to practise the language with NSs. Conversely, the expectations of the NNS were not fulfilled. The NS showed little interest in conversations and did not seem interested in the development of linguistic competence of his Korean partner. As a result, the participant ended up spending free time with his co-nationals and did not demonstrate extensive language gains.

In conclusion, the different types of living arrangements can positively or negatively affect language learning. In particular, homestay accommodation, which has often been considered the accommodation type which may result in more language gains, has not always been proven to be so. The results of the homestay experience can be varied and depend on the type of relationship that is established with the members of those families, the amount of time that people involved spend together as well as the dynamics and quality of the interactions between host family members and the SA student.

With regard to the participants of the current study, their living arrangements differed. While the Erasmus students resided in student residences or in private apartments with other students, the au pairs lived with an Irish family. However, the experiences of the au pair group of this study may be dissimilar from the homestay experiences of the students mentioned in this literature review. Indeed, apart from being hosted by a local family, the au pairs were also working for the family in return for some pocket money. Thus, this

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[34] The example has been taken from Pryde (2014: 489)

research will also allow us to analyse whether a different learner status, even within the walls of the homestay setting, corresponds to a different experience in a homestay setting. Indeed, SA research to date has mainly focused on the language learner *tout court* and the au pair experience, to the best of hitherto found knowledge, appears to be quite under-researched in SA research.

The next section will provide a brief overview on the role of social networks in language learning outcomes. As previously mentioned, the type of residence abroad may have some effects on social networks. While homestay environments are often considered 'sheltered programmes' which do not favour the creation of varied bonds outside the family environments, student residences cannot be considered superior to homestays. Indeed, the case study by Yang and Kim (2011) showed that students tended to interact with co-nationals or fellow sojourners living in the same complex.

3.2.3 Social networks

The terms 'social networks' (cf. Milroy 1980) or 'community of practice' (cf. Lave and Wenger 1991) are often used to refer to social circles of individuals as well as the strength of the bonds between the members of these social circles (Milroy 1980). In SA contexts, especially in short-term stays, it may be difficult for the students to create new and diversified bonds, especially with members of the TL community. Lave and Wenger (1991) asserted that participation in a TL community generally starts at a peripheral level and gradually, through negotiating and being accepted by the community, the individual can engage in more meaningful learning experiences. This factor has also started to attract the attention of SLA researchers (Isabelli-García 2006; Dewey *et al.* 2012; Baker-Smemoe *et al.* 2014; McManus *et al.* 2014; Mitchell 2015; Mitchell *et al.* 2105) in order to assess how social networks can affect language use during SA sojourns as well as language gains upon completion of the experience. As Baker-Smemoe *et al.* (2014) stressed, these benefits depend not only on the number of people in one's social network but also in what kind of social relationships the individual can manage to develop.

The different types of socialisation patterns which may occur in SA contexts have been presented by Coleman (2013; 2015) with the model of the concentric circles (Figure 3). According to this model, students in an SA context begin creating social bonds by socialising with their co-nationals. With time and motivation, they add other non-locals (often other foreign students) to their social circles and they may, finally, create social

bonds with members of the TL community as well. One circle does not replace another; rather, the process is additive, with the previous circle broadening during the sojourn. However, the progression from social networks comprising exclusively co-nationals towards the L2-speaking local community is not universal, automatic or unidirectional. If contextual features (LoS, living arrangements) and individual variables (motivation, initiative or attitude) allow, SA students' social circles can include locals and reaching the outer circle is indeed what most learners strive for in SA contexts.

Figure 3. Coleman's concentric circles
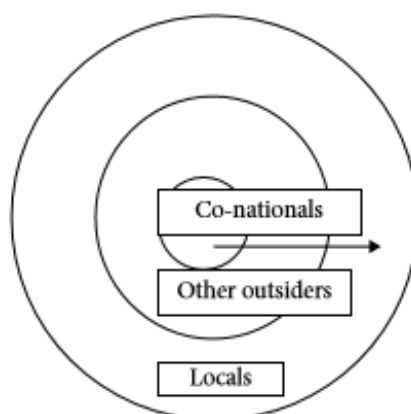
This sub-section will provide a brief outline of a number of recent studies conducted in this regard. Intuitively, there is a strong correlation between the creation of diversified social networks while abroad and language gains upon completion of the SA experience (Dewey *et al.* 2012; Baker-Smemoe *et al.* 2014). However, research to date has also demonstrated that social bonds beyond the inner circle (i.e. co-nationals) are also very difficult to create (Isabelli-García 2006; McManus *et al.* 2014; Mitchell 2015; Mitchell *et al.* 2015) The following paragraphs will analyse this factor further by briefly outlining the results of the studies mentioned above.

Positive correlations between social networks and language learning outcomes were assessed by Dewey *et al.* (2012) and Baker-Smemoe *et al.* (2014). Dewey *et al.* (2012) assessed the correlation between self-reported proficiency gains and self-reported social networks abroad in a study conducted on L2 Japanese. The researchers found that intensity and dispersion of social networks were among the most significant predictors of perceived language proficiency. The more social groups of the participants, the greater the gains they tended to indicate in speaking proficiency and the two variables of dispersion of social circles and intensity of relationships were found to be closely

intertwined. Moreover, language gains and the creation of social networks were also found to be characterised by a symbiotic relationship. Participants who had NSs in their social network tended to use the TL more, which consequently led to more perceived language gains. However, participants who felt they had made greater gains were also those who were more capable of making friendships with locals.

Similar results were found by Baker-Smemoe *et al.* (2014). The study was conducted with 100 English NSs across six different SA programs (Mexico, Spain, France, Egypt, Russia and China). In terms of social networks, the merit of the study lay in the attempt at assessing the quality of SA interactions. More specifically, the researchers examined the social networks of their participants in terms of the English proficiency of their friends, the network size and the dispersion of networks. The researchers found, counter-intuitively, that the proficiency level in English of the participants' friends aided the creation of social networks abroad. Indeed, most of the friends with some proficiency level in English were also learners who experienced an SA sojourn and, therefore, were sympathetic towards the participants and were glad to engage with them in a series of activities in their social groups. With regard to the network size, the results of the study pointed to more benefits for learners with smaller networks. Indeed, large networks tended to correspond with weaker ties and a decrease in the size of the participants' social networks tallied with higher intensity of relationships. The dispersal of social groups was also found to be a positive factor. Indeed, the greater the number of NS social groups, the more progress was found in L2 proficiency because of a diversification of input.

However, as also mentioned at the beginning of this sub-section, SA students may be eager to seek social interaction with members of the TL community but their expectations may not be totally fulfilled. As reported by McManus *et al.* (2014), Mitchell (2015) and Mitchell *et al.* (2015), upon completion of the experience, students regretted not having spent enough time with members of the TL community. As a result, SA learners may tend to isolate while abroad (Isabelli-García 2006) or keep using their L1 (Lafford 2006). Isabelli-García (2006) affirmed that students who experienced difficulties in establishing social networks in the TL community tended to adopt an ethnocentric attitude towards the target culture and were found to spend more time with their co-nationals. Consequently, they did not present extensive linguistic gains at the end of the SA experience. Lafford (2006), quoted in Pinar (2006), also posited that learners may not always feel the need for the interactions with NSs. Indeed, students were found to spend

their leisure time doing types of activities which did not require using the L2 and interaction with local people was almost non-existent. In these cases, hardly any effect on linguistic development or on communicative competence was observed.

Thus, moving towards the outer circle is a very difficult process and not all SA students can succeed in establishing strong ties with members of the TL community. However, a few exceptions have been also assessed in the literature to date and a number of students, although limited, managed to move beyond the international network to form closer local relationships. As McManus *et al.* (2014) affirmed, personal agency has been found to affect the local social structures of sojourners' placements. Thus, where individual participants had a valued skill to offer, together with the linguistic capability, networking with locals has been found to snowball. For instance, students with musical, artistic or sporting talent managed to go beyond the international social network in the LANGSNAP project (McManus *et al.* 2014*)*. Another example has been provided by Isabelli-García (2006). The student in question was involved in community life by participating in volunteer programmes, which allowed him to make local friends. This resulted in more language gains upon completion of the experience.

In conclusion, there seems to be a positive correlation between the creation of diversified social networks and language gains upon completion of an SA experience (Dewey *et al.* 2012; Baker-Smemoe *et al.* 2014). However, the dispersal of social circles and the intensity of relationships with people other than co-nationals or fellow sojourners, appears to be the exception rather than the norm (McManus *et al.* 2014; Mitchell 2015; Mitchell *et al.* 2015). On a general note, the majority of social bonds during an SA experience seems to happen within the inner circle (Coleman 2013, 2015) of co-nationals or within the international network of fellow sojourners. Although a number of exceptions to this general tendency has been assessed (McManus *et al.* 2014; Isabelli-García 2006), these cases appear to be a minority (McManus *et al.* 2014) and were mainly ascribed to the agency or a particular talent of the students in question.

The next section will be devoted to individual differences. As has been previously stressed, SA contexts present the SLA researcher with "a bewildering array of variable features" (Kinginger 2009: 5), which can be ascribed to the learning context and the opportunities of using the L2 as well as individual characteristics, which may aid or hinder the exploitation of the potential of this learning context. In the following sub-sections, a

number of individual variables will be analysed: age (§3.3.1), motivation and personality (§3.3.2), identity and gender (§3.3.3).

3.3. Individual variables

3.3.1 Biographical factors: age

Age in relation to SLA has often been investigated with reference to the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) (cf. Lennerberg 1967). This theory assumes that there seems to be a 'sensitive' or 'critical' period, ending approximately around puberty, during which L1 acquisition is more efficient. Thus, if acquisition does not occur in that timeframe, some aspects of language can still be learned but full mastery cannot be achieved. This theory has been then extended to SLA with the aim of establishing a link between the age of individuals' first exposure to an L2 and their ultimate attainment in that language. Over the years, research conducted in this regard has been the source of a long-standing debate. Supporters of CPH have argued that language learning which takes place outside of the critical period will inexorably be marked by non-native like features; whereas those who rejected the theory claimed that native-like attainment is still possible after the closing of the critical period (cf. Schouten 2009[35]).

However, while the debate about CPH and its role in SLA has been heated, the factor of 'age' has not been extensively investigated in SA Research. This limitation can be ascribed to the fact that SA researchers have in the main predominantly focused on third-level students who, consequently, did not present extensive differences in terms of age. Recent research has started to fill the gap by giving more attention to the SA experiences of young adolescents and children. More specifically, research in this regard has been conducted to assess the effects of age on SA sojourns in relation to oral and written skills (Llanes and Muñoz 2013) and pronunciation (Llanes 2016). This sub-section will briefly describe the studies mentioned in order to assess whether this variable may play a role in SA learning contexts.

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[35] Schouten (2009) provided a detailed overview of the studies which supported and contradicted the CPH in relation to SLA.

Llanes and Muñoz (2013) conducted a comparative study with four groups of participants, SA children and adults and AH children and adults, in order to assess the role of age and the learning context in relation to oral and written fluency, lexical and syntactic complexity and accuracy. Although the SA context was found to be more beneficial in terms of oral skills, the younger SA learners were the ones who presented the most extensive gains. Indeed, SA children experienced twice as many gains in oral fluency while abroad. On the contrary, SA adults showed greater improvement in the production of complex vocabulary. These findings were ascribed to more developed cognitive skills and the larger L1 lexicon of the adult participants. With regard to written measures, AH adults showed higher gains in fluency and syntactic complexity and the researchers ascribed these findings to the possibility of more writing practice at home. In conclusion, this comparative analysis evidenced the following: with regard to the child groups, the SA group presented significant improvement on most of the oral and written measures. On the contrary, the adult groups presented different language gains. More specifically, while SA adults showed a significant improvement on some of the oral measures, the AH adults presented a significant improvement on written measures. These overarching findings led the researchers to posit that age and the learning context are determinants of the language areas likely to undergo improvements.

A recent study (Llanes 2016) on Perceived Foreign Accent (PFA) reached similar conclusions. The study was conducted with eight young adolescents engaged in a two-month SA experience in Ireland and six adolescent students who learned English as an L2 in Barcelona. The participants were asked to describe a picture at three data collection times, namely prior to the SA group's departure to Ireland, immediately after their SA sojourn, and again a further year later. The excerpts were rated by a group of 11 NSs of English. The study found that only the SA group showed a significant improvement in L2 pronunciation between the pre- and the post-tests, and although neither of the groups presented a statistically significant difference on the post- and delayed post-tests, both groups scored higher on the delayed post-test than on the pre-test, especially the SA group, indicating that improvement in L2 pronunciation was durable. Thus, the hypothesis of the researcher that the SA group would significantly improve their L2 pronunciation (measured in terms of PFA) while the AH group would not, was confirmed. In addition, the results of the delayed post-test revealed that these gains were maintained even a year after the SA experience.

In conclusion, an effect regarding age can be posited in relation to the linguistic outcomes of participants who experienced an SA sojourn. However, the dearth of studies conducted in this direction cannot permit one to draw definitive conclusions and more research is needed in this regard to assess the effect of this variable in relation to SA stays. The limited number of studies to date can be related to the main tendencies of SA Research, which has tended to investigate the experiences of students at the tertiary level of education. Therefore, under these circumstances, the factor of 'age' did strongly impact on the results of the studies because participants have often been of the same age. However, as often stressed throughout this work, SA comprises different and disparate experiences and it may be a limitation to focus on the experiences of a sole group, i.e. university students. Thus, the experiences of young adolescents and of people who are experiencing SA sojourns later in life also need to be considered in order to deepen our understanding of the effect of age in SA Research.

This dissertation will enlarge the focus by comparing university students and au pairs. However, in terms of age, the two groups were quite homogeneous, being all participants in their 20s and 30s. Thus, an effect of this variable on the oral production of the learners in this study has not been assumed as the age range of the focal participants was not expansive enough to identify age-related differences in L2 gains over a semester of RA/SA sojourn. However, the role of age may be revealing for the social networks of participants while abroad and the production of the linguistic items under investigation in this study. As already mentioned in §2.3.3, Romero Trillo (2002) found a less frequent use of PMs among NS children and, therefore, it may be assumed that these linguistic items, even in the L1, are acquired when getting older. Since the group of au pairs mainly related to children during their stay in Ireland, it may be interesting to analyse whether this variable may have affected the production of PMs upon completion of their experience abroad.

3.3.2 Affective factors: motivation & personality

As Juan-Garau *et al.* (2014) mentioned, 'affective factors' is a very elusive and encompassing term that has been used to refer to the emotional side of human behaviour. It covers such individual variables as beliefs about L2 teaching and the learning process, anxiety, self-confidence, learning strategies, motivation, attitudes to the TL community and personality traits. As stressed by Kinginger (2013a), SLA researchers have often ascribed affective factors such as motivation or extraversion to the different outcomes of

SA experiences. This sub-section will briefly provide an overview of the studies conducted according to an SA perspective on motivation and personality. These two factors appear to be particularly intertwined with language contact and TL exposure. More specifically, the first part of this sub-section will be devoted to motivation and an outline of a number of SA studies conducted in this regard. The final part will instead investigate a number of personality traits with reference to a number of recent studies in SA research.

Learners' motivation has been defined as a "combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language" (Gardner 1985:10). In other words, motivation is the sum of individual characteristics which orient learners to acquire elements of the L2 and include the desire that they have for achieving this goal, together with the amount of effort that they expend in this direction. Motivation is dynamic, can change over time and, as mentioned by Trenchs-Parera and Juan-Garau (2014), is context-dependent. More specifically, in SA contexts, motivation seems to be in a symbiotic relationship with attitude, i.e. the positive or negative perceptions towards the TL community and the learning context (Cigliana and Serrano 2016). Motivational factors in SLA research have attracted the scholarly interest of SLA researchers over the years and they have often been considered as determinant factors for successful learning to take place.

From the late 1950s to the 1990s, a social psychological perspective on motivation dominated the scene in SLA. In particular, the Sociocultural Model, postulated by Gardner (1985) was in vogue. According to this framework, learners' motivation can be distinguished into two subtypes: integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation was understood both as an interest in learning the L2 in order to interact with the L2 group as well as a positive attitude towards the NSs of this group and their culture. Conversely, instrumental motivation was defined as an interest in learning the L2 in order to attain a pragmatic objective, such as to enhance future career opportunities. Gardner (1985) identified motivation as the most influential individual differences in language learning and, more specifically, posited that higher integrative motivation was a better predictor of success. A number of studies (Isabelli-García 2006; Hernández 2010; Juan-Garau *et al.* 2014; Trenchs-Parera and Juan-Garau 2014; Cigliana and Serrano 2016), conducted according to an SA perspective, have observed more language gains for integratively motivated learners as well as they seem to posit an appreciable effect on the development

of motivational factors in SA contexts. The following paragraphs will analyse this factor by briefly outlining the studies in question.

Isabelli-García (2006) found that motivation had a significant effect on student interaction with the L2 culture. One male participant in her study who experienced a pre-test to post-test SOPI gain of +1, demonstrated a high integrative motivation to study Spanish and understand the new culture. His learner profile suggested that his positive attitudes and high motivation were important factors in his development of social networks with Argentines and his concurrent progress in L2 acquisition. Similarly, Cigliana and Serrano (2016) ascertained that integrative motivation led to more language contact, which resulted in more language gains. Within the SALA project, Juan-Garau *et al.* (2014) and Trenchs-Parera and Juan-Garau (2014) also found a positive correlation between motivation, SA sojourn and language gains. More specifically, the former assessed a correlation between the motivation of the participants and their lexico-grammatical achievement. The latter claimed that the SA was a "congenial context for the development of positive motivational stands" even for learners who were already highly motivated (Trenchs-Parera and Juan-Garau 2014: 276).

However, the emergence and development of integrative motivation in an SA context does not imply the replacement of instrumental motivation; nor should the former be regarded as superior in comparison to the latter. Indeed, Hernández (2010) pointed out that the SA participants in his study were studying Spanish as an L2 for both integrative out and instrumental reasons and, therefore, were not solely and exclusively integratively motivated. Cigliana and Serrano (2016), despite the correlation between integrative motivation and language contact, were in favour of the redemption of the role of instrumental motivation and of overcoming the dichotomy between integrative and instrumental motivation. Indeed, instrumental motivation in language learning may have been neglected due to the results of the research to date which somewhat posit a correlation between integrative motivation and more widespread use of the TL in an SA context. Conversely, the desire of being socially and professionally successful may also stimulate language learning to the same extent as creating contacts with NSs. Indeed, while integrative motivation can be of help at the beginning of an SA experience, instrumental motivation plays a key role in initiating L2-learning behaviours (cf. Kormos *et al.* 2013).

With regard to the second factor under scrutiny in this sub-section, Howard *et al.* (2013) claimed that the learner's personality arises out of a range of psychological traits, such as learner's anxiety, risk taking and degree of extraversion. These traits can affect the language outcomes as they may intervene in the way a learner acquires an L2. For example, if the degree of extraversion is considered, an extroverted person may be more likely to acquire the language through fruitful interaction with NSs, while an introverted person may devote more time to studying the language with a book than interacting with others. This does not necessarily imply, as Dewey *et al.* (2014) stressed, that extroverts are better learners but simply that extroverted and introverted students take different routes. With regard to cognitive control and learner anxiety, the degree of extraversion can also lead to different results. As mentioned by Howard *et al.* (2013), introverted students may be more cautious, may tend to greater self-monitoring and, presumably, may present a higher level of anxiety when they are supposed to converse under stress. In contrast, extroverts may be less cautious in their behaviour, which may result in impulsive, arguably more fluent and less accurate language usage.

Recent SA research has addressed the relationship between personality traits and students' overall L2 use during study abroad. Findings indicate that some personality traits may indeed influence L2 use (Gu and Maley 2008; Dewey *et al.* 2014), gains in SA contexts (Ożańska-Ponikwia and Dewaele 2012) and the degree of confidence in using the L2 (Tracy-Ventura *et al.* 2016). Gu and Maley (2008), in a study conducted on Chinese university students in the UK, found that personality traits such as openness and positivity were found to impact the degree to which SA learners interact with the NSs in the host country. Dewey *et al.* (2014), in a study conducted with learners in six different SA programmes, observed that a learner's openness to new experiences was a predictor of in-class language use and also surmised that SA programmes could push even less extroverted and less open students to use the TL to a greater extent. More specifically, the researchers mentioned that a number of programmes required that the students engage in out-of-the class conversations for a certain numbers of hours per day. Thus, learners who were highly conscientious were in some way pushed to use the L2 on a regular basis. In short, the results of the study posited that conscientiousness outweighed introversion and worry over grades resulted in more L2 use outside the classroom, even for the introverted students.

Ożańska-Ponikwia and Dewaele (2012), in a study conducted with Polish immigrants in Ireland and the UK, assessed a correlation between openness and perceived language proficiency. More specifically, the analysis of the study on the personality factor was twofold: first, the researchers assessed whether personality affected L2 use. Secondly, they investigated whether a correlation could be established between certain personality traits and self-reported levels of proficiency. With regard to the former, the researchers found that the participants in the study who scored high on extraversion and openness reported using English more often than participants who scored lower on these personality traits. However, a linear stepwise regression analysis revealed that Openness was a significant predictor of L2 use and self-perceived proficiency. Thus, the researchers concluded that "the L2 user's basic inclination to seek out social interactions in the L2 [was] the best predictor of self-perceived English L2 Proficiency (Ożańska-Ponikwia and Dewaele 2012: 112).

A recent study (Tracy-Ventura *et al.* 2016), conducted within the LANGSNAP project, assessed the development of personality traits of English students during their year abroad in France and Spain. The analysis was conducted by using the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (cf. Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven 2000, 2001), an instrument devised to assess cultural adaptability and well-being in a foreign environment. The five dimensions of Cultural Empathy, Open-mindedness, Social Initiative, Emotional Stability, and Flexibility were considered for the study. The aim of the study was to a) quantitatively assess the aspects of personality change after the academic year abroad and b) identify evidence of personality change in the reflective interviews with the participants. The findings echoed Gu and Maley (2008) as students were found to be more confident and more autonomous at the end of the SA sojourn. The findings of the quantitative analysis were supported by the qualitative insights into students' reflective interviews and led the researchers to conclude that "RA is an example of a type of social investment that has the potential to positively affect the emotional stability of university students who are undertaking the experience as temporary sojourners" (Tracy-Ventura *et al.* 2016: 122).

In conclusion, this sub-section analysed two pivotal 'affective' factors, i.e. motivation and personality, which may affect the degree of TL use while abroad. Integrative motivation and openness affect the amount of TL exposure, which can then result in more language gains upon completion of the experience. However, the role of motivation and

personality in SA research has only recently attracted the scholarly interest of SLA researchers. More studies are probably needed to further investigate to what extent these 'affective' variables may intervene in the learning outcomes of SA students. The next section will close the long excursus on the intervening factors in learning outcomes, by presenting an overview of the research hitherto conducted on L2 identity and gender.

3.3.3 Social factors: identity & gender

While correlations between language contact or learners' motivation and language development can sometimes be established, these factors may not fully explain why some students become more engaged in language learning than do others. Their success in language learning may be affected by the linguistic and contextual features mentioned in the previous sections, but students can also be presented with challenges in terms of their identities during their SA experiences. As Trentman (2013: 547) mentioned:

> […] learners use language not only to exchange information, but also to gain symbolic and material resources that help them develop desirable social identities. Mismatches between learners' identities and a particular learning context can cause even highly motivated learners, who know that such behaviour may be detrimental to their language learning, to resist participation in this context.

Thus, challenges to the learners' identities can influence both the overall quality of SA/RA as an environment for language learning and the particular aspects of TL that students choose to appropriate or reject. This section will briefly analyse the issue by focusing on three main macro areas of investigation: national, 'foreigner' and gendered identity.

SA research to date conducted on learners' identities has found that when students encounter perplexing differences between their own culture and the culture of the host community, they tend to recoil in a sense of national superiority (Block 2007; Kinginger 2013b, 2015). An example of this type of behaviour is provided by Kinginger (2008) with the SA experience of Beatrice, an American student in an SA sojourn in France. Beatrice arrived in Paris on the eve of the US-led invasion in Iraq. During her conversations on the topic with the members of her host family, she misinterpreted their curiosity and, in the long run, their questions about the war started to annoy Beatrice, who perceived their curiosity as a symptom of anti-Americanism. As a result, the student decided to distance herself from them rather than use these types of conversations to nurture her language learning during her stay in Paris.

However, the challenges to the speakers' identity are not solely caused by the interpretation of the host culture in relation to the national one, but also on the 'foreigner' identities that are often imposed on the students by the members of the TL community or the 'foreigner' identity that students wish to perform in the L2. This tendency has been evidenced in studies which have been already described in other sections of this dissertation. It has been analysed (§3.2.2) that interactions in the TL community are not always characterised by authentic input. In a homestay environment, students are exposed to a simplified language or fictitious situations which somewhat reproduce conversations in a classroom setting. Consequently, students may not totally master the sociopragmatic usage of certain linguistic items, such as honorifics because of the input they receive. For example, Brown (2013), described in §2.2.1, showed that Korean NSs tended to use informal honorifics, even when a more formal would be required, for a sense of friendliness towards the SA students. Likewise, students tended to favour the use of informal forms because of their Westerner identities and the more egalitarian use of forms of address in the L1. Thus, as Kinginger (2013b) stressed, interlocutors can interpret students' foreigner status as a way of exempting all parties involved (both the hosts and the students) from a rigid observation of the TL politeness norms.

With regard to gender, SA research to date has oftentimes found different L2 outcomes in comparative studies conducted with male and female participants. The differences in the results can be related to two main factors: a) the different degree of TL contact in the host community, b) the expression of particular gendered identity by preference for certain linguistic items in the L2. With regard to the first tendency, a number of studies have found that women make fewer linguistic gains than men and these differences have been ascribed to the difficulties in creating social networks while abroad. More specifically, female students may have more difficulty interacting with NSs and integrating into social networks than male students (Brecht *et al.* 1995) as a consequence of sexual harassment or perceived threat of sexual harassment in the TL community (Twombly 1995; Isabelli-García 2006).

Brecht *et al.* (1995), in a study conducted with American students in Russia, found that gender was a significant factor for language learning gains. More specifically, men made more gains in listening skills compared to the female cohort as a result of their different learning experiences while abroad. Twombly (1995) analysed how the perceived threat of sexual harassment, manifested in *piropos*, i.e. explicit sexual comments made by men

to women in the street, seriously affected the SA sojourn of American women in Costa Rica. As the researcher also mentioned, these comments were for the female participants a constant reminder of their gender, as well as "the status as outsider in a foreign country" (Twombly 1995: 5). A similar gendered experience was witnessed by Jennifer in Buenos Aires (Isabelli-García 2006). Although the student began the program with a positive attitude and desire to learn Spanish, she became increasingly "isolated and separated from the new Argentine culture" (Isabelli- Garcia 2006: 252), citing the demoralising effects of public commentary on her appearance. By the end of her stay, her social network was limited to American friends and her relationships with the members of TL community were limited to short and formulaic conversations with her host family.

However, recent studies conducted on the effect of gender in TL contact presented differing results. Although some studies (Davidson 2010) presented a more optimistic view on the effect that gender can have in the establishment of social networks in Russia, others (Trentman 2013) still evidenced a number of challenges for the SA female students in certain cultures. More specifically, after about 15 years from Brecht *et al.* (1995)'s study, Davidson (2010) noted that gender was no longer a significant factor in proficiency gains for SA in Russia, perhaps reflecting changing social norms in the country. Thus, the access to NSs was found to be easier than before for students of all genders. Conversely, Trentman (2013), in her study of US women studying in the Middle East, found that gender roles may make it still difficult for female students to interact with locals. The female participants in the study, for instance, complained that they could not engage in serious conversation regarding cultural and social differences with their Egyptian roommates. Moreover, they felt frustrated with culturally imposed gendered restrictions on their movement, such as the curfew. As a result, these students became less invested in their SA experience as a language learning opportunity.

With regard to the second tendency, Howard *et al.* (2013) affirmed that SA research on the acquisition of sociolinguistic variants in the L2 indicates that female L2 speakers tend to use prestige and formal variants more than their male counterparts, who, conversely, have been found to prefer informal variants. In so doing, the L2 users have been found to reflect similar gender-related variation patterns of NSs. On this count, Adamson and Regan (1991), already mentioned in §2.2.2, found that Cambodian and Vietnamese immigrants in the US acquired the phonological pattern of '-in' *versus* '-ing' in a way which mirrored the gendered patterns of NSs. More specifically, males acquired the

informal '-in' whereas female NNS speakers were found to use more frequently the most prestige variant of '-ing'. Research conducted within an SA perspective reached similar findings. Regan *et al.* (2009), for instance, analysed phonological, lexical and morphosyntactic variation in L2 French. The result of the study posited that, although gender cannot be considered the sole factor which affected the emergence and more frequent use of sociolinguistic variants, it appeared that "the L2 speakers after their exposure to L1 input in France […] have noticed gender patterns in native speech and, consciously or unconsciously, tend[ed] to reproduce them" (Regan *et al.* 2009: 132).

In conclusion, language contact and language gains have been found to be affected by a number of issues related to the speaker's identities. In some cases (Kinginger 2008), learners did not exploit the potential of the SA experience because of their own national identity (Kinginger 2008) or a sense of unease with the customs of the host community (Trentman 2013). Moreover, it has been also found that learners may be not exposed to authentic situations because of their 'foreignness' and even their misuse of some pragmatic or sociolinguistic structures is accepted by the members of the TL community (Brown 2013). With regard to gender, two main tendencies have been outlined in this literature review. Firstly, female learners have sometimes been found to have fewer occasions of interactions with NSs while abroad, which then resulted in fewer gains (Brecht *et al.* 1995; Twombly 1995; Isabelli-García 2006) or loss of interest in language learning in their SA experience (Trentman 2013). Secondly, a number of studies have also assessed that, in terms of sociolinguistic variants, women tended to use the prestige forms and L2 users tended to mirror the gender patterns of NSs (Adamson and Regan 1991; Regan *et al.* 2009).

Although the assessment of the factors presented in this sub-section was beyond the scope of the current study, some of the considerations mentioned in this sub-section can still be revealing for the analysis of the data. More specifically, the sense of group inclusion may have affected the linguistic choices of the participants in the study. Therefore, it may be assumed, for instance, that learners who recoiled in a sense of national superiority during the SA stay may not have presented extensive differences in terms of the production of PMs, which, as frequently mentioned, can be used as an index for TL contact and exposure. Moreover, these linguistic items are "social shibboleths" (Beeching 2016: 2) and their use is subject to the main macro factors (gender, age, class) of sociolinguistic analysis. In her analysis of PMs in British English, for instance, Beeching (2016) assessed

a different use of these linguistic items by male and female speakers both in terms of pragmatic functions as well as position in the utterance. If these gender variation patterns are mirrored in L2 English, it has yet to be investigated in SA Research[36]. The data collected for this study will not allow for an assessment as to whether extensive differences in the use of these linguistic phenomena by L2 learners can be gender bound. This limitation was related to the practicalities of the study. While in the Erasmus group there was a number, albeit very limited, of male speakers, the group of au pairs was characterised by female speakers only and, therefore, prevented any form of assessment in that direction.

3.4 Factors intervening in language learning development: concluding remarks

This chapter analysed a number of factors which may intervene in language development and outcomes during and after an SA sojourn. These factors have been outlined by grouping them into three main categories: linguistic factors, contextual features and individual features. With regard to linguistic factors, three main variables have been analysed, i.e. onset proficiency level, CLI and TL input/exposure. The overarching findings indicate that a threshold level in the TL prior to the SA experience can aid language gains upon completion of the SA sojourn. However, the anecdotal belief that advanced learners are those who can benefit the most from the SA experience has not always been proven. Rather, results of a number of studies (Llanes and Muñoz 2009; Kang 2014; Juan Garau 2014; Mora 2014) pointed to less evident improvement for advanced learners as a result of their considerable linguistic resources prior to the SA experience. Similar findings have been ascertained at the pragmatic level (Shively and Cohen 2008; Hernández 2016) and striking differences have been identified solely between low-level students and high-level students.

CLI and transfer from the L1 have also been found to play a role in the studies. However, results conducted in that regard appeared to be quite diversified. On the one hand, the SA experience seemed to have favoured the underproduction of certain L1-specific linguistic structures (Barron 2003; Chang 2009), but on the other hand, L1 affected the typology of speech acts produced in the L2 (Hernández 2016). L1 transfer appeared to be positive in

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[36] To the best of hitherto found knowledge.

relation to the acquisition of sociolinguistic variants (Mougeon *et al.* 2010) and PMs (Rehner 2005) because the similarity of the variant or of the marker with a counterpart in the L1 resulted in a more widespread use of that linguistic phenomenon. However, Lafford (1995) also assessed that, albeit some improvement in L2 PMs, learners did not rely solely on L2 PMs and tended to use L1 markers in L2 spoken production.

With regard to input and TL contact, SA contexts have often been reported to be unique learning contexts due to the quantity and quality of input. However, the expectations that this massive exposure will lead to L2 acquisition are not always fulfilled. Moreover, assessing input and language contact in such learning contexts is quite challenging for researchers. Traditionally, language contact has been investigated retrospectively with the LCP. However, recent studies (Fernández and Tapia 2016) have highlighted a number of shortcomings of this instrument, particularly in the analysis of the different types of interactions. With regard to the effect of input on language and pragmatic gains, a number of studies (Kam 2000; Hernández 2010) corroborate the widespread idea that SA experiences can result in language gains due to the greater amount and quality of input. Conversely, other studies (Segalowitz and Freed 2004; Magnan and Black 2007) did not find substantial differences upon completion of the SA experience.

With regard to contextual features, this chapter analysed the effect of LoS, living arrangements and social networks. Although findings appear to validate the idea that a longer period of stay may result in more language gains (Dwyer 2004; Segalowitz and Freed 2004; Llanes and Muñoz 2009; Davidson 2010; Serrano *et al.* 2012), this general consensus may also be caused by a dearth of studies attempting to investigate the effects of short-term stays (Llanes 2011). Conversely, a number of recent studies (Lara 2014; Hernández 2016) assessed a number of gains even after a short SA stay. The findings of Castañeda and Zirger (2011) seem to posit that short-term stays can be enhanced with a homestay. However, although this living arrangement has been anecdotally thought to aid language gains, the experiences of students living with a host family have not always been idyllic and, in particular, have not always led to L2 improvement.

Language contact abroad has often been related to the type of social networks that students can manage to create during their SA sojourn. Although the SA experience is generally thought to aid more contact with NSs, learners may struggle to go beyond the inner circle of co-nationals or peer fellow sojourners. As a result, learner expectations about contact with NS speakers have often been unfulfilled (Isabelli-García 2006;

McManus *et al.* 2014; Mitchell 2015; Mitchell *et al.* 2015). However, a number of studies have also shown that the possession of a particular talent (McManus *et al.* 2014) or the participation in volunteering activities (Isabelli-García 2006) may aid in the creation of social networks with members of the TL community. If these bonds are indeed created and diversified, learners' linguistic outcomes appear to be positively correlated.

With regard to individual variables, this chapter has analysed biographical, affective and social factors. Special attention has been given to age, motivation, extraversion, identity and gender. As has been stressed in §3.3.1, although the factor of 'age' has sustained a hot debate in SLA research, it has not been extensively investigated according to an SA perspective. The results of the research hitherto conducted in that regard (Llanes and Muñoz 2013; Llanes 2016) seem to posit a positive correlation between SA contexts and the young age of the participants. With reference to affective factors, this chapter referred to a number of studies conducted on motivation and personality. The results of the studies mentioned observed a correlation between highly integrative motivated students and language contact abroad. Likewise, some personality traits, such as openness, have been found to positively affect L2 use (Ożańska-Ponikwia and Dewaele 2012; Dewey *et al.* 2014; Baker-Smemoe *et al.* 2014;) due a plurality and diversification of contact or a more confident use of the TL on the part of the learner (Tracy-Ventura *et al.* 2016).

With reference to identity, it can influence both the overall quality of SA/RA as an environment for language learning and the particular aspects of the TL that students choose to appropriate or reject. More specifically, the national identity of the learner may clash with customs of the TL community (Trentman 2013) and may result in a loss of interest in language learning. However, the quality of input can also be affected by the 'foreign identity' imposed on the student and may result in simplified and unauthentic input (Iino 2006; Brown 2013). Finally, another aspect which has been found to impact the experience of the SA sojourn is gender. Gender has been found to play a role in the learning outcomes of the participants both because of the attitudes towards women in different host countries (Twombly 1995; Isabelli-García 2006; Trentman 2013) as well as the preference of some sociolinguistic variants in conversation (Adamson and Regan 1991; Regan *et al.* 2009).

Overall, the studies mentioned in this chapter also point to a number of considerations to be taken into account when assessing the effect of these factors in SLA in an SA setting. Firstly, each factor cannot be taken in isolation but they do interfere with one another

resulting in a very complex picture for analysis. Secondly, the theoretical stances sometimes have to face practical conditions; students may not be able to experience long SA abroad or may not avail of the most suitable living arrangements while abroad. Thus, rather than simply pursuing for optimal and ideal situations, SA research can provide students with practical responses on how to enhance the value of their SA experience in relation to their language and conversational needs.

As previously stressed, a selection of factors, functional for the purposes of this study, has been presented. Special attention has been given to contextual and social factors, because PMs, as Fedriani and Sansò (2017) and Beeching (2016) also stressed, are subject to sociolinguistic variation and, more specifically, their functions, distributions and uses in the L1 may be determined by the classic sociolinguistic variables (age, gender), membership of a community and language contact. Moreover, the role of some of these variables may be also revealing for the research questions (RQs) of this dissertation. Indeed, as will be further explained in chapter 4, in addition to the linguistic outcomes of the learners, this study also attempted to investigate the role of their social networks abroad on the emergence and use of these linguistic phenomena. Hence, cognitive factors (cf. Grey *et al.* 2015) have been not included in this literature review, since their analysis was beyond the scope of the current research.

In conclusion, the literature review attempted to provide an overview of the main studies conducted in SA research, in order to assess the effect of the SA learning context on a plurality of language skills. Chapter 1 provided an introductory overview on SA Research by presenting the characteristics of this learning context and the main findings in terms of L2 Proficiency Development. Chapter 2 was devoted to L2 Pragmatics, sociolinguistic competence and an overview on the research to date on L2 PMs. Chapter 3 presented a vast array of factors which may interfere in the language and sociopragmatic development. As has been frequently stressed, SA learning contexts have not always proven to be superior to classroom instructed contexts. The plurality of findings may be ascribed to the different linguistic and pragmatic items under investigation as well as a series of individual variables, which may have affected the results for the learners.

This section closes the literature review. Proceeding from the findings of the studies outlined, the second part of this dissertation will describe and analyse the study conducted with 30 Italian learners of English in a six-month abroad experience in Ireland.

Chapter 4 – Methodology

4.1 Research aims and questions

As the previous chapters have shown, an SA sojourn allows the learner to engage "in more informal acquisition in the TL community through naturalistic contact with the L2 in everyday social situations" (Regan *et al.* 2009: 20) and has been found to be beneficial for the development of a number of language skills. More specifically, an SA stay has been found to foster speakers' fluency, which as observed in §1.3.1, is the sum of series of sub-skills and can also be measured by the use of appropriately filled pauses[37], as well as leading to an expansion of learners' vocabulary and a more native-like lexical collocation (§1.3.3). At a pragmatic level, as outlined in §2.1 and §2.2, SA research to date seems to posit that, on a general note, an SA sojourn appears to aid pragmatic development. However, as also stressed in Chapter 2, SA research has predominantly investigated the use of speech acts in the L2. Indeed, PMs have been quite under-researched according to an SA perspective although PMs can be considered as an index of TL exposure (Migge 2015). Thus, this study aims to investigate the development of sociopragmatic competence among L2 learners of English by focusing on their use of PMs in conversation and by relating the findings with the type of TL exposure while abroad.

More specifically, this study sets out to investigate the use of a selected number of PMs in speech production by Erasmus students (ES), drawing upon a corpus of interviews conducted at two different points in time: upon the informants' arrival in Ireland (T1) and six months later, directly before their departure (T2). This longitudinal approach enabled an assessment of whether any changes could be detected over time in the frequency and use of PMs in the respondents' speech production before and after their SA experience. Moreover, it also allowed an investigation of the SA context of acquisition with a view to assessing the effects of an SA sojourn on the development of these linguistic items in conversation. Thus, this study addresses the following RQ:

> RQ1- What is the effect of an SA context of acquisition over time on the frequency of use of
> pragmatic markers by Erasmus students?

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[37] This skill can be considered relevant for the items under investigation in the current study because, as will be shown in chapter 6, PMs can be used as fillers in conversation.

As mentioned in §1.1.2, learners can avail themselves of a plurality of SA experiences and SA research to date seems to have predominantly focused on the experience of university students. Thus, a comparative analysis based on the learner's status or *raison d'être* may allow us to expand the focus of investigation to other types of SA experiences which have been under-represented in SA research. Moreover, a comparative analysis poses the question of whether there is an optimal condition within the TL community which can aid the achievement of further gains in terms of sociopragmatic competence. Indeed, the differential characteristics of the learner's status abroad, such as a work experience or a university placement, may have potential implications on the issues underpinning learner engagement with the input and interactional opportunities. The potentially differential characteristics relate to the quantity, quality, frequency, duration, and intensity of L2 input exposure and interaction, as well as the range of L2 interlocutors who engage with the learners. This study also addresses this issue by posing the following RQ:

> R2 - To what extent does the learner's status or *raison d'être* within the target language (TL) community affect the acquisition and frequency of use of these linguistic phenomena?

Given that the aim of the research was also to assess learners' exposure to the TL and the type of interactions with NSs, results were compared to a reference corpus of Irish NSs. The NSs interviewed were Irish speakers who were born and living in Cork at the time of the interview. The comparison of the three groups (Erasmus students, au pairs and Irish speakers) aimed to assess if any differences could be detected in terms of frequency[38] and use of PMs by the two groups of learners and the Irish speakers. The analysis also attempted to investigate whether learners tended to approach NSs' frequency and typology of use over time, in order to evaluate whether their use of PMs tended to approach NSs' norms or was still found to be learner-like. Thus, the third RQ of this study is the following:

> RQ3 - Is it possible to identify differences, in terms of frequencies and discursive uses, between learners and Irish speakers?

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[38] As will be developed further in the following chapters, the raw number of occurrences (tokens) for each marker was normalised (per thousand words) according to the number of intelligible tokens produced by each participant in the interviews to enable comparability of data across informants.

Given that SLA in SA contexts appears to be characterised by highly individual variation (Kinginger and Blattner 2008) and that SA experiences even in the same learner group may be inevitably different, the quantitative analysis was then complemented with an in-depth qualitative focus on a number of participants. This approach enabled us to consider the SA experiences of each individual fully and to relate their linguistic outcomes with the type of SA experience they had while abroad. Thus, this study also addressed the following RQ:

> RQ4 - Is it possible to identify differences across participants in their longitudinal use of PMs in the L2?

As shown in §2.2.4, given that the use of PMs by learners can be an index of contact with the TL (Sankoff *et al.* 1999; Migge 2015), results were also analysed in the light of the informants' exposure to the TL while abroad as well as their interaction with local community members in order to ascertain whether this variable affected the frequency and typology of the PMs used. More specifically, cases of increases or decreases in the frequency of use of each marker and the range of pragmatic functions were analysed in light of the learners' responses to interviews and questionnaires to assess to what extent learners' TL exposure and social participation in the TL community may have affected their production of PMs in the L2, as evident from the fifth and last RQ, which follows:

> RQ5- Is it possible to link the linguistic development of the learners with their contact with the TL and Irish speakers?

In the following sub-sections, the methodology used to address the above-mentioned RQs will be presented. More precisely, §4.2 will be devoted to the instruments used for data collection and transcription. §4.3 will provide an outline of the characteristics of the three samples. In §4.4, the criteria for the selection of items as well as the tools used for data extraction, coding and encoding will be presented.

4.2 Data collection

The research was interview and survey-based and included two sociolinguistic interviews and two sociolinguistic questionnaires. The first meeting, arranged within the first month in the host country, is hereafter referred to as "T1" (= time 1). The second interview,

scheduled towards the end of the students' experience abroad, is hereafter referred to as "T2" (= time 2). As previously mentioned, LoS in Ireland for the learners was six months.

4.2.1 The sociolinguistic interview

Data were elicited during individual sociolinguistic interviews with the participants following the guidelines and principles proposed by Labov (1984) for the elicitation of natural and spontaneous speech. As noted in §2.2.2, the sociolinguistic interview is anything but a series of questions asked by the interviewer. Rather, it is considered successful if the voice of the interviewee is mainly heard. To accomplish this, the interviewee is guided from general topics towards 'personal telling' as speakers are probably more inclined to speak when they talk about their personal lives. Moreover, the emotional investment in the narration leads the subject to exercise reduced control on the form and the way of speaking (cf. Donadio 2014: 248). This principle is even more apposite in the case of L2 users, as they are using a language which is different from their mother tongue and may be even more concerned about the accuracy of what they say. Thus, a shift from general topics to a more personal and emotional telling may help participants to forget that they are being recorded and that their spoken production will be analysed for research purposes. In other words, as already mentioned in §2.2.2, this is a strategy which surmounts the 'observer's paradox' (Labov 1972).

Topics of conversation were taken from the series of Labovian modules presented in Figure 2 of §2.2.2 and slightly adapted with a view to suiting the specific learner community under investigation and the scope of the research. Therefore, the list of main topics also included questions regarding the SA experiences of the participants and FL learning, as well as difficulties with the language while abroad and opinions about the TL community. Following Labov's (1984) principles, the two interviews included both formal and informal topics, ranging from university studies and future plans to cultural differences between Ireland and Italy as well as Labov's famous 'Danger of Death'. A full list of all topics covered in the interviews is provided in Appendix B. During the interview, the interviewer adhered to the principle of tangential shifting: the interviewer mainly followed what the interviewee had to say and discretely guided the participant through the different modules or triggered the conversation when needed.

Although the interview was interviewee-led, according to the principles of the sociolinguistic interview, the interviewer attempted to discuss the same topics with all

participants. This enabled consistency during data collection and the comparability of data for the analysis. Likewise, interviews were conducted throughout by the same person and, during the meetings, the interviewer remained aware of the aforementioned principles in an attempt to reproduce similar conditions for each interview. Questions were generally kept very short, and were mostly general and open in order to avoid monosyllabic responses, such as 'yes' or 'no' by the participant. Although not an English NS, the interviewer demonstrated near-native competence in English. At the end of the study, all participants reported being totally at ease with the interviewer, as the following extracts, taken from the learners' corpora, demonstrate:

> I: Was it weird to speak English to me?[39]
> ES5[40]_T2: well not that much because you - you - like - since the beginning you approached us in English
> ES9_T2: […] I was thinking when we met at the gym - we spoke in English - and when I met you - like - in the language centre - we spoke English […] probably because we started like this […] I don't feel you like an Ita- (+Italian) -- because your accent is not pretty - recognisable
> ES14_T2: I think now it would be strange if you speak *in Italian *[laughter]*
> AU6_T2: Em no - not rea-(+really) /// yes-(+yesterday) I was like - "I never *speak with her in Italian" […] so -- no - speaking English not too much actually - maybe stranger […] in Italian
> AU7_T2: No! And the first time - em I didn't understand - that you are Italian.
> AU8_T2: No! Because - em we've always used English - so - it's not - weird.

Moreover, always with the aim of minimising the "experimenter effect" (Labov 1984: 30) and encouraging the participants to speak in as unmonitored a style as possible, a friendly setting was reproduced for the oral interviews, which were conducted while having a coffee with the respondents in a situation of equal relationship. Indeed, as also mentioned by Tagliamonte (2006), "common personal associations (ethnicity, religion, nationality, place of origin, etc.) are often critical […] for mitigating the 'observer's paradox'" (Tagliamonte 2006: 26). The interviewer introduced herself to the learners as a PhD student spending part of her studies abroad. With regard to the NSs, data were

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[39] At the end of the second interview, participants were asked to provide some concluding remarks regarding their SA experience and some feedback regarding the interviews and advice for future research projects.

[40] In order to respect the confidentiality of personal information provided in the interviews, interviews will be referenced in this dissertation as follows: the first two letters will refer to the group of informants (i.e. NS = native speakers, ES = Erasmus students, AU = au pairs). The two letters will be followed by an 'x' number assigned to each participant. For the interviews with the learners, 'x' will be also followed by 'T1' or 'T2' to indicate respectively whether the extract was taken from the first interview (upon arrival) or the second interview (before departure).

elicited from three different types of speakers: young teachers, teacher trainees and Irish students. Also in these circumstances, the interviewer tried to reproduce a situation of equal relationship. The first sub-group of NSs happened to be colleagues of the interviewer so the participants were found to be totally at ease when the data were collected. With regard to the teacher trainees, the interviewer presented herself as a PhD student and a former teacher trainee.

Interviews were conducted in a quiet room on the university campus in order to avoid background noise which could negatively affect an accurate transcription of the oral data. The interviewer and the interviewee sat facing each other. The interviewer positioned herself at a distance which was not too close and not too far away to avoid making the participant feel uncomfortable. Interviewees were generally asked to sit in a position with their back to the windows so that they would not be distracted or feel uneasy in the event of people walking outside the room or building. Interviews were recorded with the use of a smartphone which was put on the table, positioned to the side, close to the interviewer and the interviewee but not between them. The choice of using a smartphone instead of a more sophisticated recording device was also made to mitigate the 'observer's paradox'. Indeed, it was thought that a mobile phone would not have been considered as an intruding element in that context and that the interviewee would have easily forgotten that s/he was being recorded.

Participation in the study was on a voluntary basis. All participants were asked to sign a written informed consent (Appendix F) to record the data. Although all participants knew that the study was being conducted for research purposes, they were not exactly aware of the aims of the study, in order to avoid affecting the learner production of PMs in the interview. However, always with the aim of minimising the "observer's paradox", it was stressed that the aim of the research was not to assess the level of the participants nor their accuracy in the FL. Rather, the interview was presented as an informal conversation with another student about the SA experience of the participants.

Interviews lasted on average 45.9 minutes, during which each participant produced on average 5191.94 tokens words. Tables 5, 6, 7 show the length of each interview, the total of hours recorded, the mean length (μ) of each interview per group as well as the number of tokens per interview, the total number of tokens and the mean number of tokens per group. The Irish NSs were interviewed once, whereas the two groups of learners were interviewed twice in order to assess their pragmatic development over time. In total, 75

interviews and about 60 hours of oral data were recorded and transcribed. As will be expanded further in the following sub-section, the oral data were transcribed verbatim into standard orthography producing a total of 385,533 words of intelligible oral speech. This value refers to the number of tokens produced by the participants only. The questions or comments of the interviewer, although they were also transcribed, were not considered in the calculation of the total amount of words contained in each corpus. The following sub-section will describe the conventions used for the transcription of the data and the creation of the corpus.

Table 5. The NS corpus

Participant	Length (mins)	Tokens
NS1	30:52	5,347
NS2	54:48	7,557
NS3	62:55	7,408
NS4	33:48	5,378
NS5	38:28	5,050
NS6	47:58	8,136
NS7	28:24	4,070
NS8	35:29	5,826
NS9	39:33	5,655
NS10	30:53	4,536
NS11	33:05	3,895
NS12	29:40	2,615
NS13	36:23	4,094
NS14	51:40	6,170
NS15	49:25	6,920
TOTAL	**10h 3 mins**	**82,657**
MEAN (μ)	**40:13**	**5,510.47**

Table 6. The ES corpus

	T1		T2	
	Length (time)	**Tokens**	**Length (time)**	**Tokens**
ES1	48:35	4,481	54:21	5,674
ES2	48:52	4,435	54:25	4,281
ES3	47:50	4,926	68:00	7,071
ES4	33:40	2,557	50:50	4,119
ES5	42:49	5,454	51:19	6,560
ES6	46:19	4,235	72:37	8,401
ES7	45:04	3,443	49:22	3,605
ES8	39:54	2,980	53:03	4,519
ES9	49:37	5,617	51:52	6,236
ES10	37:40	6,791	61:00	12,317
ES11	41:59	4,675	48:48	6,536
ES12	36:16	4,041	48:48	6,178
ES13	70:52	9,291	52:54	5,825
ES14	43:00	4,337	50:23	5,084
ES15	46:16	3,542	46:02	4,164
TOTAL	**11h 18 mins**	**70,805**	**13 h 33 mins**	**90,570**
MEAN (μ)	**46:46**	**4,720.33**	**46:02**	**6,038**

Table 7. The AU corpus

	T1		T2	
	Length (time)	**Tokens**	**Length (time)**	**Tokens**
AU1	52:05	5,084	67:13	8,151
AU2	55:28	5,522	59:47	6,046
AU3	33:17	3,792	40:54	4,762
AU4	45:27	3,899	58:31	6,268
AU5	52:09	4,735	44:29	3,773
AU6	61:19	6,417	40:37	4,723
AU7	48:31	4,397	57:40	3,446
AU8	57:58	5,428	43:58	5,082
AU9	41:00	3,923	36:43	3,937
AU10	54:03	5,451	51:56	5,140
AU11	44:33	3,242	35:27	3,496
AU12	36:26	2,819	47:59	3,819
AU13	39:15	3,892	37:00	2,903
AU14	43:29	4,932	59:50	7,168
AU15	44:20	4,033	56:46	5,221
TOTAL	**11 h 49 mins**	**67,566**	**12h 18 mins**	**73,935**
MEAN (μ)	**47:17**	**4,504.40**	**49:15**	**5,186.53**

4.2.2 Oral data transcription

As stressed by Tagliamonte (2006), one of the major problems in transcribing conversational data is that the spoken language is not at all like written language, yet translation from one medium to the other is required for the analysis of these data. Transcribing oral data is a very lengthy, and sometimes, tedious task which needs to be performed accurately and with the same conventions in order to guarantee comparability of the linguistic data as well as consistency in the type of data under analysis. Therefore, in order to guarantee accuracy and consistency in the transcription of the interviews, the oral data were transcribed by the interviewer, as her presence in the meetings with the interviewees and the familiarity with the instrument chosen for the data collection were considered to be an advantage for the comprehension and transcription of the data. Moreover, the choice was also made to respect the confidentiality of the information contained in the recordings as well as the anonymity of the learners who participated in the study. For the NS corpus, given that the interviewer was not an Irish NS, a number of extracts from the transcriptions were checked by two Irish NSs in order to guarantee accuracy in the transcription of the NSs' data.

With regard to the choice of the transcription conventions, as also stressed by Tagliamonte (2006), the selection of the conventions is often linked to research practicalities, especially time constraints for the creation of the corpus. Indeed, transcriptions can be extremely time-consuming and a detailed transcription of a one-hour interview "might require an investment of anywhere from a day's worth of work to an entire week or more" (Tagliamonte 2006: 54). A standard estimate for an hour of oral data is, according to Tagliamonte, about four hours of transcription. Thus, as Tagliamonte (2006) stressed, the best transcription is not the one which tries to reproduce all features of the audio file in writing. Rather, the researcher has to consider time constraints and choose transcription conventions which are detailed enough to retain enough information to conduct linguistic analyses and, at the same time, are simple enough to be easily readable and relatively easily transcribed (cf. Tagliamonte 2006: 54). Consequently, the choice of transcription conventions is dependent on the scope of the research and the use of the linguistic data in the analysis.

For the transcription of the oral data collected, this study has mainly relied on an adaptation of the transcription guidelines for *The SLX Corpus of Classic Sociolinguistic Interviews* (University of Pennsylvania). With regard to the length of pauses, the

overlapping of turns and brusque interruptions of discourse, the guidelines by Blanche-Benveniste and Jeanjean (1987) were considered. The whole list of conventions used for the transcription of the oral data can be found in Appendix A. Automated transcription and the use of software for speech recognition (i.e. Dragon Naturally Speaking) were also attempted but were not found to be useful for the transcription of the type of data collected; therefore, their use in the study, after a number of attempts, was no longer considered. As a result, data were exclusively manually transcribed. The audio files were transcribed with the use of the software Express Scribe v. 5.78 (Figure 4). This software allows capturing fractions of seconds, as is possible to see from Figure 5, taken from the NS corpus, as well as allowing an increase or decrease in the normal speed (100%) of the audio recording, according to the needs of the transcriber (Figure 4 – bottom right button).

Figure 4 – Express Scribe – Transcription Software
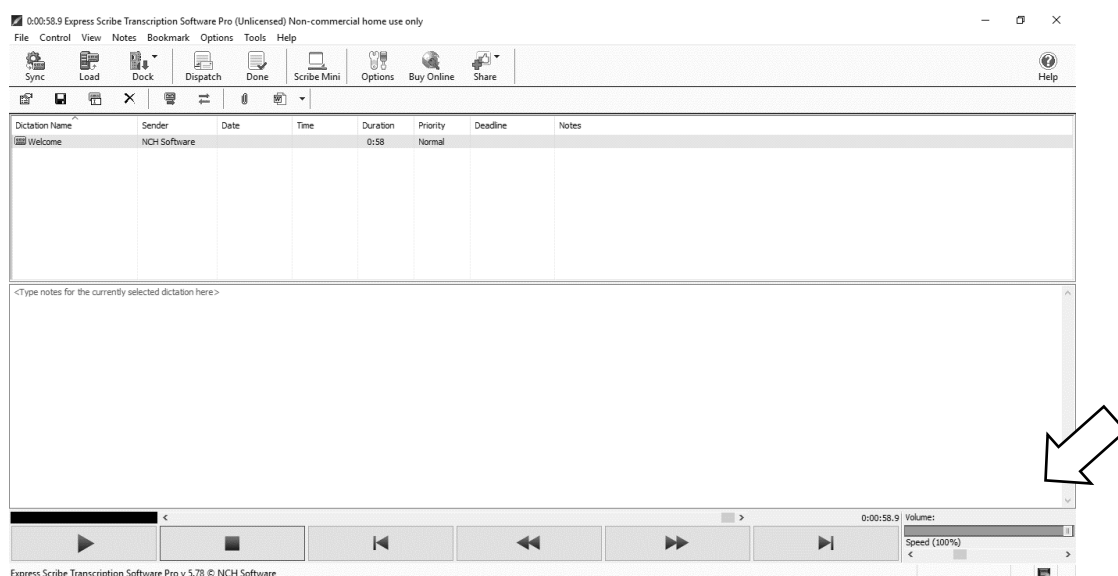
Figure 5 – Extract of a transcription

0:05:48.0 A: *did they like it?*

0:05:48.3 J: yeah - yeah they really did - I think they all - it's all clean plates - nearly so - em I think - I cooked for - I cooked in Laura's apartment for - I think there were six of us - because she had a French housemate - em - "what was her name? I forget" - em Morgan - yeah they didn't get along very well [*giggle*]- but - she /// and there was a nice - there was a girl who was in my Architecture class also and they live in the same apartment - Jessie - Jessie - yeah yeah - and em - and then there was Luca and myself and maybe one other Italian - em - but anyway we just became good friends - and em - I I through them I met - through Laura - I met like - five or six another Italians and em - so em - I just really enjoyed em spending time with her and with with with the other friend I made and em -- and in January I decided to quit Architecture - to withdraw from it - em - and I took some time - Irish - and I just found a job I worked for a while and decided to go to Italy that summer- and I spent two months nearly in Italy

0:07:17.2 A: *where?*
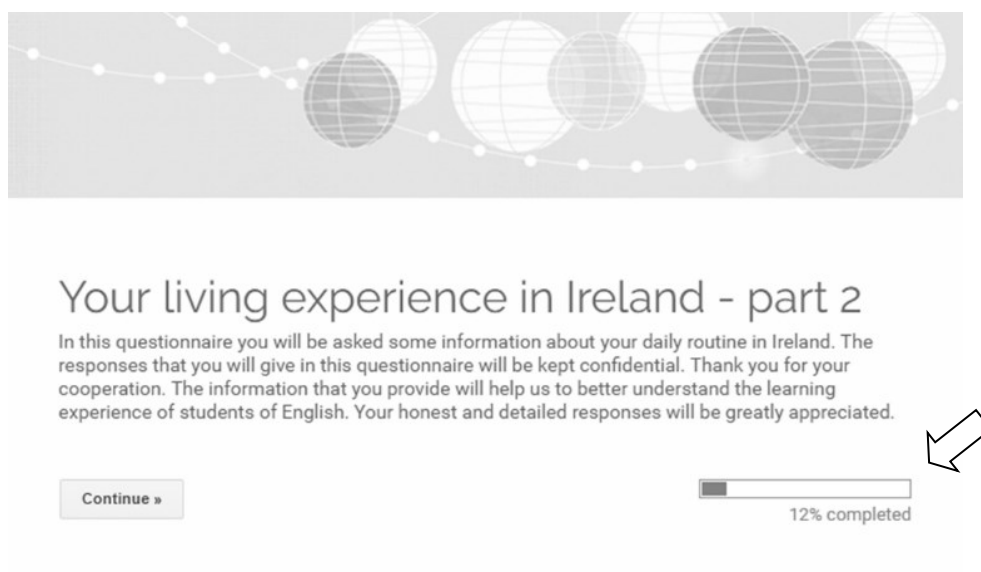
0:07:17.9 J: em - Reggio Emilia

Each audio file was transcribed as a Word document first and then in a txt file because, as will be explained further in forthcoming sections, the instrument used for data extraction recognises txt files only. A version of the transcription included the questions and comments of the interviewer, which were typed in italics to distinguish them from the data produced by the interviewee, as is possible to see from Figure 5. A second version, used for the data extraction, was comprised of the tokens produced by the participants only and also allowed for the calculation of the number of tokens produced by each participant in each interview. As forthcoming sections will mention, after the extraction of the data, the first version was used in order to investigate in-depth the context of use.

4.2.3. The sociolinguistic questionnaires

In addition to the two meetings with the interviewer, learners were also asked to complete two sociolinguistic questionnaires that provided a range of information on the learners in order to create a profile for each L2 user. The printed version of the two questionnaires can be found in Appendix C and D. The questionnaires were administered through an online survey system which was considered more user friendly. Indeed, as is possible to see from Figures 6 and 7, taken from the online version of questionnaire two, the respondent could check the percentage of the questionnaire which was already completed and sections and questions were introduced with some guidelines to help participants respond to the questions.

Figure 6 – The front page of Questionnaire 2

Figure 7 – Section 'Your daily use of the language' – questionnaire 2

Moreover, the online survey was also found to be useful for research purposes and practicalities. Indeed, it avoided the issue of missing data and skipped questions, as most of the questions were categorised as a 'required question' so participants could not move to the next section or submit the questionnaire if they had inadvertently missed answering a question. Figures 8 and 9, taken from Section six of Questionnaire two, show respectively a part of the questionnaire as it would appear on the screen of the computer/laptop or smartphone[41] of the informant. As is possible to see from Figures 8 – 9, the system would highlight[42] the section containing the question which was not answered and would not allow the respondent to proceed with the following section. Responses were automatically saved at the end of the questionnaire after the respondent submitted them. The interviewer could check remotely if questionnaires were submitted.

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[41] The use of the online survey system and the format of the questionnaire allowed the participants to answer the questions either with the use of a computer/laptop or the use of a smartphone, as long as the user was connected to an Internet connection. This option was considered to give more freedom to the participants and avoided technical issues for its completion, i.e. no computer at home, broken laptop, and so on.

[42] The system would highlight the missed question in red, so it would be quite visible to the respondent. With regard to colour, all images in this dissertation have been edited and coloured pictures were changed to black and white.

Figures 8-9. Required questions

The recording of interviews and the compilation of questionnaires occurred at different times. After recording the interview, the interviewer emailed the link to the questionnaire to the participant providing some indications regarding its completion, such as an outline of the main parts and the average time required. The estimated time for completion was 15 minutes for the first questionnaire and 20 minutes for the second. Participants were asked to return the questionnaire within a week from the meeting and were told that they could contact the interviewer by phone or email for any issues regarding the completion or submission of the questionnaires (i.e. technical problems or unclear questions). Thus, given that participation was voluntary, this system avoided very long meetings for data collection and, at the same time, allowed more freedom to the participant as respondents could complete the questionnaires in their own time, while being comfortable at home. Moreover, they could ponder the questions without being concerned about the time or the presence of the interviewer in the room.

Although the questionnaires were devised for L2 users of English and did not contain difficult or infrequent vocabulary, the participants could still check the dictionary in case of unclear questions or some unknown vocabulary. Indeed, when introducing the questionnaire, the interviewer stressed that it was not a way of testing their reading or writing abilities, rather it was a way of "knowing a bit more about them and their SA experiences". More specifically, the first questionnaire, as is possible to see from Appendix C, was mainly aimed at creating a profile for each learner, their studies, and their knowledge of the language. It was also intended to investigate the expectations of the participants towards the SA sojourn. The second questionnaire, as is possible to see

from Appendix D, was more focused on their use of the TL and the social networks while abroad. A list of all sub-sections of both questionnaires can be found in Table 8.

Table 8. List of sub-sections of the two questionnaires

Questionnaire 1	Questionnaire 2
General Information	General Information
Foreign language(s) knowledge	Your living arrangements
Study abroad experiences	Your daily use of the language
Your study abroad experience in Ireland	Language development
Your expectations	Your expectations
	Your closest friends in Ireland
	Concluding remarks

The first sub-section for both questionnaires was 'General Information'. In this part, the respondent was asked to provide some personal data, such as name, date of birth, gender, which helped to associate the responses given to the participant. The second part of questionnaire one was devoted to 'foreign language(s) knowledge' and participants were asked the number of FLs studied and some information on English learning at home. In the section 'study abroad experiences', participants were asked to provide information on previous SA sojourns and, if applicable, to provide details about each experience (i.e. reason/length of stay, accommodation type). The last section was dedicated to the expectations of the participants towards their SA sojourn. It has often been stressed in the first part of this dissertation that SA sojourns have often been considered by learners as the best environment for the development of FL skills. However, these expectations are not always fulfilled. Thus, this part aimed at investigating the expectations of the participants in the study and at assessing whether they were similar to commonly-held beliefs about FL improvements.

As previously noted, questionnaire two was devised to assess language use by the participants and social networks while abroad. After a few questions about themselves, participants were asked if they were living in the same accommodation type. In Section three, participants were asked to self-assess their language use on a daily basis. The questions used in this part of the questionnaires were taken and adapted from the Language Contact Profile[43] (LCP), developed by Freed et al. (2004). However, following

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[43] The different parts of the LCP were outlined in §1.2.3.

Ranta and Meckelborg (2013), participants were asked to assess their language use in minutes per day, as the time intervals provided in the LCP were considered to be fairly large for experiences which are arguably far from the mythical idea of total immersion. In Section four, students were asked about their learning expectations again in order to assess if there were changes over time. Section five included some questions to self-assess progress in the language. Section six was comprised of questions to investigate participants' social networks and, in particular, their closest friends while abroad considering the models provided within the framework of the LANG-SNAP project (McManus *et al.* 2014; Mitchell *et al.* 2015). The final section included open questions and participants were asked, for example, to outline difficulties during the SA experience or advice for prospective SA students.

4.3 The participants

As previously noted, this study was conducted with three groups of speakers: Erasmus students (ESs), Au pairs (AUs) and Irish native speakers (NSs). The ES and AU group were the two experimental groups and the NS group was used as a baseline. Each group was comprised of an equal number of participants, i.e. 15 members. For the ES and the NS group, the recruitment of the participants was aided with the help of the teaching and administrative staff of the university where the study was conducted. For the AU group, the recruitment of participants was possible through social networks and word of mouth. Participants were contacted by email and invited to take part in the research.

The recruitment of participants, especially for the learners, was quite a demanding task and was also a rather lengthy process as not all the learners who showed their interest in taking part in the research complemented with the criteria which were necessary for their participation in the study, i.e. Italian as L1, LoS of minimum six months, recent arrival in Ireland. Upon receipt of an expression of interest from the prospective participants, the interviewer verified that the aforementioned criteria were actually met before scheduling a meeting to record the data. Participants who did not meet these criteria were obviously discarded and not invited for the interviews. Meetings were scheduled at a time and date of the participants' choice on the university campus. The first meeting was arranged as close as possible to the date of arrival, whereas the second meeting was arranged before the participant's departure.

However, the number of learners interviewed for this study, especially at T1, was higher than the number of participants (n=15) considered for this study. As also mentioned in §1.2.2, one of the main challenges that SLA researchers have to face in longitudinal studies is retaining participants over time. Even participants who show a great deal of enthusiasm towards the study at the beginning of a research project may not complete the study at the end. The dropout rate of the participants may be ascribed to various reasons: unexpected early departure to their home country, busy schedule or simply loss of interest in this type of experience. This research project has also experienced participant dropout, which was a critical issue especially for the AU group, as these learners were characterised by an extreme mobility in the host country. Indeed, among all au pairs interviewed, six did not complete the second phase of the research (T2). Three of these participants decided to leave their host families earlier than planned and, therefore, they were no longer suitable for the research as they did not fit the criterion of the six-month LoS. The remainder (n=3) decided to change their host family and moved to another city in Ireland, making the possibility of organising the second meeting fairly difficult. Conversely, the participant dropout was not a considerable issue for the ES group and only one participant decided not to complete the study.

In addition, two participants (1 ES, 1 AU) were not considered for the analysis as their onset proficiency level was considered to be too low in comparison with the average onset proficiency level of the rest of the participants. As will be described further in the following sub-section, all participants were ranked at intermediate level upon their arrival in Ireland. Likewise, two more participants (1 ES, 1 AU) were also discarded from the linguistic analysis as they were returnees and it was thought that this would put them in a more advantageous position than the rest of the participants. Thus, the participants considered for the analysis were learners who did not experience long-term SA experiences before the one under analysis.

4.3.1 Factors considered in the study design

As mentioned in chapter 3, there are a number of factors or variables which may intervene in the language outcomes of SA learners. The aim of the current study was mainly to assess the role of learner status and, consequently, the type of exposure to the TL in the production of L2 pragmatic markers in conversation. Therefore, the study relied on a number of constant variables in order to ascertain the effects on pragmatic competence of the two different types of SA experiences. As was anticipated in Chapter 3, in order to

focus on the variable of learner status and TL exposure, the two experimental groups had many features in common upon their arrival in Ireland in order to put them in similar onset conditions. These factors are summarised in Table 10.

Table 10. Factors considered for the experimental groups

ERASMUS vs AU PAIRS GROUP		
LINGUISTIC FACTORS	L2 Proficiency	=*[44]
	L1	=
	Input & L2 exposure	≠
CONTEXTUAL FEATURES	Length of stay	=
	Living arrangements	≠*
	Social networks	≠
INDIVIDUAL VARIABLES	Age (range)	=
	Gender	≠*
	Studies	≠*

All participants were Italian learners of English at intermediate level during a six-month sojourn in the South of Ireland. Although their onset proficiency in English was not tested by the interviewer, all participants attended a B2 English language course during their stay in Ireland. In order to be admitted to these courses, participants were asked to take a written and oral test to assess their English language skills upon arrival. Therefore, all participants were considered to be on equal standing with regard to their onset proficiency level upon arrival in Ireland. In terms of age range, the two groups were also quite homogeneous. Although the participants were not exactly the same age, they were all students at university level, either at the beginning or near the completion of their university studies. A number of au pairs had completed their studies before embarking on their sojourn in Ireland. However, as already mentioned in §3.3.1, the difference in the age of the focal participants was not extensive enough to assume age-related effects on the learners' productive skills. Indeed, the participants were all in the 20-30 age range. More specifically, the mean (μ) age for the ES group was 22.53 years of age, whereas the mean (μ) age for the AU group was 24.07.

In terms of gender, living arrangements and their studies, the two groups differed. While the ES group included five male participants, the AU group was comprised of female

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[44] The symbol '=' stands for 'equal', whereas '≠' stands for 'different'. The single asterisk close to these two symbols is a symptom of a particular condition to consider in the assessment of the variable. More specifically, '=*' stands for 'similar', '≠*' stands for 'different' between the two groups but not within the same group.

participants only. Indeed, the au pair experience is more common among young women. The phenomenon of male au pairs is quite recent and this novelty may have affected the participation of male au pairs in this study. With regard to the living arrangements, au pairs were obviously living with an Irish family. Conversely, the ES group preferred either student accommodation or private houses, where they were living with other students. Therefore, in terms of accommodation type, there was homogeneity within the same group, but not between the two groups.

However, the participants were living with different people and, in the case of the ES group, of different nationalities. Consequently, the type of input they might receive at home was inevitably different, as it was linked to other types of factors (i.e. daily schedules, loquacity and personality of the co-tenants). Likewise, the type of social networks of each participant was also inevitably case-specific and was affected by a number of other variables (i.e. participation in extra-curricular activities, personality of the participants and their peers, busy schedules). With regard to their studies, learners' background was also different; however, there was some consistency between the two groups. Indeed, in both groups there were five students of Modern Languages and ten students of other disciplines (i.e. Economics, Engineering, Primary Education and so on). Tables 11 and 12 will provide the list of university studies for all participants, whereas Figures 11 and 12 will show the different background studies of the participants as a group.

In conclusion, this sub-section outlined the main similarities and differences among the two samples of population considered for this study, by focusing, in particular, on the factors considered in the study design. All details for each participant in this study are provided in Tables 11 and 12, showing respectively the ES and AU group. The main in-group and between-group differences are summarised in Figures 10, 11 and 12. The next sub-section will, instead, describe the reference corpus of Irish NSs.

Table 11. Information about the ES group

Participant	Age	Gender	Studies
ES1	23	F	Modern Languages
ES2	26	F	Geology
ES3	28	F	Law
ES4	23	F	Finance
ES5	20	F	Modern Languages
ES6	23	M	Engineering
ES7	20	M	Economics
ES8	20	M	Modern Languages
ES9	22	F	Economics
ES10	22	M	Biology
ES11	24	F	Political Science
ES12	22	M	Business and Administration
ES13	24	F	Engineering
ES14	21	F	Modern Languages
ES15	20	F	Modern Languages

Table 12. The AU group

Participant	Age	Gender	Studies
AU1	22	F	Radiology
AU2	27	F	Architecture
AU3	19	F	Modern Languages
AU4	24	F	Accountancy
AU5	20	F	Modern Languages
AU6	24	F	Primary Education
AU7	21	F	Philosophy
AU8	23	F	Modern Languages
AU9	30	F	Modern Languages
AU10	30	F	Accountancy
AU11	28	F	Primary Education
AU12	25	F	Modern Languages
AU13	20	F	Finance
AU14	20	F	Economics
AU15	28	F	Arts

Figure 10. Information about the ES group – gender
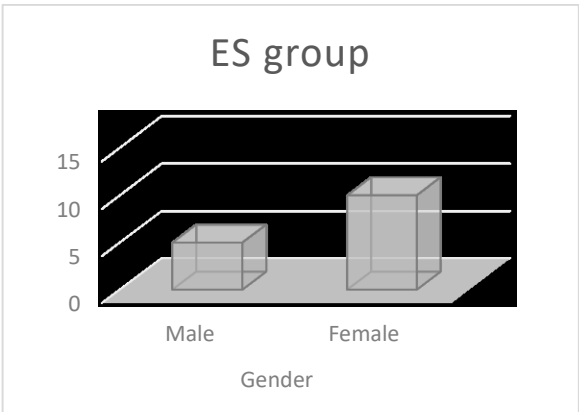
Figures 11 & 12. Background studies of the ES and AU group
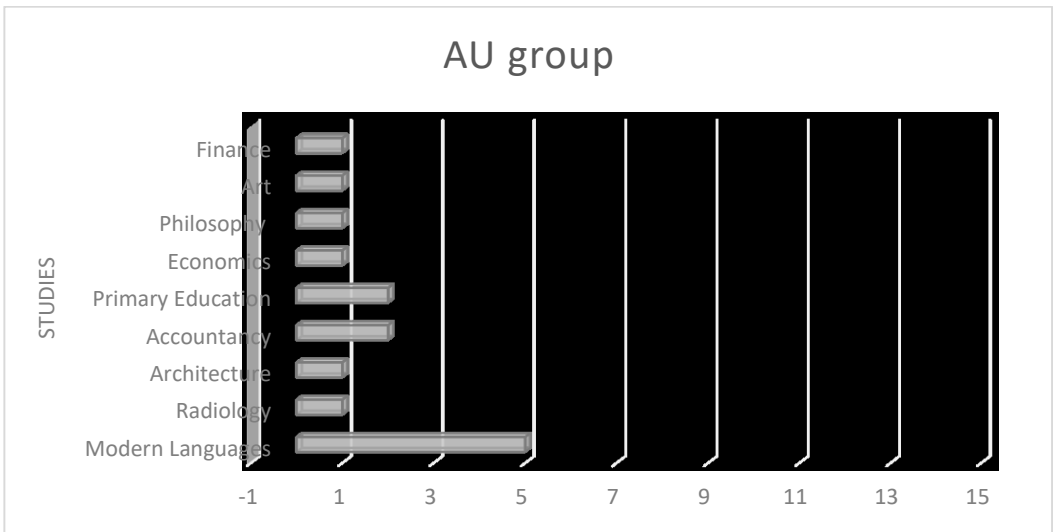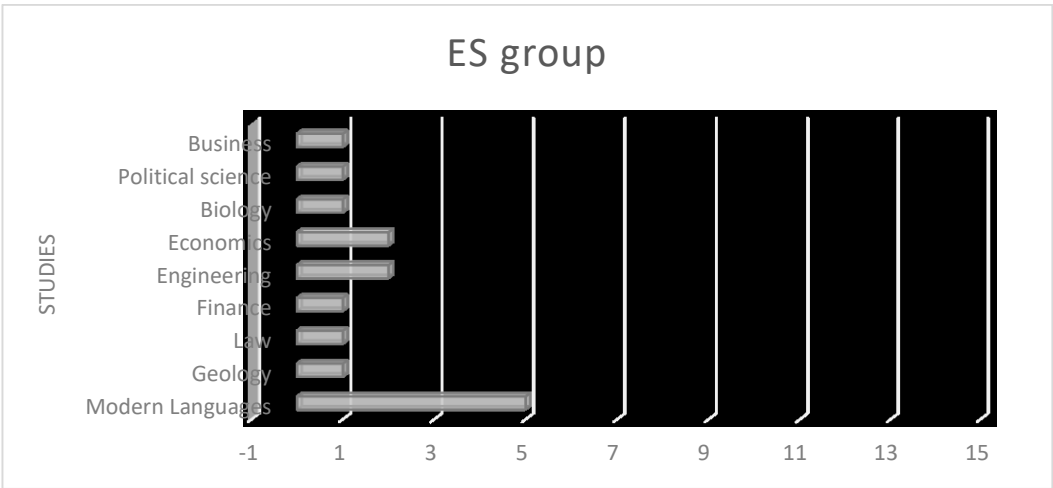
4.3.2 The reference corpus

As previously mentioned, the learner data were compared with a baseline corpus of interviews conducted with 15 Irish NSs. The NS participants were individuals of the same age range of the learners (mean age = 24.47) and were born in the South of Ireland and were living there when data were collected. In terms of gender, the group was quite balanced as there were seven male and eight female participants. With regard to their social status, participants were also chosen according to their plausible contact with FL learners in Ireland. Therefore, data were collected from college language teachers, university students and teacher trainees. In particular, the situation of teacher trainees was considered to be fairly similar to the cases of a number of au pairs. Indeed, they were recent graduates who decided to start a teacher training courses upon completion of their university degree. With regard to the SA experiences, the majority of the participants interviewed experienced an SA sojourn. Three other individuals were planning to embark on an SA experience in the near future. The majority of people interviewed had been Erasmus students in Italy and in Spain. Thus, their SA experiences mirrored to some extent the ones under analysis in this study.

Table 13 shows all details for each participant, whereas Figures 13 and 14 summarise the main features as a group, discussed above.

Table 13 – The NS group

Participant	Age	Gender	Social status
NS1	21	M	Student
NS2	30	F	Teacher
NS3	24	M	Teacher
NS4	30	M	Teacher
NS5	20	F	Student
NS6	30	F	Teacher
NS7	23	F	Teacher trainee
NS8	22	F	Teacher trainee
NS9	21	M	Student
NS10	30	F	Teacher trainee
NS11	26	M	Teacher trainee
NS12	22	M	Student
NS13	20	F	Student
NS14	23	M	Student
NS15	25	F	Student

Figures 13 & 14 – Main features of the NS group
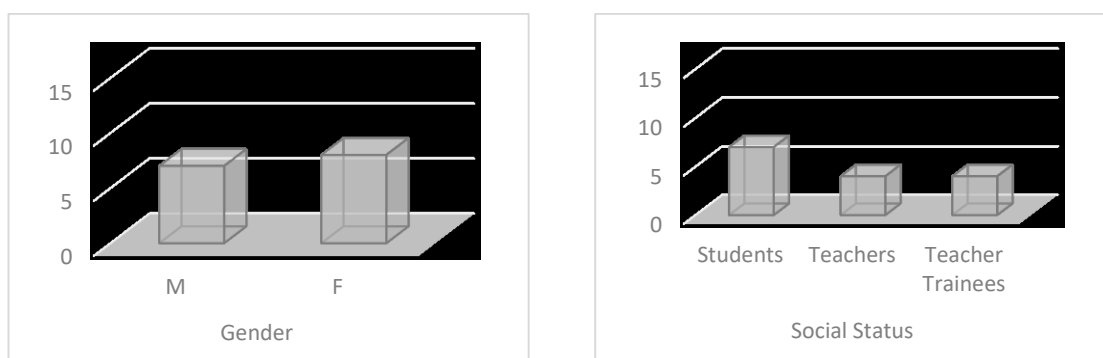
In conclusion, §4.3 outlined a number of similarities and differences among the three groups of individuals who participated in the study. When possible, the study attempted to analyse respondents who were experiencing similar living conditions while in Ireland in order to aid comparability of data. The features that participants had in common led to the assumption that participants were almost on par at the beginning of their SA experience, and therefore, a comparative analysis between the two groups of learners could be conducted. With regard to the NS corpus, data collection was limited to individuals of the same age range of the learners and who could be in their social networks while abroad. However, some differences among the three groups were inevitably still present and were, under some circumstances, unavoidable due to the type of research undertaken and the type of SA experience under analysis. Indeed, the longitudinal nature of the project has been, under some circumstances, an impediment to the collection of more data. Moreover, the study relied on the participation of volunteers; therefore, the use of additional criteria for the selection of participants was not always feasible.

4.4 Linguistic items under scrutiny

As has been stressed throughout this dissertation, PMs belong to a rather composite category, which is comprised of disparate and diverse linguistic items, belonging to different grammatical categories. As a result of their formal and functional heterogeneity, there is as yet no general consensus on the inventory of elements to be included in this category. While some scholars (Pichler 2013) adopt a more inclusive approach and subsume under this umbrella term elements such as 'like', 'y'know', as well as multiword

non-lexicalised expressions[45] such as 'something like that' or 'stuff like that'[46] on the ground of their procedural function, others (Fischler 2006; Fraser 2006) tend to limit their definitions to those entities that respond to some formal criteria such as fixedness, detachability, mobility and predefined set of functional criteria (cf. Fedriani and Sansò 2017).

In that regard, this dissertation is more in line with the exclusion of non-lexicalised expressions from the vast category of PMs. However, this study did not aim at the identification of linguistic features for the inclusion or exclusion of a particular item under the vast PM category. Rather, the purpose of this study was to identify a number of PMs whose investigation could be considered relevant for the context of acquisition under analysis (i.e. SA/RA contexts) of the participants and their development of sociopragmatic competence in the L2. Therefore, a number of criteria have been considered in the selection of the items under investigation and will be outlined in the following sub-section.

4.4.1 Criteria for the selection of items

In the choice of markers under investigation, two criteria have mainly been adopted:
     1. exclusive pertinence to the oral medium;
     2. frequency of use in the TL language/community.
The first criterion adopted may appear quite obvious due to the fact that this dissertation aims at investigating PMs in the oral production of the participants. Moreover, as Beeching (2016) also stressed, these linguistic phenomena appear to be a distinctive feature of oral language. However, the first criterion implies discarding a number of markers, such as 'so' or 'but', which, despite being relatively informal, can also occur in the written language. It also appears to be particularly relevant for this study, as the learners who partook in this research had formerly learnt the language in an instructed learning context where they were probably exposed to a more formal register. As noted in chapter 2, PMs have been mainly excluded from the classroom syllabi due to the fact they mainly belong to the sphere of conversation. Indeed, classroom syllabi often give

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[45]Lexicalisation refers to the transformation of a sequence of elements into unique or conceptual elements and it is possible to distinguish between lexicalised and non-lexicalised expressions. While the former are often considered as single lexical units, the latter are not. Lexicalised expressions have idiosyncratic syntax and semantics and contain elements which do not occur in isolation, whereas non-lexicalised expressions contain elements whose meaning combine compositionally (cf. Agirre et al. 2006).
[46] Referred to as 'extenders' in Beeching (2016).

more space to written rather than spoken features. Consequently, this condition *sine qua non*, i.e. exclusive pertinence to the oral medium, may as a result shed more light of the effect on the SA learning context on the learners given that in the classroom and in teaching materials, oral markers belonging exclusively to the sphere of conversation, are rarely discussed.

With regard to frequency, this study takes a primarily corpus-based approach to the investigation of highly frequent markers in Irish English (IrE). Indeed, the use of a corpus can be even more apposite to examine the frequency of occurrence of a specific linguistic phenomenon (Tognini-Bonelli 2001). This study relied on the findings of SPICE-Ireland (Kallen and Kirk 2012), a version of the Irish component of the International Corpus of English (ICE). The corpus contains 626,597 tokens and is comprised of two sub-corpora of approximately the same size: 312,288 tokens from the sub-corpus 'Northern Ireland' (NI) and 314,309 tokens from the sub-corpus 'Republic of Ireland' (ROI). The corpus comprises different types of oral text categories: from parliamentary debates and broadcast discussions to telephone or face-to-face conversations. The sole limitation of the corpus is that, apart from the distinction according to the political border, there is no other type of sociolinguistic information (age, social class, gender...) about the informants, which may have been helpful for the analysis of these linguistic items with a more sociolinguistic approach. Indeed, PMs can be considered as "social shibboleths" (Beeching 2016: 2) and the extent to which a particular marker can reflect social indexes can influence their dispersal in a particular variety of English or their use by the social strata of the population.

SPICE-Ireland is available to the general public and can be downloaded and accessed upon request. Once permission for the use of SPICE-Ireland is given, the user receives a password which allows the use of all features of the corpus. The choice of this corpus as a starting point for the analysis of PMs in this study stems from its distinctive feature of pragmatic/discourse annotation[47]. Indeed, the corpus has been tagged in terms of speech acts and PMs. In linguistics, a corpus pragmatically annotated is the exception rather than the norm as pragmatic and discourse annotation are extremely lengthy tasks, which are often "encoded into a text manually, since the theoretical approach at the very heart of

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[47] Corpus annotation is a procedure which allows encoding some information about the linguistic data (i.e. grammatical, prosodic, pragmatic) in the corpus data itself or to have them stored separately but linked to the raw data (McEnery and Hardie 2011).

this type of annotations cannot dispense of the researchers' interpretation of the data" (Fruttaldo 2017: 41).

With regard to PMs[48], the taggers of SPICE-Ireland distinguished three types of PMs (cf. Kallen and Kirk 2012):

- syntactic PMs: markers which include the use of the subject plus a verb of perception, such as 'you know', 'I see';
- lexical PMs: lexical items, such as 'well' or 'like', which, in addition to their lexical counterpart[49], can be used as PMs as well;
- phonological PMs: markers which mainly include vocal fillers, such as 'eh', 'ah', 'ohh'.

In order to address the RQs outlined in §4.1, this study focused on the first two sub-categories of PMs mentioned above and computed the three most frequently occurring markers for each sub-group. The raw number of occurrences, mentioned in Kallen and Kirk (2012), were also normalised over the total number of tokens of each corpus. Tables 14 & 15 show raw and normalised frequency[50] of syntactic PMs in each sub-corpus (i.e. Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland), whereas Tables 16 & 17 show raw and normalised frequency of lexical PMs.

Table 14 – Syntactic PMs – SPICE (Northern Ireland)

PM	Tokens	Rate
You know	1046	3.33
I think	602	1.93
I mean	425	1.36
You see	113	0.36
I suppose	65	0.21
I'd say	11	0.04

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[48] The two authors referred to these linguistic items as DMs and, following Schiffrin (1987) and Aijmer (2002) encompassed under this label "elements of discourse that marks the speakers' orientation towards the illocutionary core of an utterance" (Kallen and Kirk 2012: 41). Although referred to differently, the criterion used for the identification of these linguistic items was considered to be similar to the one used in this study.

[49] The non-pragmatic occurrences of these items will be referred to in this study as 'canonical', following Beeching (2016).

[50] Henceforth, raw occurrences will be referred to as 'tokens' (T) and normalised frequency will be referred to as 'rate' (R).

Table 15 – Lexical PMs – SPICE (Northern Ireland)

PM	Tokens	Rate
Well	973	3.03
Like	528	1.64
No	387	1.20
Just	367	1.14
Yeah	337	1.05
So	317	0.99

Table 16 – Syntactic PMs – SPICE (Republic of Ireland)

PM	Tokens	Rate
You know	719	2.29
I think	533	1.70
I mean	322	1.02
I suppose	109	0.35
You see	107	0.34
I'd say	64	0.20

Table 17 – Lexical PMs – SPICE (Republic of Ireland)

PM	Tokens	Rate
Yeah	1010	3.21
Well	777	2.47
Like	528	1.68
Now	436	1.39
So	427	1.36
No	373	1.19

As is possible to see from Tables 14 and 16, the three most frequently occurring syntactic PMs in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland are 'you know', 'I think' and 'I mean'. However, the rate values show that Irish speakers in Northern Ireland tend to use them slightly more frequently in conversation ('you know' = 3.33 (NI) *versus* 2.29 (ROI); 'I think' = 1.93 (NI) *versus* 1.70 (ROI); 'I mean' = 1.36 (NI) *versus* 1.02 (ROI). Conversely, as is possible to see from Table 15 and 17, there is not total homogeneity in the three most frequently occurring lexical PMs in the two sub-corpora. Although two PMs (i.e. 'well', 'like'), albeit at different degrees, were among the most frequent ones in both sub-corpora, the frequency of the third most commonly occurring linguistic item seems to be fairly different between the two corpora. Thus, for the selection of items under investigation, this study relied on the most frequent PMs in the sub-corpora 'Republic of Ireland' (i.e. 'yeah', 'well', 'like'), because the learners who participated in

the study resided there for a six-month SA sojourn. Moreover, the choice of some of the abovementioned markers was also relevant according to the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2. Indeed, 'well' was found to be one of the most frequently investigated English PMs in SLA studies (§2.3.3). 'Like' was also found to be frequently used in Ireland and common among all age groups according to a number of studies on Irish English (IrE) (Hickey 2007, 2015).

In conclusion, this section outlined the main criteria used in the selection of the linguistic items for the analysis. Results of the most frequently used markers in SPICE-Ireland allowed us to circumscribe the analysis to six linguistic items: 'you know', 'I think', 'I mean', 'yeah', 'well' and 'like'. The results of the analysis conducted to investigate frequency are also in line with the first criterion of the selection (i.e. exclusive pertinence to the oral medium), as these linguistic phenomena are not used as PMs in writing. In chapter 5, an outline of their pragmatic use will be presented. The next sub-sections, which will close this methodology chapter, will be devoted to the extraction of the data from the corpora (§4.4.2) and the procedure followed to code and encode[51] each example (§4.4.3).

4.4.2 Data extraction: AntConc

As previously mentioned, each audio file was transcribed verbatim into standard orthography. The tokens produced by each participant were then saved in a separate txt file in order to create electronic files which could be machine-readable. Occurrences were extracted with the use of AntConc (Version 3.4.4). As mentioned by Anthony (2009), AntConc is a freeware corpus toolkit which can be used with almost all the languages in the world because of its Unicode compliance. It can be used to conduct a series of linguistic analyses, such as to investigate frequency, distribution, collocations and concordances of a searched term or a cluster of items. This study has mainly used a

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[51] In corpus linguistics, encoding is also referred to as 'annotation', 'mark-up' or 'tagging' (Baker *et al.* 2006). It is a procedure which, as already mentioned in note 43, allows adding some information at the meta-linguistic level: information about the author, level of readership or date of publication or it can encode "an analysis of some feature at the discourse, semantic, grammatical, lexical, morphological or phonetic level" (Baker *et al.* 2006: 66). Although the corpora of this study were not tagged and the meta information about the pragmatic uses of the markers was stored separately in a database, the procedure of 'encoding' was gauged to be fairly similar. Indeed, as mentioned by McEnery and Hardie (2010: 13) "the basic operation it describes is […] analogous to the analyses of data that have been done using hand, eye and pen for decades".

number of the features of the concordance tool to extract the linguistic items under analysis. Its use for the extraction of the occurrences was gauged to be more accurate and reliable in comparison with a manual extraction. Each occurrence was then analysed in context by using the KWIC (Key Word in Context) format, shown in Figure 15, or the File View option of the software, as is possible to see in Figure 16[52]. The following paragraphs will briefly describe the use of these two features of the Concordance tool.

Figure 15 – AntConc – Concordance tool - KWIC format
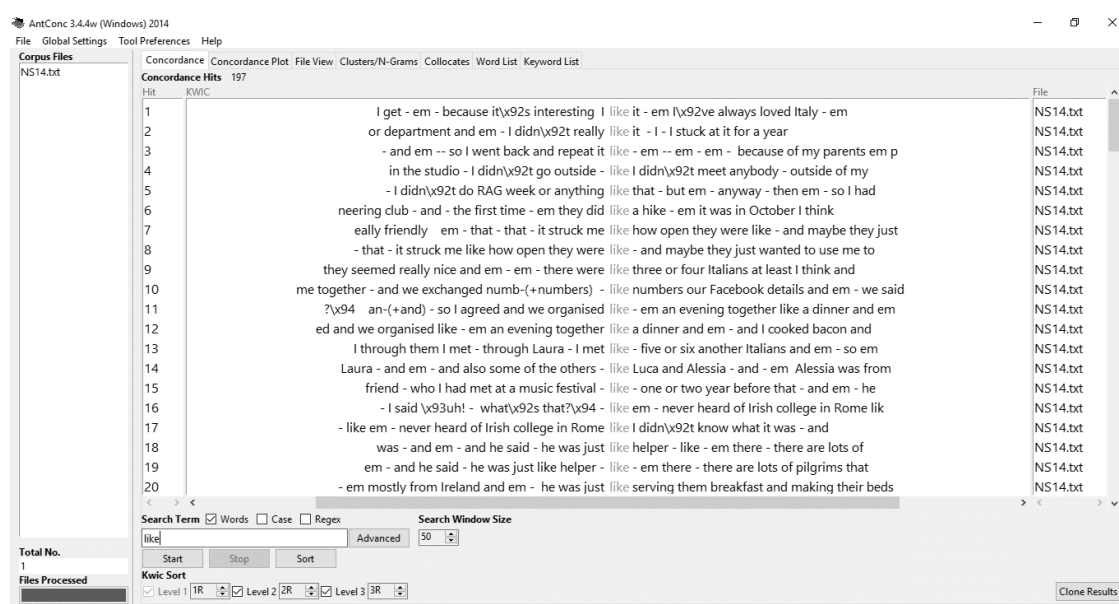
In order to conduct an analysis with this software, the electronic files need to be uploaded (File – Open File/s). There is no minimum or maximum number of files that can be uploaded and files can be uploaded separately or as a whole corpus. For this study, the analysis was conducted separately for each participant and each interview, as the aim of the research was to assess differences among participants and the different times of data collection. Once the electronic files are uploaded onto the software, they are still visible under the heading 'Corpus files' (Figure 15 - top left). The item of interest can be inserted in the search box and then the research can be conducted by clicking on the 'start' button. AntConc will go through the file/all the files uploaded and will search for the linguistic items of interest.

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[52] The results displayed in Figure 15 are taken from the NS corpus, participant 14.

As a result, the software will show the following:

a. the total number of occurrences found in the file ('Concordance Hits' – top left corner). For instance, as is possible to see from Figure 15, 187 occurrences of 'like' were found in the file NS14.txt;

b. each occurrence according to the order they appear in the txt file in the so-called KWIC format, i.e. with the searched term highlighted in the middle and its cotext on the right and the left. If needed, the number of items in the context can be adjusted by increasing or decreasing the 'Search Window Size', whose default value is 50. Additionally, more context can also be viewed by clicking on the highlighted keyword. By so doing, the software will go to the 'File view' tool and will show where the term exactly appears in the original file, as shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16 – AntConc – File view
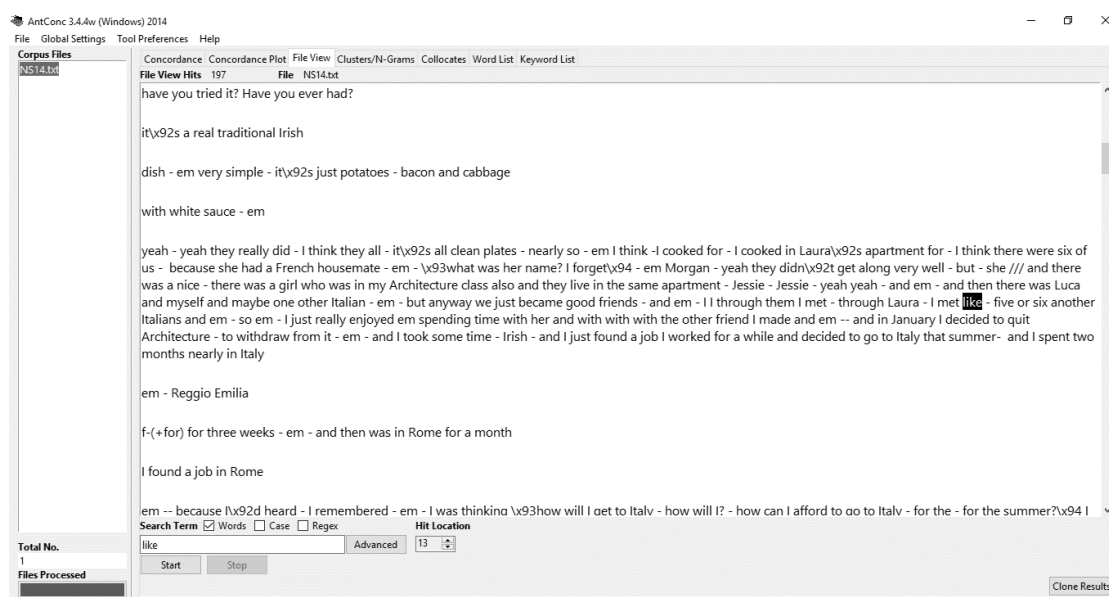
The results of the concordance tool in the KWIC format were then copied into a database where the analysis was conducted. As previously mentioned, each occurrence was analysed in context also considering the transcription containing the tokens produced by the interviewer as well as the audio file. Since the corpora of this study were not pragmatically tagged, the software extracted all occurrences of 'yeah', 'like' 'you know', 'I mean', 'well' and 'I think'. However, as often stressed throughout this dissertation, PMs are linguistic items which can be used as PMs as well as in their non-pragmatic uses, which will be referred to in this dissertation as 'canonical'. Thus, as will be further

developed in the following sub-section. Every single occurrence was analysed in context in order to assess:

a. the pragmatic or canonical use;

b. the pragmatic function at the macro-level;

c. the pragmatic function at the micro-level.

4.4.3 Coding and encoding

The first step of the analysis was to distinguish the use of the items under analysis as PMs from their 'canonical' uses. Indeed, PMs are ubiquitous items that, in addition to their pragmatic function, can also be used as a verb, adverb, noun, and so on. For instance, if 'well' is considered, the linguistic item can be used in sentences such as 'yesterday I slept well' (adverb – canonical) as well as in sentences like 'Okay, what are the disadvantages of this technique? Well, first of all, you can't control it' (pragmatic marker). Both uses of the word 'well' can occur in the spoken production of a speaker. However, AntConc is not able to distinguish between the first and second example if the corpus has not been previously tagged, and will consider both examples as hits of the same searched term (i.e. 'well'). This distinction also allowed the calculation of the Index of Pragmatic Value (IPV)[53] of the marker (Romero-Trillo 2002), which is the ratio between the pragmatic uses of the item over the total number of occurrences. This value, together with the rate of use, allowed a longitudinal investigation of the frequency of use of each marker, as will be developed in forthcoming chapters.

After the distinction between canonical and pragmatic uses, each occurrence of PMs was coded as follows: ABx_y, where the first two capital letters referred to the corpus in question (i.e. NS, ES, AU). Each participant was assigned a number which was indicated immediately after the first two letters ('x'). Examples were then progressively numbered ('y') according to their order of occurrence in the interview. For the learners, the progressive number of the example ('y') was preceded by either 'T1' or 'T2. Thus, the coding 'ES5_T1_7', for example, implies that this example was taken from the ES corpus, that the example was actually produced by the participant number 5 in the first interview (Time 1) and that it is, progressively, the seventh example of the PM in question in the interview.

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[53] Referred to as 'D-value' by Beeching (2016).

Figure 17 shows how occurrences were saved, coded and encoded in the database. The example is taken from the NS corpus and shows the use of 'well' by NS14.

Figure 17 – Coding and Encoding

well			
Canonical		Ex_no	Pragmatic
they didn't get along very **well** - but - she /// and there was a nice - there	Adverb	NS14_1	- because you're not close to the sea - **well** - you can take the train but it's
umour - and em — they're quite traditional as **well** but em - they're a lot more - em	As well	NS14_2	**well** - they're very - em — I think they'
- like em caring and and really treated me so **well** like especially - with the food she kept feed	Adverb	NS14_3	**well** another - first I'll say another thing I
in Italian and we are doing crime narrative as **well** for another - another module - em so like - e	As well	NS14_4	like em - **well** it's just - **well** some of the things
n English em - and those are quite difficult as **well** - em because we were given the text usually i	As well	NS14_5	like this like em - **well** it's just - **well** some of the things we've been studying
talian - sometimes we were given a translation as **well** - but - yeah just found like - there's a	As well	NS14_6	yeah - **well** - that's because this year - we - like - i
not very **well** no	Adverb	NS14_7	yeah - **well** - **well** for me because I'm doing a
		NS14_8	yeah - **well** - **well** for me because I'm doing a single
		NS14_9	em - **well** - I thought it would be very useful - em - if
		NS14_10	em -**well** at first I wanted to go to Palermo em -

Each occurrence was then analysed at the macro-level and the micro-level by considering the environment of the marker (i.e. the presence of other markers, vocal fillers, repetitions, pauses, as well as what the speaker was trying to say and the intonation used). Each function was assigned by considering the context of use in the KWIC format, the transcription as a word document (i.e. the version containaing questions of the interviewer) as well as the audio file. At the macro-level, as observed in § 2.3.2, there appear to be two macro-functions for these linguistic items in the scientific literature review to date: PMs are considered either to perform a cohesive-propositional function or to be a symptom of a particular attitude of the speaker towards what is being uttered or has been just uttered. These two macro-functions (i.e. Propositional and Attitudinal) were also considered for the analysis of the six markers under scrutiny. At the micro-level, each marker was found to have specific pragmatic uses. These functions were mainly taken from a recent sociolinguistic study on pragmatic markers in British English (Beeching 2016) and will be outlined in detail in the following chapter.

4.5 Methodology: concluding remarks

This chapter, commencing from the main aims and RQs of the study, outlined the methodology used. More specifically, this chapter described the two main instruments used for data collection (i.e. the sociolinguistic interviews and the questionnaires), which were used respectively to gather the oral data and create a profile for each learner. Oral data were then transcribed in electronic files in order to create the three corpora. The chapter also outlined the conventions and tools used as well as the instruments which were discarded (i.e. software for speech recognition) because they did not prove to be useful for the transcription of the oral data in question. Special attention was also given in §4.3 to the participants in the study and to their similarities and differences as a group. More specifically, this chapter described a number of factors concerning the characteristics of the three groups.

The concluding section was devoted to the selection and extraction of the linguistic items under analysis. As often stressed, PMs are a vast category of linguistic items and it would have been impossible to investigate them all. Therefore, two criteria (i.e. pertinence to the oral medium & frequency in the TL language), relevant for the scope of the study and the context of acquisition under scrutiny, were considered in the selection of the items. The PMs were then extracted from the corpora with the use of AntConc, a commonly used software in Corpus Linguistics, and were coded and pragmatically encoded at the macro- and micro- level with the use of a database. Two macro-functions (i.e. propositional or attitudinal) were considered for all markers. The following chapter will outline the pragmatic uses at the micro-level for each PMs under analysis. Chapters 6-7 will outline the main findings of this study and draw some conclusions from the discussion of the results.

Chapter 5

Pragmatic functions – theoretical framework

As outlined in Chapter 4, this study aimed to analyse six commonly occurring PMs in the language of the host community and to compare frequency and use of these linguistic phenomena in the oral production of Irish NSs and L2 learners of English. The choice of selecting the items under investigation based on the criterion of frequency was mainly ascribed to the assumption that their frequency in the input available to the learner in an SA context of learning may affect their emergence and use in the L2. As noted in the previous chapter, the selection of items under analysis was mainly performed with a corpus-based approach, i.e. by considering the most frequent markers in SPICE-Ireland, a version of the Irish component of the International Corpus of English (ICE). Considering the frequency of PMs in SPICE-Ireland, this study selected the following linguistic items for investigation: 'you know', 'I mean', 'I think', 'well', 'like' and 'yeah'.

This chapter will outline the pragmatic functions of each marker at the micro-level by presenting the six markers under scrutiny according to the classification used in SPICE-Ireland, i.e. syntactic markers and lexical markers. More specifically, section 5.1. will present the pragmatic functions of 'you know', 'I mean' and 'I think', whereas section 5.2 will be devoted to 'well', 'like' and 'yeah'. Each function will be described by referring to examples taken from the theoretical framework[54], using as well extracts from the reference corpus of Irish NSs, collected for the purpose of this study.

5.1 Syntactic markers

5.1.1 You know

For the micro functions of the PM 'you know', this study referred to the theoretical framework outlined by Beeching (2016). As also stressed by Beeching (2016), the pragmatic marker 'you know' can be distinguished from canonical 'you know' on semantic and syntactic grounds. Indeed, as shown in §2.3.2, because of the commonly-held belief about the presumed optionality of PMs in conversation, a practical way to

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[54] Examples taken from the theoretical framework will follow the transcription conventions used in the monograph/articles quoted.

assess their pragmatic uses is the detachability criterion. In other words, if the item can be deleted without affecting the propositional content, the syntax and grammaticality of the utterance, it may be used as a PM in that context. For example, if 'you know' is considered, the item can occur in conversation in utterances similar to the ones which follow (Beeching 2016: 97):

1. You know (that) I love you, because I married you.
2. You know, I love you – and that's why I married you.

In example 1, 'you know' cannot be omitted without changing the semantics which involves the hearer's knowledge that the speaker loves him/her. It is also syntactically integrated; therefore, its deletion would probably affect the grammaticality of the utterance as well. Conversely, if 'you know' is deleted from example 2, the content is fairly the same but the utterance, as also mentioned by Aijmer (2015), may sound a bit awkward or even brusque as a result and the attempt of the speaker to enjoin the interlocutor in what he/she is about to say is inevitably lost.

Indeed, 'you know' as a PM is primarily addressee-oriented and its core function is to create common ground, or fictive common ground, between the speaker and the listener. It is also a strategy to invite the interlocutor to share or collude in the speaker's opinions (Beeching 2016). This core function appears to be evident in all pragmatic usages of this marker (Beeching 2016: 99-104). The list of all functions is presented in the following paragraphs.

- Hesitation: 'you know' is used to hesitate and enjoin their interlocutor to fill in the gaps of what is said and co-construct meaning, as the following example, taken from Beeching (2016: 99) shows:

  3. […] and it's with a big company and they are willing to pay us to work for the whole summer which means that you know between you know work gain experience all of this like what do you think?

As mentioned by Beeching (2016), in this extract the speaker is attempting to list the advantages of working for a big company. She uses 'you know' to cover the breakdown of articulation, to appeal to her interlocutor to fill in the gaps through the interlocutors' common knowledge and she ends up with a slightly incoherent list, punctuated by 'between', to conjure up what she is trying to express.

The analysis conducted on the reference corpus of Irish NSs revealed that in this function, 'you know' is often accompanied by the presence of other markers, short (-) and medium

(--)[55] length pauses and repetitions or paraphrases of the preceding segment. The analysis also showed that in this pragmatic function, 'you know' performs both attitudinal and propositional functions. As also stressed in §2.3.1, PMs can perform different functions in the same construction (syntagmatic level). Indeed, Irish NSs appear to use 'you know' in this function as a propositional discourse structurer, whose function is merely to fill in pauses, as well as an interpersonal attitude marker, aimed at somewhat mitigating the strength of the utterance. The following example has been gauged as an exemplification of respectively a propositional and attitudinal function.

4. NS2_1/2 […] I'm still doing the propo-(+proposal) *[giggle]* doing the proposal - and it just feels like you could be doing the proposal forever - like -- practically part of me is kind of hoping - probably unrealistically that - em -- you know - it'll be chapter one of my - you know *[giggle]* - eventual thesis […]

In this extract, the speaker is talking about the progress of her PhD dissertation. The first occurrence of 'you know' (NS2_1) can be considered as a way to fill in pauses to think what to say next. Indeed, this marker is preceded by a short pause, a vocal filler and a medium pause and this may be a symptom that she is using 'you know' mainly as a filler. The second one appears to be expressing tentativeness towards what is being uttered (i.e. *my proposal will be chapter 1 of my dissertation*). Indeed, 'you know' is immediately followed by a giggle, which may also be a symptom of a sense of uneasiness and the audio file also revealed that the second 'you know' is also prosodically more stressed than the previous one. Thus, together with filling in pauses, Irish NSs were also found to use 'you know' as a strategy to carefully choose the words which follow. Conversely, the analysis conducted on the learner corpora showed that this polyfunctionality seems to be lacking in L2 learners' oral production. Indeed, learners appear to use 'you know' mainly as a filler, as will be further investigated in the following chapter. Moreover, rather than a co-construction of meaning, L2 speakers appear to have re-interpreted the hesitation function of 'you know', as they mainly use it to overcome difficulties in conversation and as an appeal to the listener to intervene, as the following pragmatic use will also show.

- Word search (WS): speakers also use this marker to invite the collaboration of their interlocutor to find the right words. In the following example, taken from Beeching (2016: 99), the speaker is mentioning that employers would appreciate that a job-seeker had had the initiative of an independent venture abroad.

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[55] The transcription conventions used for pauses are outlined in Appendix A.

5. […] wouldn't they want someone who's like you know like gone out on their own and got this amazing experience?

In the NS corpus, 'you know' seems to be rarely used in this function (1.72%[56] of the total occurrences), whereas learners tend to rely on this function slightly more often, especially upon arrival in the TL community (i.e. at T1). However, in addition to its frequency, some considerations in terms of learners' use and NSs' use of 'you know' in this function need to be outlined. While NSs tend to use it mainly to find more appropriate words, the use of 'you know' by L2 users in this function is often an appeal to the listener to intervene in order to overcome the difficulty in communication or to surmount the communication gap, as the following examples, taken respectively from the NS and ES_T1 corpus, show:

6. […] there *was - em - three classes in - of Irish in the ((one)) year - and one of them – only one class was the higher level class – which would be - the - you know - just the kind of honour class and then the other classes were at the lower level […] [NS1_17]

7.   […] suddenly my Chinese classmates saw that in the stairs there was the other shoe - inside the stairs - you know - I don't how *is in English - you know - the part of the stairs that you touch to go up. [ES1_T2_2/3]

In the first example, the speaker is talking about his proficiency in languages other than English and attributes this low proficiency in Irish to the class he attended when he was younger. In his attempt to describe the different types of courses available, he hesitates a bit and fumbles for words to describe the higher level class. In the second example, taken from the Erasmus corpus, the speaker is stating that a terrible experience happened during her SA experience. She uses 'you know' as a signal for her interlocutor to intervene in order to overcome the conversation gap.

-   Clarification: 'you know' can precede an explanation. In the following example, taken from Beeching (2016: 100), speaker A is mentioning that she would not feel comfortable letting her property to pay the mortgage and expands and clarifies the previous statement by saying 'it's just my home – I just don't think I want people in':

8. A: […] I just it's just there's something weird about it – you know – it's just my own home – I just don't think I'd want people in it […]

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[56] All values indicated in this chapter are the per-person mean percentages. More specifically, the analysis considered the percentage of each pragmatic function over the total number of occurrences for each informant. After the percentage of use was calculated for each participant in each function, the mean value as a group was then computed in order to have an idea of the average use by each group.

This function appears to be one of the most common in the corpus of Irish speakers (33.50%) as well as in the learner corpora at T2[57] (19.39 % and 21.47%[58]). The examples which follow are taken respectively from the NS corpus and the AU corpus:

9. […] I think I'm a little bit more - "oh I want to stay here" - you know I'm a little bit em - resistant to change and moving […] [NS2_63]

10. I would love to - keep working as an au pair because it's - it's really convenient you know - you don't have to pay anything - and you get paid […] [AU3_T2_1]

In the first extract, the speaker is talking about the possibilities of working abroad and she express her reluctance to do so by saying "oh I want to stay here" and then she further elaborates that by indicating that she is resistant to change. In the second extract, the au pair is mentioning her idea of extending her stay in Ireland and of her intention to continue working as an au pair. She considers this accommodation solution 'convenient' and she further expands what she means by introducing the second segment with 'you know'.

- Direct appeal to shared knowledge (SK): in this function, 'you know' is probably closer to its canonical use and it is a strategy where the speaker appeals directly to the knowledge that the two speakers share or presumably share. Example 11, taken from Beeching (2016: 101), is an exemplification of 'you know' used in this function, as the speaker appeals to the knowledge that two speakers share about finishing college as a prelude to a suggestion:

11. Hi um well you know we finish college well uni in two weeks/ I was thinking why don't we do some volunteering [….]

This function does not seem to be particularly predominant in the NS corpus of Irish speakers (2.63%) and an illustration of 'you know' in this function is provided in example 12.

12. […]it was actually on one of the hills - you know the way - *there's seven hills -- we were on one of them - near to - em - em - the John Lateran - em church - or cathedral - em I don't know the name in Italian […] [NS14_3]

In this extract, the speaker is describing where he was residing during his SA experience in Italy. Since his interlocutor is a person from the South of Italy, NS14 assumes that the

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hearer probably knows about the geographical position and introduces the statement with 'you know the way'. In this extract, this marker is accompanied by "the way" and it has been found to occur in a similar construction also in other extracts and in the production of other NSs. However, as a marker of shared or pseudo-shared knowledge, it does not exclusively occur in this construction.

- Repair: 'you know' is also used to repair in syntactic reformulations where the speaker stops mid-flow and reformulates a construction. In this function, 'you know' is very similar to 'I mean', although, as Beeching (2016) stressed, it introduces the reformulation more covertly. Example 13 is taken from Beeching (2016: 102):

    13. I'm sort of lacking in experience/ and some some other people have been working in business up until you know from the age of 16 and so […]

As evident from the aforementioned example, when the speaker arrives at the point of 'other people have been working in business up until', she realises that 'up until' was not what she meant to say, so she flags the repair with 'you know' and then introduces her correction.

In the NS corpus, the use of 'you know' as a repair is not among the most frequent functions of this PM (7.51%). The following extract was gauged as an instantiation of 'you know' in this function. The speaker is talking about the things he likes the least about his job and provides an anecdote regarding the difficulty of teaching the use of contractions.

    14. […] I was like "well - if you wanna sound native and you want to listen to native speakers - you're not /// you know - *there's gonna be reasons why you can't understand listening and this is why - we contract a lot [NS3_19]

The speaker is corroborating the previous segment by saying 'you're not'. However, he stops mid flow as this may be not what he actually meant to say and introduces his correction with 'you know'.

- Self-evident truth: in final position, 'you know' can be used to point up a self-evident truth. As a marker of consensual truth, 'you know' occurs not only with tautologies, but also with general description of a situation, state or event, as evident from the following example (Beeching 2016: 103):

    15. We're not all perfect, you know

If uttered with falling intonation, 'you know' tends to imply that the proposition it accompanies is so self-evidently the case, that no argument can be raised against it. On

the contrary, in final position with rising intonation, the message is still portrayed as self-evident but agreement is sought from the interlocutor.

In the NS corpus, 'you know' as a strategy to express a self-evident truth appears to be quite frequent (15.31%). In the following extract, the speaker is talking about rural Ireland and the stereotypes that are often associated with country life.

> 16. […] if you are not from the city then you're automatically em - labelled as a farmer or someone who has - who milks the cows or who drives tractors - you know. [NS1_15]

'You know' has also other pragmatic functions. It can be used to

- Launch a new piece of information, especially in initial position, and attract the attention of the listener to a new piece of information. The following example is provided by Beeching (2016: 101):

> 17. And I you know they are doing some really amazing things out there/ and I just th I just think you know like you can rent your house out it's no real effort […]

In example 17, the PM 'you know' launches the proposition 'they are doing some really amazing things out there'. In this case, 'you know' does not appeal to shared knowledge, but rather draws attention to a new piece of knowledge that the speaker wishes to share with the interlocutor.

Examples 18-19, taken from the Irish NS corpus, have been considered, respectively, an instantiation of launching a new piece of information and attention getting:

> 18. […] - I can't have my dinner whenever I want have my dinner - like you know - like just - small tiny things like that - you know - that you're just like *[sigh]* - you know - my sister actually lived with her boyfriend for the last year and em - they are planning and going to Thailand in Janu-(+January) […] [NS7_49]

> 19. […] I actually do and I get really nervous -- right - you know watching the time and whatever […] [NS7_23].

Example 18 is taken from the transcription of the interview of NS7, a recently graduated Irish student who decided to register for a teaching qualification course after her four-year degree in Modern Languages. In the first example, the speaker first describes how difficult it was to go back home after her year of Erasmus in Spain and then introduces the story of her sister who is planning to go to Thailand. In example 19, the speaker is revealing what makes her uncomfortable during her teaching practice and then focuses the attention on time management and the necessity of adjusting her class to time constraints.

- Initiate a topic: in this function, the speaker introduces a new topic by using 'you know' with a rising intonation. In this function, 'you know' can also be paraphrased as 'you know what?", as is possible to see from the following example taken from the NS corpus. In this extract, NS2 is talking about her PhD proposal and then introduce a new topic, i.e. the different types of registration for PhD students:

  20. […] so I've a kind of clearer idea of what I am about - I think with that - but - I just need to get the proposal finished and in - and apply in and all of that stuff - and - you know - actually - I think you can tell me something like this because - I don't /// there's a difference between applying full-time and part-time? [NS2_6]

In conclusion, 'you know' is a marker that is often used to create common ground, or fictive common ground, between the speaker and the listener. Following Beeching (2016), nine pragmatic uses were considered for the analysis of 'you know' as a PM in this study. The functions considered are summarised in Table 18, which follows:

Table 18 – Pragmatic functions – you know

	You know
1	Hesitation (Hes)
2	Word search (WS)
3	Clarification (Cla)
4	Launching new information (LnI)
5	Attention getting (AG)
6	Appeal to shared knowledge (SK)
7	Initiating a topic (IaT)
8	Repair (Rep)
9	Self-evident truth (SeT)

5.1.2 I mean

While 'you know' is mainly an addressee-oriented marker, 'I mean' mainly serves as a way of making one's meaning and intentions in saying something plain. As also stressed by Beeching (2016), the pragmatic functions of 'I mean' derive from the two canonical senses of the verb 'to mean', i.e. to 'signify' and to 'intend'. As found by Beeching (2016), 'I mean' tends to occur mainly as a PM in conversation. These findings have been corroborated, as will be developed further in the following chapter, by the analysis conducted on the Irish NS corpus. Indeed, 'I mean' is the marker with one of the highest IPV (70%) in the NS corpus. 'I mean' can also occur in tag form, such as 'you know what I mean'. However, these uses of 'I mean' were considered 'canonical' in this study. The following paragraph will outline the pragmatic uses of 'I mean'

- Self-repair: 'I mean' introduces a correction, as evident in the following example (Beeching 2016: 185)

    21. You are so selfless I mean selfish

In the Irish NS corpus, 6 occurrences have been considered examples of 'self-correction'. The example which follows is taken from the interview with NS1:

    22. […] I just like to take every year as it comes - I don't really like to plan too far ahead - I mean I'd like to [NS1_34]

- Hesitation: along with other pause-fillers and stallers, 'I mean' can be used to express the hesitation of the speaker and fill in pauses, as is evident from the following example, taken from Beeching (2016: 186):

    23. […] why? I mean um there's actually a lot of good reasons really like I mean er I'd quite like to sort of it looks good on the CV for a start like I mean especially like now at university you know sort of moving on larger you've got to separate […]

In this example, one of the speakers has manifested the intention of doing some voluntary work and in the extract above, the speaker is outlining the reasons for the choice. In the extract, the speaker uses 'I mean' three times, the first two of which are followed by pauses filled with 'um' and 'er' and could be gauged as examples of hesitation.

In the NS corpus, 'I mean' is also used to express hesitation (12.90%). The following example is taken from NS9:

    24. NS9: so my problem in Italy was that anyone would hear my accent and they'd just speak with me in English […]
    I: I reckon - you can pick up my accent as well
    NS9: em - yeah - I mean yours is pretty subtle - so - yeah that's good […] [NS9_13]

The speaker here is explaining the difficulties he experienced an NS of English during his year abroad in Italy. He mentioned that his accent was a hindrance to potential conversation in Italian as local people could easily recognise it and addressed him in English. To the comment of the interviewer, he hesitates a bit before mentioning 'yours is pretty subtle'.

- Clarification: 'I mean' is most often used to link two segments where the second segment is often used to clarify, exemplify, elaborate or reformulate the previous one, as evident from example (Beeching 2016: 187):

    25. I just think voluntary work is good because (.) you get to know how life works I mean you're helping people […]

In the Irish NS corpus, clarification is one of the most frequent functions of this marker (26.29%). The example which follows is taken from the interview with NS9.

26. […] like if I heard a recording of myself record and then I was not very - not very Italianee - but that's fine because as long as I can make myself understood - I mean - I am happy enough with that – yeah [NS9_13]

The speaker here is mentioning that his accent is still very strong in Italian but he is quite satisfied with his skills in the L2. Indeed, he can manage to be understood by NSs and then clarifies and expands this segment by saying 'I am happy enough with that'.

- Justification: in this function, the speaker provides a justification for the attitude expressed in the first segment. In this case, 'I mean' can be paraphrased as 'The reason why I am saying this is that'. The following example is taken from Beeching (2016: 188):

27. Well I just don't understand why you are not looking at my situation a bit better I mean you've always wanted to do voluntary work and now it's all about money money money

In example 27, the speaker expresses exasperation at her interlocutor's lack of understanding of her opinion about voluntary work. She expands her frustration by reminding the interlocutor that she had always wanted to do it. As stressed by Beeching (2016), this is not a metalinguistic explanation at morphosyntactic level, rather it is metacommunicative, as it is a comment on the speech act.

In the NS corpus, 12 occurrences have been gauged as an illustration of 'justification', but this pragmatic function does not appear to be extensively used (4.53%) and example 28 is taken from the interview with NS9.

28. […] in a car it's maybe twelve minutes from the city centre - I mean for me to move into student accommodation would be just a waste of money [NS9_67]

- Concession: in the construction '[…] I mean […] but', this PM introduces a concession, as is possible to see from example 29, taken from Beeching (2016: 189):

29. Yeah (.) well (.) I don't disagree I mean money is important but (.) there are other things to life than money you see

In the NS corpus, this pragmatic function appears to be one of the least frequently used (4.70%). Example 31 is taken from the interview with NS9. The speaker is mentioning his interest in languages and linguistics. He introduces a concession when he mentions the courses he is considering for his Master's by saying that, despite his interest, linguistics is not 'something [he] would throw [himself] into'.

30. […] I mean I've never studied Linguistics before I've kind of passing interest in languages and st-(+stuff) but I'm not sure if that would be really something - I would throw myself into [NS9_33].

- Hedge: 'I mean' can also be a way of softening the strength of an assertion or an evaluative comment and often occurs in the cluster 'but I mean' Example 31, taken from Beeching (2016: 189), is an example of this pragmatic use:

31. A: yeah when you've got volunteer work on your CV it will look a lot better than having worked in a big company with thousands of other people for a month don't you think?
B: yeah but I mean obviously it depends what work you are going into […]

'I mean' seems to be used quite frequently in this pragmatic function in the Irish NS corpus (24.46%). Example 32 is taken from the interview with NS1. The speaker in this extract is talking about his ability to speak Irish:

32. […] I can understand it and I could probably speak to somebody in Irish but I mean - since I finished school I haven't really made much of an effort to continue with it [NS1_28]

In conclusion, 'I mean' is often used as a reformulation marker and it is a strategy for speakers to stress what they really intended to say or self-correct the previous segment. Following Beeching (2016), six pragmatic uses were considered for the analysis of 'I mean' as a PM in this study. The functions considered are summarised in Table 19, which follows:

Table 19 – Pragmatic functions – I mean

I mean	
1	Repair (Rep)
2	Hesitation (Hes)
3	Clarification (Cla)
4	Justification (Jus)
5	Concession (Con)
6	Hedge (Hed)

5.1.3 I think

As Baumgarten and House (2010) mentioned, 'I think' has a prototypical meaning of 'cogitation' and three other epistemic meanings, namely 'belief', 'opinion' and 'subjective evaluation'. These functions were considered by Baumgarten and House (2010) as deliberative use of 'I think' (cf. Baumgarten and House 2010: 1189) and were gauged in the current study as 'canonical' following the detachability criterion outlined in §5.1.1. Indeed, in these meanings, 'I think' cannot be omitted without altering the

syntax and semantics of the utterance. This study will, therefore, focus on the occurrences of 'I think', referred to by Baumgarten and House (2010) as tentative use of 'I mean'[59], which can be detached from the grammatical structure of the utterance and can, therefore, be considered to perform a pragmatic function in that context. By adopting a corpus-based approach on the Irish NS corpus, two pragmatic functions were found.

- Hedge: predominantly in the right periphery, as the following examples, taken from the Irish NS corpus show:

> 33. […] one small incident gets magnified and then the rest of the country kind of gets labelled I think [NS1_8]

> 34. [he] was come from I think eight years working abroad […] [NS11_3]

As 33 and 34 show, in both cases the two speakers express tentativeness towards what is being uttered. In 33, the speaker is talking about stereotypes about Irish people and blames a number of incidents in the US. In his opinion, these incidents sustained the negative stereotypes associated with Irish people. However, he also mitigates the strength of his assertion by adding 'I think' at the end of the utterance. In 34, NS11 is talking about a friend who spent a long time abroad. However, he is not totally convinced of the exact length of time and he mitigates the strength of his assertion by giving an approximate time frame with the use of 'I think' in mid-position. This function resulted in it being the most commonly used by NSs (68.68%) and learners at T2 (ES: 98%; AU: 80%).

- Hesitation: as a filler, especially in mid-position, together with other hesitation markers, repetitions or false starts:

> 35. I've never really had that kind of closeness with - with em - with any friends here particularly especially male - like - I think em - I would never hug or rarely hug any of my - my friends here - like male friends [NS14_12]

> 36. I'm thinking about it yeah - I think -- it's - em - em - I find the relationship with college is kind of strange [NS15_4].

In 35, NS14 is talking about the aspects of Italian culture that he found strange or different when he visited the country. In this extract, he is talking about hugs and physical closeness. When comparing this aspect of Italian culture with Irish culture, he hesitates a bit, presumably looking for the right words to express his opinion. Moreover, 'I think' is used in conjunction with other PMs and pauses. In 36, NS15 is talking about her idea of

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[59] As a tentative use, Baumgarten and House (2010) only mentioned the use of 'I think' as a hedge.

registering for a PhD course in the future. After mentioning that she is considering this option, she hesitates and uses 'I think' and other vocal fillers.

These two pragmatic functions, drawn from the analysis of the Irish NS corpus and summarised in Table 20, have been considered for the analysis of the learners' corpora.

Table 20. Pragmatic functions – I think

I think	
1	Hedge (Hed)
2	Hesitation (Hes)

5.2 Lexical markers

5.2.1 Well

As shown in § 2.3.3, 'well' is the most frequently investigated PM with respect to its use by native and non-native speakers. As mentioned by Beeching (2016), 'well' is a PM which acknowledges what has been mentioned and anticipates what follows in particular attitudinal ways, flagging a qualification of what has been uttered or what is about to be expressed. In addition to its pragmatic uses, 'well' can be used canonically as an adverb ('sleep well'), a noun ('a well is where you draw water'), an exclamation ('Well, really! What a thing to say!') or in the expression 'as well'. As stressed by Beeching (2016), these canonical usages can be distinguished from the pragmatic ones through semantic, syntactic and collocational features, and also through the 'omissability' test, which has already been discussed in §5.1.1.

From an etymological viewpoint, the PM 'well' has developed historically from its corresponding adverb (Beeching 2015). Whilst the adverb has exclusively positive connotations (i.e. 'sleep well!'), the use of 'well' as a pragmatic marker is far from expressing a whole-hearted acceptance. Conversely, the main function of this marker is to flag a demurral, i.e. to hesitate and to express reservation in a "covert and polite manner" (Beeching 2015: 184). This core function is also evident in the findings of other studies. According to Schiffrin (1987), 'well' is a response marker indicating that what follows "is not fully consonant with prior coherence options" (Schiffrin 1987: 103) and its use in conversation generally implies that "the context created by the previous

utterance […] is not the most relevant one for the interpretation of the utterance" (Jucker 1993: 438).

From a sociolinguistic point of view, 'well' is among the PMs which are less subject to social stigmatisation. Watts (1989), quoted in Beeching (2016), distinguished between left-hand and right-hand markers and suggested that the former are less sociolinguistically marked. Given that 'well' does not occur in the right periphery, it is less stigmatised than other PMs that can occur in the right position (i.e. 'you know'). Moreover, its use in conversation has been found to contribute to the politeness of the utterance. Indeed, Svartvik (1980), quoted in § 2.3.3, highlighted the importance of this PM in the L2 and affirmed that the lack of its use in conversation by learners of English may be interpreted as rude or brusque behaviour.

In addition to its core function, 'well' can be used in a plurality of pragmatic sub-functions. The following paragraphs will outline and describe these functions, following Beeching (2016). More precisely, 'well' can be used to:

- Express 'hesitation', i.e. a delay strategy which allows the speaker to think about what to say next and bridges interactional silence, as is evident from the following example, taken from Beeching (2016: 53):

   37. B: […] have you realized[60] what you want to do?
       A: um well / I've had a look through loads of stuff / basically I kind of wanna … I wanna make some money but I think I'm actually gonna go and do some volunteering in the summer because it'll just look really good on my CV […]

As is possible to see from the previous example, speaker A buys some thinking time by using the hesitation marker 'um' followed by 'well' before launching into a description of her decision-making process. However, there is still a connection to the core meaning of 'well', previously mentioned. Indeed, in addition to marking hesitation, 'well' prefaces a response which does not directly answer B's questions or, as Jucker (1993) puts it, prefaces a response which is not the most relevant one.

In the corpus of Irish NSs, the use of 'well' in this function is quite frequent (13.73%). However, as will be further elaborated in chapter 6, learners tend to use 'well' in this function to a greater extent (ES_T2: 38.33%, AU_T2: 34.13%). The example which

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[60] Examples taken from other sources have been reported in this dissertation following the spelling conventions of the original.

follows is taken from the interview with NS5. As is possible to see from 38, the speaker hesitates and uses 'well' in conjunction with other markers.

38. […] my sisters and they're both in Australia - just for two years but - I mean - they're doing it and they're fine - so - well - like - my older sister she really misses family but - I mean so I think if they can do it then I think - I could do it [NS5_9]

- Mark a 'transition', especially in the left periphery. 'Well' gathers up the consequences of what the previous speaker has said and moves to the consequences of that remark or question, as is possible to see from examples 39 and 40, taken respectively from Beeching (2016: 54) and the NS corpus (speaker NS10):

39. A: um it hasn't been confirmed but yeah that's what I am looking at
B: well have they another job there?

40. I: why did you choose to - to do the CELTA course?
NS10: ah - well I've been kind of thinking about maybe going abroad for a year so I thought "ok that could be a nice one to have […] [NS10_1]

In this function, 'well' is frequently used by Irish NSs (31.52%).

- Indicate a topic change, as shown in examples 41 and 42, taken from Beeching (2016: 54) and the NS corpus (NS11):

41. A: I haven't seen you in ages
B: I know long time no see
A: I know / well listen to this right/ I just saw an opportunity for both of us

42. […] yeah not easy - well there you go! I hope that's a - I hope that's a good sample of Cork speech *[laughter]* [NS11_2]

In the example taken from the Irish NS corpus, NS11 is talking about postgraduate fees and then suddenly he breaks mid-flow and introduces a new sentence ('there you go').

- Raise an 'objection', as is possible to see in the following examples, taken respectively from Beeching (2016: 54) and the Irish NS corpus (NS12):

43. Well I just don't understand why you are looking at my situation a bit better I mean you've always wants to do voluntary work

44. I just don't know if it's if it's not going to play a part in my career if it's worth it because - you know let's say if you - spend loads of money and time studying a specialised area of something and then you go and work on something completely different - it wouldn't - it doesn't make much sense - for me […] yeah - well if I enjoyed that then - that's fine [NS12_4]

As mentioned in § 5.1.2, in example 43 the speaker is expressing her frustration at her interlocutor's lack of understanding of her future plans. She also raises an objection

introduced by 'well' and further elaborates her surprise in the reaction of her interlocutor by stating that the listener had always wanted to do this type of working experience. In example 44, taken from the Irish NSs corpus, the speaker is talking about his decision of not doing a Master's in his immediate future because of the cost of postgraduate studies. However, he introduces an objection with 'well' by saying that that if he liked the subject studied, the situation would be different, hinting that it would be worth spending time and money to study a subject he liked.

- Preface a dispreferred response. This pragmatic function of 'well' is probably the closest one to the core meaning of 'well', i.e. flagging a demurral. A dispreferred response is a reply which is not consonant with the hearer's expectations of what the response may be. It is classically illustrated by a polite refusal to an invitation. The following example, taken from Beeching (2016: 55), was gauged as an illustration of this function.

    45. B: yeah it would actually but is your company going to be lenient enough to let us?
        A: well I'll have to get into contact with them and try and find out exactly what they want and what the contract says.

In 45, speaker B asks whether the company will allow them to work only for a part of the summer holidays. The 'well' in A's reply prefaces a dispreferred response in that the speaker does not say 'yes' or 'no' immediately but she postpones her reply with 'well' and explains that she needs to investigate it. No occurrences of 'well' in this function were found in the Irish NS corpus and the learner corpora. This phenomenon could have been ascribed to the instrument used, i.e. the sociolinguistic interview, because, as previously mentioned in §4.2.1, the use of 'yes/no' questions was reduced to a minimum in order to give more space to the interviewee.

- Take the turn and interrupt politely, as evident in the following example:

    46. A: = no you are right/ it's actually gonna be really difficult money wise 'cos I have to pay to go away so it will probably cost me like a couple of grand but I think it's worth it because I'm actually a real good person [and I enjoy
        B: [well whereabouts will you actually go?

The frequency of this function in the Irish NS corpus was very limited (1.67%) and only one occurrence of 'well' were gauged as an exemplification of 'well' in this function. This finding was ascribed to the instrument used for data collection, as it involved the use of short questions and comments by the interviewer which, therefore, may have hindered

the use of polite interruptions from the interlocutor. The example found in the Irish NS corpus was taken from the interview with NS11.

47. I: So - <u>anyway</u>
    NS11: <u>Well</u> - make sure to let me know if it ever get cited and researched or anything or if your PhD is ever on the library.

- Correct the interlocutor, as is possible to see from the examples which follow, taken respectively from Beeching (2016: 55) and the Irish NS corpus (NS14):

48. A: but if it involves earning nothing then I'm gonna have to rule that out
    B: well you'll get expenses paid

49. I: so it's mainly literature
    NS14: well for me because I'm doing a single honours in Italian - so fifty credits.

In 48, speaker A expresses a concern that he cannot work for nothing. B uses 'well' to both politely interrupt A, as well as to preface a correction to speaker A's assumption that he will not be paid. Similarly, NS14 is describing the courses he is attending and the interviewer assumes that the modules are mainly based on literature. NS14 corrects this assumption by stating that this is valid in his own case and hints that it may be different for another student. However, the use of 'well' in this function is very limited in the Irish NS corpus and only two occurrences have been found. The scarcity of 'well' in this function can also be ascribed to the instrument used for data elicitation. Indeed, the questions of the interviewer were kept short and comments and personal opinions were reduced to a minimum. Thus, the tool for data collection may have hindered the production of 'well' in the function of 'other correction'.

- Repair, i.e. to self-correct both at word and at a syntactic level, as the following examples, taken from Beeching (2016: 56), show:

50. […] um well you know we finish college well uni. In two weeks

51. […] [yeah, that's true] and you just remember you're really helping these little well if you work in an orphanage or something you really help these people.

The first example is an instantiation of self-correction at the morphological level. Indeed, the speaker corrects the word 'college' with 'uni' and flag the correction with the PM 'well'. The second example, instead, is an illustration of self-repair at the syntactic level. Indeed, the speaker is talking about one volunteering possibility, namely helping children in orphanages. She is about to say 'these little [children]' but realises this is only one of the volunteering options available so she backtracks mid-utterance and restructures the rest of the following segment with an if-clause. At a syntactic level, as also stressed by

Beeching (2016), this use of 'well' can also function as a parenthetical remark and is often spoken more rapidly and with lowered pitch.

The use of 'well' in this function is among the most frequently used in the NS corpus (19.50%), as well as the learner corpora (ES: 4.28%, AU: 13.41%). The following example is taken from the Irish NS corpus (NS10). The speaker is talking about her preparation for her teaching practice and the anxiety connected with it. She adds a parenthetical remark about her level of stress and anxiety, which is going to be reduced with time and practice and, by doing so, she self-corrects the previous segment where she described the evening before her teaching practice as 'scary':

52. […] it's only really Thursday night now that I were a bit like *scary - well that'll get better as well while I get more confidence [NS10_3]

- Evoke direct speech (quotative 'well'), as evident in the following examples, taken respectively from Aijmer (2013: 53) and the interview with speaker NS3. As evident from the examples which follow, they both cite words from a conversation with another interlocutor and are introduced by a reporting speech structure (i.e. to say, to be like):

53. I said well you know it's not for you

54. and then I was like "oh well where are you from?" and she was like "well I am originally of this place in Morocco" [NS3_5/6]

In conclusion, 'well' is used in conversation to make the force of the utterance "placatory and less abrasive" (de Klerk 2005: 1195) by flagging a polite demurral. This core function is evident in most of the pragmatic functions listed in this sub-section, which are summarised in Table 21:

Table 21 – Pragmatic functions - well

Well	
1	Hesitation (Hes)
2	Transition (Tra)
3	Topic change (Top_ch)
4	Objection (Obj)
5	Dispreffered response (Dis_res)
6	Turn taker (Turn)
7	Other correction (O_corr)
8	Self-correction (S_corr)
9	Quotative (Quo)

Although 'well' was found to be very frequent in SPICE-Ireland, it was not found to be very frequent in the corpora collected for this study. However, the analysis of its use as a PM by L2 users can still be revealing because, as previously mentioned, this PM has been one of the most frequently investigated PM in learner language.

5.2.2 Like

Of the six markers considered for investigation, 'like' is the one which is presumably more subject to social comment and the overarching findings about the perception of this PM by English NSs revealed that 'like' is often stigmatised as a marker of the least educated (cf. Beeching 2016). As Beeching (2016) mentioned, there are a number of myths about its origin as a PM. It is believed that the PM 'like' originated in California where it was mainly used by female young speakers. 'Like' has been extensively analysed in sociolinguistics with a view to assessing its use in different varieties of English (Andersen 2001; Tagliamonte 2005). Recent studies have also focused on the use of 'like' in Irish English (IrE) (Hickey 2007, 2015; Schweinberger 2015) and a few studies have also started to appear in terms of its use in the L2 (Nestor and Regan 2015). The studies to date have shown that it is also used differently in terms of use and frequency in the Englishes spoken around the world (Murphy 2015). With regard to IrE, Hickey (2007; 2015) shows that 'like' as a PM is a highly frequent marker, common to all age groups in Ireland.

In its canonical use, 'like' is one of the most ubiquitous words of the English language. Indeed, it can be used as a lexical verb (i.e. I like swimming), noun (i.e. a man whose like we shall not see again), preposition (i.e. She's wearing a dress like mine), conjunction (i.e. No one sings the blues like[61] she did), a suffix (i.e. childlike) or in extenders (i.e. something like that). As an overarching core function, 'like' is often use to flag approximation and hedge discourse. This core function is evident in all sub-functions considered for this study, as will be further explained in the following subparagraphs. More specifically, following Beeching (2016) and Murphy (2015), six pragmatic functions have been considered for analysis in this study. 'Like' can be used for the following.

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[61] Non-standard but often used in colloquial English.

- Introduce an example, especially when it can be paraphrased as 'for example'. The following examples are taken respectively from Beeching (2016: 128) and the interview with NS15:

    55. we like could go to Nepal

    56. […] they do have classes or modules on like Language Acquisition and em Language Learning and Teaching a language em - or teaching a second Language and everything […] [NS15_13]

In the first example, the speaker tentatively proposes Nepal as one of the possible destinations. In the example extracted from the Irish NS Corpus, NS15 is mentioning a number of subjects covered in her Master's. However, as Beeching (2016) stressed, even in this function there is a link with the core meaning of 'like'. Indeed, it is a strategy to save the speaker's face and, to some extent, to hedge the utterances, as the speaker could row back from their words, drawing on the fact it was just one of the options and not necessarily a definite proposal (cf. Beeching 2016: 129).

- Introduce an approximation, both with numerical and non-numerical constituents, as the following examples, taken respectively from Murphy (2015: 69) and Beeching (2016: 130), show:

    57. He's been there for like five hours

    58. Well obviously you have like a letting agent

As evident from the first example, the speaker is giving an approximate time frame by using the word 'like'. In the second example, 'like' is used to approximate the concept while looking for the most appropriate word. In the Irish NS corpus, 'like' in this function was found to be quite frequent (9.17%), especially with numbers, and the examples which follow are taken respectively from the interview with NS13 and NS6:

    59. I have to come back to Ireland like three or four times during the year because I have braces [NS13_18]

    60. […] just the beaches just had like one beach café - and maybe two or three restaurants around so - they're kind of like - seaside towns in Ireland - except with much better weather. [NS6_68].

In the first example, NS13 is giving an approximate idea of the number of times she would have to come back to Ireland in order to go to the dentist (i.e. like three or four times). In 60, the speaker is describing the places she visited in Italy and she compares them with seaside towns in Ireland. The approximation is evident because of the use of 'like' in conjunction with 'sort of'.

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- Introduce a quotation or inner thought ('quotative like'), as evident in the example taken from Hickey (2007: 376):

> 61. I'm, like, "No way my parents will pay for that!"

As stressed by Beeching (2016), strictly speaking the use of 'be like' to introduce direct speech cannot be considered to be a pragmatic marking usage in the narrow sense based on the criterion that 'be like' cannot be omitted without altering the syntax of the utterance. However, 'be like' differs from other reporting speech structures in that the person whose speech or thought is reported "said something along the lines of what is being reported" (Beeching 2016: 131). In other words, the words reported are not necessarily the ones being uttered and it can be a strategy to express a personal stance towards the narration. In the example which follows, taken from the Irish NS corpus, the speaker is expressing his frustration towards a student who kept asking the same question:

> 62. […] but she wanted to know which ones can you put the object in between which ones can't you - and I was like "what am I - a scientist?" [N3_23]

The speaker is presumably not reporting the words that were actually said but the use of 'like' allows expressing a personal stance by saving the speaker's face, as the use of this marker hints at the fact that these words were not necessarily the ones which were uttered. The use of 'quotative like' has been found to be a frequent phenomenon in IrE (Hickey 2007, 2015), common to all age groups and different geographical areas of the country. The results of the analysis on the reference corpus corroborate these findings and 'like' in this function was found to be among the three most frequently used (12.50%) among the Irish participants.

- Mark discourse in narrative: 'like' can help to lubricate the parts of speech by linking sequences together, as evident in the following examples, taken from Beeching (2016: 132) and the Irish NS corpus (NS7):

> 63. […] it's really expensive and depending on like where you go it can be totally dangerous.

> 64. […] in general - I do I really enjoy it - and like the students we have are so nice as well - there are always nice [NS7_46].

In this function, 'like' appears quite frequently in the reference corpus (37.89%) and, as will be discussed in the following chapter, it is the pragmatic function where major changes occurred in the learner language.

- Highlight or give emphasis to a statement ('focuser like'), especially in the right periphery, as is evident from the following examples taken respectively from Beeching (2016: 132) and the interview with NS2:

  65. […] there's loads of stories in the newspapers recently about um a couple who went abroad […] she's been found dead in the back of a car like.

  66. […] and it just feels like you could be doing the proposal forever like [NS2_2].

In the first example, the speaker is talking about dangerous places and provides a dramatic focus by referring to a piece of news (i.e. *she's been found dead*). In 66, NS2 is talking about the status of her PhD application and she highlights that, because of the amount of readings, a proposal can be never ending. This function was also among the most frequent ones in the NS corpus where it occurred with a per-person mean average of 13.25%.

- Hedge discourse: 'like' can be used as a mitigating word to lessen the impact of an utterance. This phenomenon may be particularly revealing considering that directness is not valued in Irish society (Murphy 2015) and this pragmatic use of 'like' may allow speakers to avoid expressing direct opinions, as occurs in 67, taken from Murphy (2015: 69), and in 68, taken from the interview with NS14:

  67. That's what I think like.

  68. em I don't want to generalise like - I don't wanna say - I don't wanna say like all Italians are [NS14_97/98].

- Express hesitation, namely to fill in pauses, especially in conjunction with other hesitation markers or repetitions and false starts, as evident in the following examples, taken from Murphy (2015: 69) and the Irish NS corpus (NS8)

  69. Well I like eem I went in ah then I met her.

  70. I - like - I think the students like learning grammar [NS8_9].

In conclusion, 'like' can fulfil a number of pragmatic functions: it can be an exemplifier, an approximator, a hedge, it can mark discourse or have a highlighting function, as Table 22 summarises. However, in all these functions, there is a strong persistence of its core meaning to 'similar to'. Indeed, the use of this PM hints that the surrounding discourse is not expressed with certainty or needs to be modalised (cf. Beeching 2016: 134).

Table 22. Pragmatic functions – like

	Like
1	Exemplifier (Ex)
2	Approximator (App)
3	Quotative (Quo)
4	Discourse marker (DM)
5	Focuser (Foc)
6	Hedge (Hed)
7	Hesitation (Hes)

5.2.3 Yeah

As mentioned by House (2013), following Spielmann (2007), 'yeah' is used in conversation as a backchannel signal, i.e. as a strategy to indicate to the interlocutor the attention of the listener, as an agreement marker, i.e. to signal agreement with what the interlocutor has said, and likewise to be used a discourse structurer, in other words as a DM in the narrow sense. This study mainly focused on the third function and considered all other occurrences of 'yeah' as canonical. With regard to the different functions of 'yeah' as a discourse structurer, they were drawn from the analysis of the reference corpus. 'Yeah' was found to be used:

- to express hesitation (Hes), i.e. 'to fill in pauses, as evident from examples 71 and 72:

   71. […] and I'm like using my hands like I would with a foreign language person - cause it makes it simpler for people maybe to understand what I am talking about but em - yeah -- no - I do that a bit too much [NS4_55]

   72. […] so I did em Arts Degree BA International - yeah - so em - I but I did my Erasmus in Spain just cause I - just - personal preference really [NS8_41]

As shown by the previous examples, 'yeah' is accompanied by vocal fillers, short (-) and medium pauses (--) and it is a strategy for the speaker to think about what to say next. In 71, NS4 is mentioning how his job has affected his way of speaking. After mentioning that the use of hands in conversation "*makes it simpler for people […] to understand what [he is] talking about*", he stops mid-flow and hesitates, before saying "*I do that a bit too much*". Similarly, NS8 mentions that she did a BA International and then she fills in the pause with 'yeah - so em' before adding a new piece of information, i.e. the destination

of her year abroad. This function appears to be the most frequent one in the NS corpus (54.90%) and the learners' production at T2 (52.86%, 54.87[62]).

- To mark the end of the turn (En_tu), especially in the right periphery, namely to signal that the speaker has no more to say or as an appeal for the interlocutor to intervene, as is possible to see from examples 73 and 74:

    73. […] but I will look at form as well cause it's a grammar lesson - you know that in a way so - yeah [NS8_24]

    74. […] also the accommodation too as well in Rome was really really expensive so I thought - em - ok - forget about that idea - push that one aside - yeah [NS4_9]

In 73, NS8 is talking about her teaching practice and her preparation for it. In 74, the speaker is recalling his journey in Italy and mentions that he would love to move there if accommodation options were cheaper.

- To introduce a topic, especially in the left periphery. In this function, 'yeah' will be referred to as a 'opener' in the analysis and instantiations of 'yeah' in this function are provided in the two examples which follow:

    75. Yeah - I had - I did a lesson the other day and - I had my iPad you know I was checking my iPad - like and I had my timer on [NS7_8]

    76. Yeah so I think - when I start learning another language - the other languages kind of were feeding a bit - it's weird - don't know - I think cause I was so invested in learning Italian - I could think of the word in Italian but not in Irish so that was funny! [NS15_29]

In 75, the speaker is talking about her teaching practice and introduces the topic of 'time management'. In 76, the speaker is talking about her fluency in Irish and then she introduces the concept of language attrition which affects her spoken production in Irish.

- In mid-position, 'yeah' can also be used as a strategy to introduce a new piece of information (N_Info) or to elaborate and expand the previous segment (Exp):

    77. […] because everybody is doing some sort of research in the area -- em - so yeah I've - I've kind of a long way to go I suppose - I have to get all the ethic stuff [NS2_4]

    78. […] everyone was like put their nose up and Catania was pretty - but I thought Palermo was prettier - yeah I've never been to Napoli so I can't compare the food - but I've heard good things [NS9_23]

    79. [...] I think it's just - yeah it's about meeting a person that you can - you know - have something in common as well to stay in touch - that's true. [NS15_8]

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80. […] but if the students are always progressing towards things - yeah planning a lesson wouldn't be a big deal. [NS11_20]

Examples 77 and 78 can be considered an illustration of introducing a new piece of information. Indeed, in example 77, NS2 is talking about the type of research in her department and then she introduces a new segment "'I've kind of long way to go". In 78, NS9 is talking about his journey to Sicily and suddenly he mentions "I've never been to Napoli so I can't compare the food". On the contrary, 79 and 80 can be considered examples of expansion. In 79, NS15 is mentioning the ineffectiveness of joining language learning exchanges to keep practising her Italian because, after a few meetings, participants tend to lose interest if they do not have something in common. In the example, after expressing her opinion, she adds further details (i.e. "it's about meeting a person"), introduced by 'yeah'. In 80, NS11 is talking about preparation for classes and the fact that with experience and practice, preparation time will tend to reduce. In this extract, he focuses on the level and participation of participants and expands his previous idea by saying 'yeah planning a lesson wouldn't be a big deal.' The use of 'yeah' to elaborate the previous segment was found to be very common in the three corpora. Indeed, this pragmatic function was assessed to be, albeit at different degrees, among the three most frequent ones for all participants (NS: 22.89%; ES_T2: 20.85%; AU_T2: 16.02%)

Therefore, five functions have been considered for the analysis of 'yeah' as a discourse structurer. These functions are summarised in Table 23 below.

Table 23 – Pragmatic functions – yeah

Yeah	
1	Hesitation (Hes)
2	End Turn (En_Tu)
3	Opener (Opn)
4	New Info (N_Info)
5	Expansion (Exp)

5.3 Pragmatic functions: concluding remarks

In conclusion, this chapter outlined the pragmatic functions which have been considered for the analysis of each PMs under scrutiny. The functions were taken from recent sociolinguistic studies (Murphy 2015; Beeching 2016). In the case of 'I think' and 'yeah',

the starting point of the analysis has been two recent studies on the use of PMs in L2 English (Baumgarten and House 2010; House 2013). However, the functions considered for these two PMs were mainly drawn from the analysis conducted on the reference corpus of Irish NSs. Each pragmatic function was outlined by referring to examples taken from the theoretical framework as well as occurrences taken from the reference corpus of Irish NSs. An indication of the most and least frequent functions in the reference corpus has already been provided for a number of PMs and their frequency will be further elaborated in the following chapter, by comparing the three groups of participants. Indeed, chapter 6 will attempt to respond to the RQs outlined in chapter 4 and discuss the main findings of this study by referring to the frequency and pragmatic uses of the six PMs under analysis. Chapter 7 will analyse the findings by relating them to contextual variables.

Chapter 6

Results – Frequency & Characteristics of Use

As mentioned in chapter 4, the core RQ of this study is aimed at assessing the effects over time of an SA context of learning on the pragmatic competence of L2 learners of English. In order to assess the role of this learning context, two different types of SA experiences were considered and the results of the findings were compared to a group of Irish NSs, which constituted the reference corpus. Results were then analysed in the light of a number of contextual factors, with a view to illuminating whether they may have played a role in the sociopragmatic development of the participants. Findings were mainly subject to quantitative statistical analysis, with a qualitative focus on the experiences of a number of participants. The main results of the study will be discussed in this and the following chapter by referring to the five specific RQs presented in chapter 4. In particular, this chapter will present the quantitative statistical analysis and will address the first three RQs of this study. Chapter 7 will address the fourth and fifth RQ with a quali/quantitative approach in order to shed light on a number of contextual factors.

Results of the quantitative analysis will be presented as follows. Firstly, the production of PMs by the ES group will be discussed and analysed (§6.1) and it will then be compared with the results of the AU data (§6.2). The analysis of the learner data will be conducted with a longitudinal focus in terms of frequency and characteristics of use in order to analyse whether the six-month SA sojourn had an effect on the production of PMs by the L2 learners. Results of the learner data at T2 will be examined by referring to the production of Irish NSs (§6.3) with a view to investigating whether learners approached NS frequency and characteristics of use at the end of their SA experience.

6.1 Longitudinal analysis of the Erasmus students' production

> RQ1 - What is the effect of an SA context of acquisition over time on the use of these linguistic phenomena by Erasmus students?

6.1.1 Frequency

The first RQ of this study analysed the longitudinal use of PMs by the ES group. This sub-section will mainly address frequency, whereas pragmatic uses will be further explained in §6.1.2. As mentioned in chapter 4, two values were considered for the

analysis of frequency of these linguistic phenomena: the Index of Pragmatic Value (IPV), namely the ratio between pragmatic and canonical uses, expressed in percentages, and the Rate (R), namely the normalised frequency[63], expressed in decimals[64]. The following Tables will present the frequency of use of the six PMs analysed in the oral production of the ES group at T1 and T2. More specifically, each Table will include the per-person mean value[65] at T1 and T2, the size of difference between the two means (Diff.) as well as the Probability value (p-value). The p-value was calculated with two-sample paired T-tests in order to assess whether the difference between the values at T1 and T2 was statistically significant.

Table 24 – Longitudinal frequency – Erasmus students - IPV

ERASMUS STUDENTS					
	T1 mean	**T2 mean**	**Diff.**	**P-value**	**Significant**
You know	43.924%	81.362%	+37.438%	0.006	Yes
I mean	40.000%	64.380%	+24.381%	0.052	No
I think	14.484%	17.521%	+3.038%	0.354	No
Well	30.352%	41.867%	+11.515%	0.206	No
Like	29.173%	49.729%	+20.556%	0.002	Yes
Yeah	51.892%	61.282%	+9.390%	0.042	Yes

Table 25 – Longitudinal frequency – Erasmus students – Rate

ERASMUS STUDENTS					
	T1 mean	**T2 mean**	**Diff.**	**P-value**	**Significant**
You know	1.319	2.986	+1.666	0.161	No
I mean	0.700	1.357	+0.657	0.049	Yes
I think	0.930	0.985	+0.055	0.803	No
Well	0.816	1.239	+0.424	0.356	No
Like	2.956	9.906	+6.950	0.013	Yes
Yeah	8.602	11.039	+2.437	0.477	No

As Tables 24 & 25 show, the main findings of this study indicate that there was a tendency towards an increase in the IPV and the rate in the spoken production of the ES group after

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[63] The raw number of occurrences for each marker in the interview was normalised per thousand words.
[64] All values were rounded up to the third decimal place.
[65] This value was calculated by computing all values for each participant. Then, the mean values of the results obtained were calculated. Thus, rather than calculating an overall percentage (i.e. adding all raw values produced by the participants and then generating an overall mean value per group), this study relied on per-person mean values as they were considered more indicative of the dispersal of the PM under analysis in the samples.

the SA sojourn. Indeed, the size of difference between the T1 and T2 mean was a positive value for all markers analysed. However, the analysis also revealed that statistically significant differences in the longitudinal frequency were present only for a number of PMs.

With regard to the IPV, there was a significant difference in the frequency of 'yeah', 'you know' and 'like', because their p-values are below 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho), i.e. there was no difference in the IPV of these three markers between T1 and T2, was rejected and the alterative hypothesis (H$_A$), i.e. there is significant difference in the IPV of these three markers after a period of stay abroad, was accepted. Consequently, the increase in the IPV of these three markers was not attributed to chance and, more specifically, there is 95% possibility that other experiments aimed at assessing the IPV of 'yeah', 'you know' and 'like' can lead to the same results. Thus, Erasmus students after a six-month sojourn abroad may be expected to increase the pragmatic uses of these three markers over the non-pragmatic uses. Conversely, for the other markers under analysis, although an increase was assessed, the difference in the mean IPV values was not found to be statistically significant. Therefore, similar conclusions for the increase in the IPV of 'I mean', 'I think' and 'well' cannot be drawn.

If the rate of PMs produced by Erasmus students is considered, Table 25 shows that the difference was statistically significant solely for the mean rate of 'I mean' and 'like', as their p-value is below 0.05. Thus, as mentioned above, there is 95% possibility that other types of experiments conducted to assess the rate of these markers over time may lead to analogous findings. Consequently, it may be affirmed that after six months in Ireland Erasmus students are expected to increase their frequency of 'I mean' and 'like' in conversation. Conversely, for the other markers, although an increase was found, the difference between rate values at T1 and T2 was not statistically significant and it is not possible to assume similar findings for future tests conducted in this direction.

Results of the findings are summarised in Table 26, which follows. The Table will present the p-value and the significance of the result.

Table 26 – Summary significant differences – ES group

PM	IPV		Rate	
	P-value	**Significant**	**P-value**	**Significant**
You know	0.006	Yes	0.161	No
I mean	0.052	No	0.049	Yes
I think	0.354	No	0.803	No
Well	0.206	No	0.356	No
Like	0.002	Yes	0.013	Yes
Yeah	0.042	Yes	0.477	No

As shown in Table 26, if the IPV and rate values of the ES group are compared, some considerations can also be outlined. As previously mentioned, the results relative to the IPV and the rate of the PMs produced by the ES group were not all statistically significant and, in some cases, there was no correlation between a significant difference in the IPV of a PM and the significant difference in the rate of the same linguistic item. For example, the two-sample paired t-tests showed that the ES group statistically increased the number of pragmatic occurrences of 'you know' over the canonical uses at T2. However, the increase in the rate of the same marker was not statistically significant. In other words, the ES group was found to use the cluster 'you know' more as a PM, but the increase in the general frequency in conversation was not as extensive as the increase in the IPV. Likewise, 'yeah' was used more as a discourse structurer at T2, but at a general level, its increase in frequency in the spoken production of the informants was not statistically significant.

On the contrary, the ES group increased their production of 'like' and the difference in the results at T1 and T2 was found to be statistically significant both in terms of the IPV and the rate. Thus, not only did the ES group statistically increase the occurrence of 'like' as PM over canonical uses (i.e. verb, preposition) but the frequency of use in conversation also statistically increased. These findings are particularly revealing if considered in relation to previous studies conducted on the use of the same marker in IrE. Indeed, as mentioned elsewhere in this dissertation, 'like' has been found to be very common as a PM in Ireland, where it is used as a focuser, a quotative (Hickey 2007, 2015) and a hedge (Murphy 2015). Thus, an increase in its use by L2 learners may be a symptom of TL exposure, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

In conclusion, the findings of this study may lead one to assume that the six-month SA experience in Ireland can positively affect the frequency of PMs in the oral production of Erasmus students. More specifically, participants were found to use PMs more frequently in the post-test (T2) because the size of difference between the two means increased for all six markers under analysis. Moreover, the difference in the IPV and the rate for a number of PMs was statistically significant. Therefore, it is possible to assume that a six-month sojourn abroad was beneficial for these learners for the emergence and increase in frequency of PMs in conversation. With regard to 'like', the findings outlined in this section may lead one to assume that its increase in the learners' production may be ascribed to contact with members of the TL community. This hypothesis will be further analysed in the following chapter by considering contextual variables.

6.1.2 Characteristics of use

In order to analyse use, this study considered as a parameter of assessment the per-person mean percentage in each function. The analysis of PM use was conducted at a macro-level and a micro-level. As previously mentioned (§2.3.2), at the macro-level the analysis will focus on the two overarching categories of propositional and attitudinal functions. They include all functions considered at the micro-level, described in chapter 5. For the analysis, this study will concentrate on the three most commonly occurring pragmatic functions at the micro-level[66]. Each marker will be presented separately in this sub-section, following the order already used in chapter 5 (i.e. syntactic and lexical markers), and some overarching conclusions in terms of use will be outlined at the end of the section.

The analysis conducted on the longitudinal use of 'you know' by the ES group showed that in the production of this marker, this group did not present extensive longitudinal differences, as shown in Tables 27 & 28.

Table 27 – Macro-functions of 'you know'

YOU KNOW					
Macro-function	T1 mean	T2 mean	Diff.	P-value	Significant
Prop.	61.222%	84.136%	+22.914%	0.082	No
Att.	5.444%	9.198%	+3.753%	0.368	No

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[66] A selection was considered necessary due to the size of the dataset, the number of PMs under analysis as well as the different and varied pragmatic uses of each marker.

Table 28 – Most frequently occurring micro-functions of 'you know'[67]

	Micro-function	T1 mean		Micro-function	T2 mean	Diff.	P-value	Significant
1	Hes	45.393%	1	Hes	50.231%	+4.839%	0.662	No
2	Cla	16.359%	2	Cla	19.385%	+3.026%	0.481	No
3	AG	4.111%	3	WS	18.456%			

At the macro-level, 'you know' was mainly used for propositional macro-functions at T1 and T2, while the use of 'you know' to express an attitudinal stance was less frequent in both tests. Although there was an increase in the Diff. between the T1 and T2 means, no substantial changes over time were evident from the two-sample paired t-tests. An overall increase in both functions was assessed, but the results were not statistically significant and they may have been ascribed to a general increase in the frequency of 'you know', discussed in the previous sub-section. Thus, it may be affirmed that the ES group did not report extensive changes after six months abroad in terms of use, as they kept using the same pragmatic macro-functions at T2.

At the micro-level, results of the analysis lead to similar conclusions. No extensive changes emerged between T1 and T2 in terms of pragmatic functions. Indeed, the ES group mainly relied on the same functions (Hesitation, Clarification) and, in particular, 'you know' appeared to be predominantly a strategy to avoid embarrassing silence (T1: 45%, T2: 50%). With regard to the third most frequently occurring function at T1 and T2, some differences were observed. While at T1, students used 'you know' to attract the attention of the speaker (AG), at T2 the third most frequent pragmatic function was Word Search (WS). However, striking differences between T1 and T2 cannot be claimed. Indeed, at T1, AG immediately followed WS (3.000%) and the number of raw occurrences in these two functions was respectively 11 and 10. Thus, a substantial difference between these two functions at T1 was not present. Conversely, at T2, the function WS showed an increase of +15.456 (p-value: 0.138), while AG presented a decrease of – 2.285 (p-value: 0.392). Thus, this group mainly relied on the functions of

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[67] The pragmatic functions at the micro-level will be presented in the Tables by referring to their ranking order of frequency. In case of a correlation between the three most frequently occurring pragmatic functions at T1 and T2, the Diff. and the p-value will be also included in the Tables, whereas dissimilarities between T1 and T2 will be further expanded in the narrative sections.

Hesitation, Clarification and WS at T2. However, notwithstanding the increase in the number of occurrences, significant differences were not found.

Hence, it may be affirmed that the ES group did not extensively change their production of 'you know' at the pragmatic level after the SA experience. Moreover, the most frequent functions were mainly used to solve a communication gap: to fill pauses, to clarify the previous segment or to look for a proper word. The results of the analysis conducted at the macro- and the micro-level may lead one to affirm that this use of 'you know' was probably more in line with the conversational needs of these informants. Indeed, learners were probably more concerned about their spoken production rather than expressing an interpersonal attitude. Therefore, they mainly used 'you know' to fill pauses, to clarify what they meant and to surmount a communication gap where a word was not known.

Tables 29 & 30, which follow, present the results for 'I mean'.

Table 29 – Macro-functions of 'I mean'

I MEAN					
Macro-function	**T1 mean**	**T2 mean**	**Diff.**	**P-value**	**Significant**
Prop.	33.126%	42.192%	+9.071%	0.323	No
Att.	6.874%	24.470%	+17.596%	0.042	Yes

Table 30 – Most frequently occurring micro-functions of 'I mean'

I MEAN							
	Micro-function	**T1 mean**		**Micro-function**	**T2 mean**	**Diff.**	**P-value**	**Significant**
1	Hes	19.068%	2	Hes	18.353%	-0.715%	0.804	No
2	Cla	14.664%	1	Cla	25.181%	+10.518	0.481	No
3	Rep	3.469%	3	Jus	9.795%			

As shown in Tables 29 & 30, the longitudinal use of 'I mean' by the ES group presented similar results, especially at the micro-level. Indeed, two of the three most frequent functions at T1 (i.e. Hesitation and Clarification) were also the most frequent ones at T2, albeit with a different ranking order. With regard to the third most frequent function, although it differed between T1 and T2, similar uses can be presumed. Indeed, the third most frequent function at T1 (i.e. Repair) immediately followed the third most common one at T2 (6.325%). Thus, the longitudinal use of 'I mean' did not present extensive changes. However, a number of dissimilarities were evident. At T2, the emergence of a

new function (i.e. Justification) was found. Moreover, as shown in Table 29, the ES group started using 'I mean' for attitudinal functions more (p-value = 0.042) and the difference between T1 and T2 was statistically significant. However, as shown in Table 29, despite the significant increase in attitudinal macro-functions, the ES group used 'I mean', even at T2, predominantly for propositional macro-functions (Prop: 42.192%, Att: 24.470%).

Thus, the analysis of 'I mean' and 'you know' presented similar trends in their longitudinal use. Indeed, these PMs were mainly used as fillers and clarification devices and these findings corroborate what was previously presented, i.e. that learners were more concerned about their spoken production than expressing an interpersonal attitude[68]. However, a number of changes for 'I mean', albeit limited, was still present. The ES group started using a new pragmatic function and showed statistically significant difference for the attitudinal macro-functions at T2. Tables 31 & 32, which follow, will present the findings for 'I think' and compare them with the two syntactic PMs hitherto outlined.

Table 31 – Macro-functions of 'I think'

I THINK					
Macro-function	T1 mean	T2 mean	Diff.	P-value	Significant
Prop.	0.000%	2.000%	+2.000%	0.334	No
Att.	73.333%	98.000%	+24.667%	0.065	No

Table 32 – Most occurring micro-functions of 'I think'

I THINK							
	Micro-function	T1 mean		T2 mean	Diff.	P-value	Significant
1	Hed	80.000%	1	98.000%	+18.000%	0.128	No
2	Hes	0.000%	2	2.000%	+2.000%	0.334	No

With regard to 'I think', no extensive differences over time were observed. Indeed, it was mainly used as a hedge by the ES group. At T2, this group started using it, even though to a limited degree, as a filler as well. However, despite the increase in the size of difference between the T1 and the T2 mean, which may have been ascribed to an overall increase in the frequency of this PM (§6.1.1), results of the two-sample paired t-tests were

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[68] This assumption will be further investigated by comparing the learner production with the NS data.

not statistically significant. Thus, it can be affirmed that the use of 'I think' over time did not undergo extensive changes.

In conclusion, it is possible to affirm that in terms of the three syntactic markers analysed, the ES group did not show extensive differences in longitudinal use. A number of differences, although limited, were solely for 'I mean'. In the next paragraphs, the analysis of the lexical markers 'well', 'like' and 'yeah' will be presented. More specifically, Tables 33 & 34 summarise the findings for 'well', Tables 35 & 36 give a summary of the analysis of 'like'. Finally, Tables 37 & 38 present the findings for 'yeah'.

Table 33 – Macro-functions of 'well'

WELL					
Macro-function	T1 mean	T2 mean	Diff.	P-value	Significant
Prop.	47.786%	59.992%	+8.205%	0.419	No
Att.	6.547%	11.675%	+5.128%	0.129	No

Table 34 – Most occurring micro-functions of 'well'

WELL							
	Micro-function	T1 mean		Micro-function	T2 mean	Diff.	P-value	Significant
1	Hes	30.369%	1	Hes	38.330%	+7.967%	0.447	No
2	Tran	15.192%	2	Tran	14.877%	-0.315%	0.967	No
3	Rep	2.800%	3	Obj	6.953%			

As is evident from Tables 33 & 34, the results of the analysis of 'well' are quite similar to the ones previously outlined. Indeed, at the macro-level, the use of 'well' by the ES group, despite a modest increase, did not present significant differences between T1 and T2. Similarly, at the micro-level, the two most frequently occurring functions, namely Hesitation and Transition, remained unchanged at T2. With regard to the third most frequent function at T1 (Repair), it was ranked as the fourth most frequent one at T2 and, therefore, immediately followed the pragmatic function 'Objection'. As already pointed out for 'you know' and 'I mean', a general increase for all functions, with the exception of the use of 'well' for transitions, was shown. However, differences were not shown to be to a statistically significant degree. Therefore, it may be affirmed that, despite minor changes, the ES group did not extensively change the use of 'well' in conversation after their SA experience.

Table 35 – Macro-functions of 'like'

LIKE					
Macro-function	**T1 mean**	**T2 mean**	**Diff.**	**P-value**	**Significant**
Prop.	83.268%	81.655%	-1.613%	0.811	No
Att.	3.399%	11.679%	+8.280%	0.010	Yes

Table 36 – Most occurring micro-functions of 'like'

LIKE							
	Micro-function	**T1 mean**		**Micro-function**	**T2 mean**	**Diff.**	**P-value**	**Significant**
1	Exe	38.768%	2	Exe	20.491%	-18.276%	0.028	Yes
2	Appr	23.952%	1	DM	33.553%			
3	Hes	9.286%	3	Hes	16.672%	+7.386%	0.027	Yes

The longitudinal use of 'like' by the ES group presented the most striking differences between T1 and T2. At the macro-level, as evident from Table 34, the ES group decreased their use of 'like' for propositional functions, even though not to a statistically significant degree, and significantly increased the attitudinal functions. At the micro-level, at first glance, the results of 'like' appear to be similar to the ones of other PMs hitherto analysed. Indeed, as Table 35 shows, they presented two recurring top functions at T2 and a new one, less frequent at T1. However, in all the functions at the micro-level, with the sole exception of 'quotative like', the PM presented statistically significant differences.[69]

As is evident from Table 35, at T1 'like' was mainly used to introduce an example (38.768%) and an approximation (23.952%). The frequency of these two functions may be ascribed to their closeness to the 'core' meaning of 'like' (§5.2.2), which may have caused their frequency in the learner language to be higher in comparison to other pragmatic functions upon arrival in the TL community. At T2, the ES group presented a statistically significant decrease in the use of these two functions (Exe_Diff.= -18.276, Exe_pvalue: 0.028; Appr_Diff. = -18.364%, Appr_pvalue: 0.029). While these functions decreased at T2, a number of functions, which have been found to be characteristics of

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[69] In order to allow consistency and clarity in the discussion, the analysis focused on the three most common functions for all markers. In the case of 'like', some considerations were also reckoned appropriate for functions which were not in the top three list. These functions will be further analysed when discussing the effect of TL exposure. In order to provide a clearer picture of the longitudinal use of this PM, the full list of pragmatic functions of 'like' used by the ES group is available in Appendix H.

the TL (Hickey 2007, 2015; Murphy 2015), increased to a significant degree at T2 (DM^{70}_Diff. = + 24.686, DM_pvalue = 0.000; Foc_Diff. = + 11.029; Foc_pvalue = 0.003; Hed_Diff = +2.327, Hed_pvalue = 0.025). Thus, the longitudinal use of 'like' by the ES group appears to have undergone extensive changes in the production of this PM between T1 and T2. Moreover, an effect of exposure to the language of the host community seems to be plausible and will be further investigated in the following chapter.

Tables 37 & 38 are devoted to 'yeah'.

Table 37 – Macro-functions of 'yeah'

YEAH					
Macro-function	T1 mean	T2 mean	Diff.	P-value	Significant
Prop.	93.330%	100.000%	+6.667%	0.334	No
Att.	0.000%	0.000%	+0.000%	//////	N/A

Table 38 – Most frequently occurring micro-functions of 'yeah'

YEAH								
	Micro-function	T1 mean		Micro-function	T2 mean	Diff.	P-value	Significant
1	Hes	59.763%	1	Hes	52.826%	-6.907%	0.316	No
2	En_tu	16.912%	3	En_tu	15.644%	-1.268%	0.775	No
3	Exp.	11.372%	2	Exp.	20.847%	+9.475%	0.055	No

As Tables 37 & 38 show, the longitudinal use of 'yeah' by the ES group did not show considerable changes between T1 and T2. At the macro-level, 'yeah' was mainly used as a discourse structurer. Similar findings emerged from the analysis of the other two groups, as the following sections will show. At the micro-level, the most frequent functions at T1 and T2 were quite homogeneous, albeit with a different ranking order. As is possible to see from Table 38, 'yeah' was mainly a filler in the spoken production of this group (T1= 60%; T2=53%). It was also used to mark the end of the turn and, sometimes, as a conversation strategy to invite the hearer to intervene or add something. The longitudinal analysis of 'yeah' showed that in this function, this PM occurred slightly less at T2 (Diff. -1.268%). Conversely, 'yeah' as a marker of expansion, increased at T2 (Diff. +9.475%).

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[70] As will be discussed in §6.3.2, this function was found to be the most frequent in the NS data.

However, on a general note, no statistically significant differences were assessed in its longitudinal use.

Thus, with regard to the pragmatic functions of the six PMs under analysis, the ES group presented similar trends in the longitudinal use of these linguistic items. There was a tendency towards an increase in the number of PMs in each function but, with the exception of 'like', no statistically significant differences were present. Some minor changes were found for 'I mean' but, on a general note, the ES group used PMs at T1 and T2 to perform mainly speech management functions.

6.1.3 Longitudinal analysis of the Erasmus data: main findings

In conclusion, from the longitudinal analysis conducted on the ES group, it emerged that after a semester abroad Erasmus students used more PMs in conversation. Indeed, the size of difference between the T1 and the T2 mean was a positive value for the frequencies and pragmatic functions of all PMs under analysis. However, for the majority of the PMs analysed, the differences between T1 and T2 did not prove to be statistically significant. In terms of frequency, the ES group reported significant results for the IPV of three PMs ('yeah', 'you know', 'like') and the rate of two PMs ('I mean', 'like'). In terms of use and pragmatic functions, the most frequent functions remained rather unchanged at T2 and the ES group was also found to use all the PMs analysed to express hesitation. Minor differences were shown for 'I mean', which was used more in attitudinal macro-functions and began to be used also to express a Justification at T2. With regard to 'like', it underwent the most striking differences both in terms of frequency and use. Indeed, Erasmus students started using it to a greater extent both in terms of the ratio between pragmatic and non-pragmatic uses as well as on the overall number of words produced.

Thus, on a general note, the response to the first RQ of this study can be understood as positive. The Erasmus students showed increases over time in the frequency of these linguistic items as PMs as well as a number of changes in their main pragmatic functions. As a consequence, it may be affirmed that the SA sojourn in Ireland positively affected the production of these linguistic items in conversation for these informants. However, results can only be partially generalised, as not all the longitudinal uses of the six markers analysed presented statistically significant differences between T1 and T2. Thus, it may be affirmed that, although some changes were present, a six-month SA sojourn did not extensively and substantially affect the production of PMs by these learners. However,

an effect of the SA and exposure to the language of the host community can still be surmised as the longitudinal use of 'like' presented significant differences in all the aspects analysed.

The next section will compare these findings with the results of the data produced by the AU group in order to assess whether the two groups of learners performed similarly or differently over time. The comparative focus will allow an investigation of the role of learner status in the longitudinal use of PMs in conversation.

6.2 Comparative analysis between learner groups

RQ2 - To what extent does learner status or *raison d'être* within the target language (TL) community affect the use of these linguistic phenomena?

As previously mentioned, a key question of this study investigated whether different SA experiences lead to similar or different linguistic outcomes. More specifically, the comparative analysis was conducted with a view to:

a) evaluating whether there is an optimal learner condition or *raison d'être* within the TL community which can aid the production of the linguistic phenomena under analysis;

b) investigating whether the findings can be attributed to the destination of stay (destination-related), the SA context of learning itself regardless of the type of SA sojourn (context-related) or if they need to be ascribed to the type of SA sojourn (experience-related).

6.2.1 Frequency

In order to address RQ2, results of the ES group were compared with the AU group. This sub-section will focus on the frequency of use, whereas pragmatic uses will be discussed in §6.2.2. Tables 39 & 40, which follow, show the results of the analysis in terms of frequency of use for the AU group.

Table 39 – Longitudinal frequency – Au pairs – IPV

AU PAIRS					
	T1 mean	**T2 mean**	**Diff.**	**P-value**	**Significant**
You know	50.832%	61.486%	+10.655%	0.418	No
I mean	45.774%	62.381%	+16.609%	0.294	No
I think	13.578%	16.402%	+2.824%	0.405	No
Well	34.556%	46.184%	+11.638%	0.257	No
Like	12.777%	48.263%	+ 35.485%	0.001	Yes
Yeah	43.999%	45.107%	+1.108%	0.788	No

Table 40 – Longitudinal frequency – Au pairs – Rate

AU PAIRS					
	T1 mean	**T2 mean**	**Diff.**	**P-value**	**Significant**
You know	1.625	1.597	-0.028	0.953	No
I mean	0.660	1.172	+0.512	0.507	No
I think	0.598	0.788	+0.190	0.367	No
Well	0.456	1.354	+0.098	0.038	Yes
Like	1.214	6.183	+4.967	0.003	Yes
Yeah	7.009	8.167	+1.158	0.532	No

As Tables 39 & 40 show, au pairs also seem to have benefitted from the SA experience because they started to produce more PMs in conversation. Indeed, there was a tendency towards an increase in the size of difference between the T1 mean and the T2 mean, both in terms of the IPV and the rate. However, while the ES group reported an increase in all markers and in all values, the AU group also experienced a slight decrease in the frequency of use of 'you know' in conversation (Diff. rate = -0.028). With regard to statistical differences in the IPVs, the AU group experienced a statistically significant increase only for 'like'. Whereas in terms of rate, these learners presented a statistically significant difference for 'like' and 'well'. Thus, even for this group, the difference in the frequency of use between T1 and T2 of 'like' was statistically significant both in terms of the ratio between pragmatic and non-pragmatic uses of this item as well as in terms of general frequency over the total number of words produced. Moreover, both groups reported differences to a statistically significant degree in terms of rate for two PMs.

However, although the two groups seem to have reported similar results (i.e. overall increase in the frequency of use of PMs), if analysed under closer inspection, the two groups performed slightly differently from each other over time. The findings are summarised in Tables 41 & 42, which follow. More specifically, Table 41 will show the comparison of statistically significant results between the two groups. Table 42 will,

instead, analyse the size of difference between the T1 and the T2 mean (Diff.), in order to investigate whether the two groups were on par in the production of these linguistic items or whether one of the two groups outperformed the other. As previously mentioned, findings will be discussed in terms of results due to the SA learning context (context - related), destination of the SA experience (destination-related) and the type of SA experience (experience-related).

Table 41 – Comparison Significant Differences – ES & AU group

PM	ERASMUS STUDENTS				AU PAIRS			
	IPV		RATE		IPV		RATE	
	P-value	Sign.[71]	P-value	Sign.	P-value	Sign.	P-value	Sign.
Yeah	0.042	Yes	0.477	No	0.788	No	0.532	No
I mean	0.052	No	0.049	Yes	0.294	No	0.567	No
You know	0.006	Yes	0.161	No	0.418	No	0.953	No
Like	0.002	Yes	0.013	Yes	0.001	Yes	0.003	Yes
Well	0.206	No	0.356	No	0.257	No	0.038	Yes
I think	0.356	No	0.803	No	0.405	No	0.367	No

Table 42 – Comparison Diff. ES & AU group – IPV & Rate

	ERASMUS STUDENTS		AU PAIRS	
	IPV – Diff.	Rate – Diff.	IPV – Diff.	Rate – Diff.
Yeah	+9.390%	+2.437	+1.108%	+1.158
I mean	+24.381%	+0.657	+16.609%	+0.512
You know	+37.438%	+1.666	+10.655%	-0.028
Like	+20.556%	+6.950	+35.485%	+4.967
Well	+11.515%	+0.424	+11.638%	+0.098
I think	+3.038%	+0.055	+2.824%	+0.190

As is evident from Table 41 & 42, the findings of this study suggest that there was an overall increase in the frequency of these linguistic phenomena in the spoken production of the learners after a six-month sojourn abroad. Thus, it may be affirmed that an SA experience tends to aid the production of these linguistic items in conversation. This finding may be gauged as context-specific, because both groups, regardless of their type of SA experience, reported an increase after their SA sojourn. However, the increase in frequency was found to be statistically significant only for a number of markers. More specifically, in terms of rate, both groups reported significant differences for two PMs (ES: 'I mean', 'like'; AU: 'like', 'well'), out of the six under analysis. As a result, it may

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[71] Statistically significant.

be concluded that, although an overall increase and some statistically significant findings emerged, SA learning contexts appear to affect the frequency of PMs in the L2 only to a certain extent.

With regard to the destination-related results, both groups presented statistically significant differences, both in terms of the IPV and the rate, for the PM 'like'. This finding can be considered particularly revealing as a number of studies previously mentioned (Hickey 2007, 2015; Murphy 2015) attested that 'like' is a common feature in IrE. Consequently, since both groups used 'like' quite frequently at T2, an effect of exposure to the language of the host community can be assumed. Moreover, results, both in terms of differences of the IPV and the rate, were found to be statistically significant (p-values < .05). Thus, it may be assumed that a six-month stay in Ireland may affect the production of the PM 'like' in L2 English to a statistically significant degree, despite the type of SA experience under analysis. Therefore, these findings have been classified as 'destination-related', as they may be ascribed to the TL spoken by the host community.

However, in terms of higher frequency of production, the ES group seems to have slightly outperformed the other group in the longitudinal analysis. Indeed, if the p-values of IPVs are considered, the ES group reported three statistically significant results (i.e. 'yeah', 'you know', 'like'), whereas the AU group were only found to have significantly increased the IPV of the PM 'like'. Thus, it may be concluded that, with the exception of 'like', the AU group did not extensively change the ratio between pragmatic and canonical uses of these linguistic items and, as a result, the canonical counterpart of these linguistic items was still high. These findings can be classified as 'experience-related', as it appears that there is a correlation between the different learning status within the TL community and the longitudinal development of PMs. More specifically, it can be affirmed that the ES group outperformed the AU group in terms of frequency of use as the former reported more statistically significant results.

Likewise, if the size of differences between the two means is considered, the Erasmus group reported the most substantial increases. Indeed, as is possible to see from Table 42, although the AU group tended to increase the use of PMs, the frequency in the AU spoken production was not as extensive for most of the PMs under analysis. The sole exceptions were the IPV of 'like' and the rate of 'I think' where they presented a higher value (AU: +35.485% *versus* ES: +20.556%; AU: +0.190 *versus* ES: +0.055). Moreover, the AU group also presented a decrease, albeit slight, in the frequency of 'you know' (-0.028).

Therefore, a six-month Erasmus experience abroad may presumably affect to a greater degree the frequency in conversation of these linguistic phenomena.

In conclusion, this sub-section aimed at comparing the two groups of learners in terms of the frequency of these linguistic items. More specifically, the findings were analysed in relation to the effects of the context of learning (context-related), destination of stay (destination-related) and the type of SA experience (experience-related). It has been found that the SA context can aid the production of these linguistic items, in spite of the type of SA experience, but the increase in the frequency of use was not statistically significant for all the PMs under analysis. 'Like', which is very common as a PM in IrE, was found to increase to a statistically significant degree for both groups. Thus, an effect of exposure to the language of the host community can be presumed (destination-related). Finally, although an overall increase was assessed, the ES group seems to have somewhat outperformed the other group in terms of frequency. Thus, an effect of the SA experience in that regard can be posited.

6.2.2 Characteristics of use

With regard to use, this sub-section will first present the results of the AU group and then compare the results with the findings outlined in sub-section §6.1.2. Findings will be outlined considering the syntactic markers first and then the lexical ones.

With regard to the longitudinal use of 'you know', the au pairs demonstrated the following findings, summarised in Tables 43 & 44.

Table 43 - Macro-functions of 'you know'

YOU KNOW					
Macro-function	T1 mean	T2 mean	Diff.	P-value	Significant
Prop.	53.753%	66.419%	+12.665%	0.366	No
Att.	12.919%	13.581%	+0.668%	0.917	No

Table 44 – Most occurring micro-functions of 'you know'

YOU KNOW							
	Micro-function	T1 mean		Micro-function	T2 mean	Diff.	P-value	Significant
1	Hes	33.961%	1	Hes	39.536%	+5.575%	0.638	No
2	Cla	9.980%	2	Cla	21.472%	+11.492%	0.481	No
3	WS	7.888%	3	SeT	11.421%			

As is possible to see from Tables 43 & 44, the use of 'you know' by the AU group did not undergo substantial changes. Although there was an increase in all functions, the differences were not statistically significant. If the pragmatic functions at the micro-level are considered, this group showed results similar to the ES group. Indeed, the two most frequent pragmatic functions at T1 remained rather unchanged at T2. Moreover, these two pragmatic functions were also the most frequent ones among the Erasmus students. Thus, it may be assumed that, notwithstanding the type of SA experience, 'you know' is mainly used in the learner language to express hesitation or introduce a clarification[72]. However, as previously mentioned, none of the differences between T1 and T2 were statistically significant. Therefore, it is possible to affirm that, despite minor differences, the use of 'you know' by the AU group did not extensively change over time.

With regard to the third most recurring function, the AU group used 'you know' for WS at T1. The use of 'you know' in this function decreased at T2 (Diff. -6.848%), even though not to a statistically significant degree (p-value 0.325), and the function of Self-evident truth started to be used more frequently at T2 (Diff. +4.650, p-value 0.360). This result is revealing, especially if analysed in relation to the ES group. Indeed, the ES group at T2 mainly relied on propositional functions (i.e. hesitation, clarification and word search). Conversely, the au pairs started using, to a greater extent, an attitudinal function, i.e. self-evident truth, which is also sociolinguistically marked since in this function 'you know' occurs mainly in the right periphery[73]. Thus, although the differences in frequency were not statistically significant, the AU group presented a variety in the typology of the most recurring pragmatic functions, which are not solely ascribed to the necessity of surmounting a communication gap.

Tables 45 & 46, which follow, will present and summarise the findings of the longitudinal use of 'I mean'.

Table 45 - Macro-functions of 'I mean'

I MEAN					
Macro-function	**T1 mean**	**T2 mean**	**Diff.**	**P-value**	**Significant**
Prop.	53.753%	66.419%	+12.665%	0.366	No
Att.	12.913%	13.581%	+0.668%	0.917	No

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[72] This assumption will be further analysed in 6.3.2 when comparing the learner data with the NS corpus.
[73] See §5.1.1

Table 46 – Most occurring micro-functions of 'I mean'

	Micro-function	T1 mean		Micro-function	T2 mean	Diff.	P-value	Significant
				I MEAN				
1	Cla	15.204%	1	Cla	23.444%	+8.241%	0.463	No
2	Hes	13.897%	2	Hes	20.667%	+6.789%	0.510	No
3	Hed	8.989%	3	Hed	14.333%	+5.344%	0.237	No

As is possible to see from Tables 45 & 46, the AU group did not present striking differences in the longitudinal use of 'I mean'. Indeed, despite an overall increase in all functions, differences at T1 and T2 were not statistically significant. At the micro-level, the au pairs did not show any differences in the type of pragmatic micro-functions between T1 and T2. Thus, it can be assumed that a six-month experience abroad did not substantially affect the longitudinal use of 'I mean' by the AU group. If the results of the ES group are considered, it is possible to observe that the two most frequent functions of 'I mean', albeit with a different ranking order, were Clarification and Hesitation. Thus, it is plausible to assume that 'I mean' was mainly used by the learners in these two functions. The comparison with the reference corpus will allow us to analyse whether these two frequent functions were also the most commonly occurring ones in the NS data.

With regard to the third most recurring pragmatic function, the AU group used 'I mean' quite frequently to mitigate the strength of their assertions both at T1 and at T2. Conversely, for the ES group, Self-repair and Justification were ranked as the third most frequent pragmatic functions respectively at T1 and T2. If the function of 'hedging' is considered, it was one of the least frequently used at T1 by the Erasmus students, especially if the dispersal of the function is considered (i.e. only two participants reported the use of 'I mean' as a hedge in the ES group at T1[74]). The function started to be used by more participants at T2, but if the two percentages of uses are compared, the AU group tended to use 'I mean' to hedge more often than the ES group (i.e. AU_T2: 14.333%, ES_T2: 6.056%). Thus, with regard to the use of 'I mean', while the same first two functions were similar in both learner groups, they differed in the type of the third most frequent pragmatic function.

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[74] In order to allow more clarity, the per-person results are available in Appendix H.

Tables 47 & 48, which follow, will present the results of the third syntactic marker under analysis.

Table 47 - Macro-functions of 'I think'

I THINK					
Macro-function	**T1 mean**	**T2 mean**	**Diff.**	**P-value**	**Significant**
Prop.	0.000%	0.000%	+0.000%	/////	No
Att.	86.667%	80.000%	-6.667%	0.032	No

Table 48 – Most occurring micro-functions of 'I think'

I THINK							
	Micro-function	**T1 mean**		**T2 mean**	**Diff.**	**P-value**	**Significant**
1	Hed	86.667%	1	80.000%	-6.667%	0.032	No
2	Hes	0.000%	2	0.000%	+0.000%	/////	No

No statistically significant differences and no occurrences of 'I think' as a filler were found for this group. The au pairs mainly used this PM as a hedge. In that regard, the ES group and the AU group performed differently. Indeed, as mentioned in §6.1.2, the ES group started using, although to a limited degree, 'I think' as a filler as well. With regard to the per-person percentage of use, it is possible to note that at T2 there was a slight decrease in the use of 'I think' (Diff: -6.667%). This phenomenon can be attributed to the dispersal in the sample. Indeed, at T1, 13 participants used the PM as a hedge. On the contrary, at T1, only 12 participants used it, as is possible to see in Appendix H.

With regard to 'well', results of the longitudinal analysis are summarised in Table 49 and 50.

Table 49 - Macro-functions of 'well'

WELL					
Macro-function	**T1 mean**	**T2 mean**	**Diff.**	**P-value**	**Significant**
Prop.	45.595%	58.940%	+13.345%	0.339	No
Att.	14.405%	14.405%	-0.012%	0.999	No

Table 50 – Most occurring micro-functions of 'well'

	Micro-function	T1 mean		Micro-function	T2 mean	Diff.	P-value	Significant
	WELL							
1	Hes	17.500%	1	Hes	34.135%	+16.635%	0.663	No
2	Obj	10.833%	2	Rep	13.409%			
3	Tran	8.333%	3	Tran	10.394%	+2.061%	0.566	No

If the macro-functions of 'well' are considered (Table 49), no substantial changes can be seen over time. At the micro-level (Table 50), the most frequent function was Hesitation, which seems to be even more frequent at T2. With regard to the second most frequent function, at T1, 'well' was used by the au pairs to express an objection and at T2 to self-correct. Self-Correction was one of the functions which reported the most striking changes by these learners. Indeed, it was one of the least used at T1 (0.833%) and it underwent changes to a statistically significant degree (Diff: +12.575, p-value: 0.018) at T2. Conversely, the use of 'well' to express objection decreased (Diff: -4.539) but not at a statistically significant level (p-value: 0.304). Thus, it may be affirmed that an SA sojourn did not substantially affect the production of 'well' over time for these learners, with the exception of the pragmatic function of repairing.

If these findings are compared with the ES group, a number of similarities emerges. Although, the ES group did not present statistically significant differences, the two groups seem to share the most common functions (i.e. hesitation, transition, objection or self-repair). Thus, it can be assumed that these functions are among the most common in the learner production. The comparison with the NS corpus will analyse whether these functions are also shared by Irish speakers or are characteristics of the learner language.

Tables 51 and 52 will display the longitudinal use of 'like' by the AU group.

Table 51 - Macro-functions of 'like'

Macro-function	T1 mean	T2 mean	Diff.	P-value	Significant
		LIKE			
Prop.	66.667%	87.295%	+20.628%	0.137	No
Att.	0.000%	12.705%	+12.705%	0.000	Yes

Table 52 – Most occurring micro-functions of 'like'

	Micro-function	T1 mean		Micro-function	T2 mean	Diff.	P-value	Significant
1	Exe	22.825%	2	Exe	22.750%	-0.074%	0.995	No
2	Quo	13.526%	3	Quo	13.299%	-0.227%	0.972	No
3	Appr	12.521%	1	DM	34.745%			

As evident from Table 51, at the macro-level, the AU group started using 'like' in attitudinal functions more often and the differences between T1 and T2 showed to be statistically significant. At the micro-level, at T2, 'like' was mainly used as a DM and the increase in the frequency of this function was also statistically significant (Diff.: +31,894, p-value: 0.000). The other two frequent micro-functions (i.e. Exemplifier, Approximator) did not substantially change over time and only a minor decrease was assessed (i.e. respectively -0.074%, -0.227%). With regard to the functions that have been regarded as specific to Irish English (i.e. Quotative, Focuser, Hedging), this group presented the emergence of 'like' as a highlighting device and the use of 'like' for quotations as one of the most frequent functions at T2. Conversely, no occurrences were found with regard to the use of 'like' as a hedge[75] for the AU group.

If these findings are compared to the ES group, some considerations need to be outlined and discussed. With regard to the similarities, both groups significantly increased the percentages of attitudinal macro-functions and the use of 'like' as a discourse structurer in narratives. Thus, it may be affirmed that after six months in Ireland, learners of English, regardless of their *raison d'être* within the TL community, may be expected to change their production of 'like' in these two functions over time. Moreover, both groups were found to use, albeit to a lesser extent, other functions which have been considered typical of IrE. The ES group statistically increased the use of 'like' as a focuser and as a hedge. For the AU group, the emergence of 'like' as a focuser was assessed, whereas no occurrences of 'like' as a hedge were found.

However, a number of differences can also be outlined. Although the AU group presented changes in the longitudinal use of the PM 'like', it may be affirmed that the ES group reported the most striking changes. Indeed, more statistically significant differences were

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[75] The full list of the longitudinal uses of the different pragmatic functions is available in Appendix H.

found for the ES group. Moreover, the ES group decreased at a significant level the use of 'like' as exemplifier and approximator, which did not happen for the AU group. These findings are revealing because, as mentioned in §5.2.2, these two functions are the ones which are closer to the core meaning of the word 'like' and were also among the most common ones upon arrival in the TL community. The comparison of the learner data with the reference corpus will permit us to investigate whether these two functions are predominantly exclusive in the learner language.

Additionally, if the variety and dispersal of micro-functions are considered, a number of dissimilarities can be outlined. More specifically, the ES group at T2 predominantly used 'like' as discourse structurer, exemplifier and filler, which are all functions of speech management (Aijmer 2011). Thus, although the attitudinal macro-functions tended to increase over time, the predominant pragmatic functions assessed in the ES speech were propositional. Conversely, the AU group also presented among the most common ones, functions which can be considered attitudinal in some cases. Indeed, as shown in ex. 62 in §5.2.2, 'quotative like' is not only a reporting structure but it is a way of expressing an inner thought and of showing the speaker's attitude towards an anecdote.

In conclusion, both groups presented considerable changes between T1 and T2 for 'like'. Thus, it can be posited that an SA sojourn in the TL community may affect the production of this PM. However, if analysed under closer inspection, the two groups slightly differed in the detail of their development. The ES group reported more occurrences of 'like' at T2 and the differences in the use of the pragmatic functions were statistically significant. Moreover, they started using a function (i.e. hedge) which was not used by the other group. Thus, it can be affirmed that the ES group slightly outperformed the other group with regard to the diversity of pragmatic uses of 'like'. However, if the main pragmatic functions are considered, the ES group predominantly used 'like' for propositional macro-functions, while the AU group also used it to express an attitudinal stance.

Tables 53 & 54 present the results for 'yeah'.

Table 53 - Macro-functions of 'yeah'

YEAH					
Macro-function	T1 mean	T2 mean	Diff.	P-value	Significant
Prop.	100.000%	100.000%	0.000%	/////	N/A
Att.	0.000%	0.000%	0.000%	/////	N/A

Table 54 – Most occurring micro-functions of 'yeah'

	Micro-function	T1 mean		Micro-function	T2 mean	Diff.	P-value	Significant
1	Hes	55.627%	1	Hes	58.871%	-0.756%	0.891	No
2	En_tu	19.058%	2	En_tu	21.777%	+2.199%	0.637	No
3	Exp	17.813%	3	Exp	16.021%	-1.793%	0.651	No

As Tables 53 & 54 show, no extensive changes can be observed over time for the production of 'yeah' as a PM by the AU group. Indeed, the marker was mainly used for speech management macro-functions and more specifically, it seems to be used to fill pauses, to mark the end of a turn and to expand the previous segment. In these uses, it is commonly used by this learner group upon arrival in Ireland as well as just before their departure. No extensive increases or decreases were assessed over time and no significant differences can be reported. If compared with the other group, a number of similarities can also be outlined. For instance, both groups relied on the same pragmatic functions and did not present significant changes in the longitudinal analysis. However, in terms of size differences, the ES group reported higher levels than the au pairs (Hes: -6.907%, Exp: +9.475%).

6.2.3 Comparative analysis: the role of learner status

In conclusion, the comparative analysis between the longitudinal analysis of the ES and the AU group presented a number of trends, similarities and differences. In terms of frequency, both groups, on a general note, reported an increase in the number of PMs in their spoken production both with reference to the IPV and the rate. The AU group presented a slight decrease exclusively in the rate of 'you know' (-0.028%). Moreover, although both groups reported an increase, the size of difference between the T1 and the T2 mean was higher for the ES group. Additionally, they presented more significant results in terms of the IPV. Thus, it may be assumed that the ES group outperformed the other especially in terms of frequency of PMs in conversation.

With regard to use, it appears that the AU group presented more variety in terms of pragmatic functions at T2. Indeed, although both groups presented two similar occurring functions for a number of markers ('you know', 'like', 'I mean'), the AU group seems to have undergone a number of changes in terms of use. Indeed, while the ES group was found to rely mainly on propositional functions as the three main ones ('you know',

'like'), the au pairs were also found to use an attitudinal function among the most frequent ones ('you know' = self-evident truth, 'like' = quotative). However, it is also observed that the ES group started using the function of Justification for 'I mean' quite frequently and was found to use 'like' as a hedge in conversation, which, instead, was not present in the AU data. Thus, it may be affirmed that, the response to the second RQ of this dissertation can be considered positive in terms of frequency, as an effect of the type of SA experience was found in that regard. However, if characteristics of use are considered, the two groups were almost on par: different results were found in some cases but they may have been related to the input in the TL community or the different conversational needs during their stay abroad.

The next section will compare the learner data with the Irish NS corpus in order to assess a) which group was found to increasingly approach NS frequency and use; b) whether sociopragmatic development at the end of the SA experience can still be considered specific to the learner language.

6.3 Comparative analysis between learners' data and native speakers' data

> RQ3- Is it possible to identify differences, in terms of frequencies and discursive uses, between learners and Irish speakers?

Results were then compared to the reference corpus of NSs in order to assess whether the two groups approached NS use at T2 and which group developed more towards "native-like" use. In order to address these two questions, results were analysed with one-way ANOVA tests in conjunction to two-sample paired t-tests[76]. This section will first discuss the results in terms of frequency of use (§6.3.1). Characteristics of use will be analysed in §6.3.2.

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[76] The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was chosen because it is used to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the means of two or more independent groups. Specifically, it tests the null hypothesis $H_0 = \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 = ... = \mu_k$ (μ = mean, k = number of groups). If ANOVA returns a statistically significant result (<0.05), H_0 can be rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_A), i.e. there are at least two groups that are statistically different from each other, can be accepted. However, ANOVA is an omnibus statistic test and it cannot indicate which specific groups were statistically significantly different from each other; it only shows that at least two groups were different. Therefore, two-sample paired t-tests were then conducted to assess if there were statistically significant differences among the three groups, by comparing the ES *versus* AU group, the ES *versus* the NS group and the AU *versus* the NS group.

6.3.1 Frequency

In order to assess if the three groups performed similarly or differently in terms of frequency of use, ANOVA tests were conducted. On a general note, if the ANOVA tests generated non-significant results, substantial differences among the three groups were not present and similar production of PMs was assumed. Consequently, since the ANOVA tests included the reference corpus, if the results of the tests did not present statistically significant differences, development towards native-like frequency and characteristics of use was supposed. Conversely, if the ANOVA tests generated significant differences, one of the three groups was inevitably considered to have a different degree of frequency and use. Thus, two-sample paired t-tests were subsequently conducted to locate the difference (i.e. whether between ES vs AU, ES vs NS or AU vs NS[77]).

Results of the ANOVA tests are summarised in Table 55 and are also fully provided in Appendix G. Results of the two-sample t-tests are summarised in Tables 56 and 57 and the following paragraphs will outline the main trends.

Table 55 – Summary of results – ANOVA tests

	IPV		RATE	
	P-value	Significant	P-value	Significant
You know	0.016	Yes	0.071	No
I mean	0.894	No	0.813	No
I think	0.010	Yes	0.026	Yes
Well	0.280	No	0.964	No
Like	0.023	Yes	0.012	Yes
Yeah	0.006	Yes	0.552	No

Table 56 – Summary of results – two-sample paired t-tests (IPV)

	ES vs. AU	Significant	ES vs. NS	Significant	AU vs. NS	Significant
You know	0.093	No	0.210	No	0.011	Yes
I mean	0.909	No	0.734	No	0.645	No
I think	0.783	No	0.011	Yes	0.018	Yes
Well	0.703	No	0.319	No	0.030	Yes
Like	0.912	No	0.004	Yes	0.018	Yes
Yeah	0.010	Yes	0.007	Yes	0.913	No

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[77] Since one of the aims of the study was to assess the effects of the SA experience on language learning through longitudinal lenses, the values of the learner data considered for the comparative analysis with the learner corpus were the T2 ones.

Table 57 - Summary of results – two-sample paired t-tests (Rate)

	ES vs. AU	Significant	ES vs. NS	Significant	AU vs. NS	Significant
You know	0.912	No	0.004	Yes	0.018	Yes
I mean	0.810	No	0.675	No	0.591	No
I think	0.436	No	0.062	No	0.025	Yes
Well	0.847	No	0.715	No	0.914	No
Like	0.243	No	0.092	No	0.002	Yes
Yeah	0.340	No	0.549	No	0.570	No

As is possible to see from Table 55, the three groups performed similarly, both in terms of the IPV and the rate, for 'I mean' and 'well'.[78] Thus, it can be affirmed that the learners at T2 approached native-like frequency for 'I mean' and 'well' because no substantial differences among the three groups were found. For the other PMs, the tests with ANOVA show that there was statistical difference between at least two groups for the IPV of 'you know' and 'yeah'. Additionally, statistically significant differences were found for both values for 'I think' and 'like'. As previously mentioned, two-sample paired t-tests were conducted to investigate this difference further.

As Tables 56 & 57 show, in terms of the outcomes of the SA experience (i.e. comparison between T2 for each learner group), the learners did not present substantial differences at the end of the SA experience, with the exception of the IPV of 'yeah'. With regard to the comparison with the NS corpus, the AU group did not approach NS frequency of use in terms of the IPV of 'you know', the rate of 'I think' and 'like' because the tests generated statistically significant results. Likewise, the ES group did not approach NS frequency of use for the IPV of 'I think' and 'yeah'. Both groups were still learner-like with regard to the IPV of 'like' and the rate of 'you know'. With regard to the rate of 'yeah', the two learner groups were found to approach NS frequency of use. These findings are summarised in Table 58.

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[78] These findings are corroborated by the subsequent two-sample t-tests as the differences between the groups haVE been found to be non-significant.

Table 58 – Comparison between learner and native frequency of use

PM	IPV	RESULT	RATE	RESULT
You know	AU statistically differed	ES approached native-like frequency	ES & AU statistically differed	Learners did not approach native-like frequency
I think	ES statistically differed	AU approached native-like frequency	AU statistically differed	ES approached native-like frequency
Like	ES & AU statistically differed	Learners did not approach native-like frequency	AU statistically differed	ES approached native-like frequency
Yeah	ES statistically differed	AU approached native-like frequency	No statistically significant differences	The three groups performed similarly

In conclusion, results of the statistical analyses showed that for some markers ('I mean', 'well' and the rate of 'yeah'), participants approached NS frequency. For the other markers, a number of differences were found. Since the ES group showed fewer statistically significant differences, especially in terms of normalised frequency, it may be assumed that this group slightly outperformed the other in terms of overall frequency as they approached NS values. Conversely, with regard to the IPV, the AU group was more similar to NS values. Thus, even though some subtle differences were present, the findings of the study suggest that the two groups were almost on par in the frequency of use of PMs and present similar differences when compared with the NS corpus.

6.3.2 Characteristics of use

The pragmatic uses of each marker by the learners at T2 were compared with the NS uses, in order to assess whether there was conformity to or deviation from Irish NS usage. This sub-section will briefly describe the analysis conducted on the two macro functions and then the analysis at the micro-level will be illustrated by referring to each marker under analysis.

At the macro-level, the ANOVA tests (Appendix G) did not show significant differences among the three groups with regard to the propositional functions. Conversely, a number

of dissimilarities were present for the attitudinal ones. Results are summarised in Tables 59 & 60[79] which follow.

Table 59 – Summary of the results – ANOVA tests – macro functions

PM	Propositional		Attitudinal	
	P-value	**Significant**	**P-value**	**Significant**
You know	0.213	No	0.002	Yes
I mean	0.955	No	0.337	No
I think	0.000	Yes	0.039	Yes
Well	0.795	No	0.001	Yes
Like	0.251	No	0.023	Yes

Table 60 – Summary of the results – two-sample t-tests – macro functions

PM	ES vs AU	Significant	ES vs NS	Significant	AU vs NS	Significant
I think_Prop	0.326	No	0.000	Yes	0.000	Yes
You know_Att	0.480	No	0.000	Yes	0.014	Yes
I think_Att	0.109	No	0.000	Yes	0.437	No
Well_Att	0.664	No	0.002	Yes	0.002	Yes
Like_Att	0.781	No	0.015	Yes	0.027	Yes

As is possible to see in Table 60, with regard to the use of propositional functions, a statistical significance was found only for 'I think'. Indeed, as will be further explained when outlining the analysis at the micro-level, this PM is rarely used or totally absent in the learner data in propositional functions (ES: 2%, AU: 0%). The most striking differences were for the attitudinal macro-functions. As shown in Table 60, learners did not approach NS use as differences with NSs were found to be statistically significant. In the majority of cases, with the exception of 'I think', these differences were ascribed to an underproduction of PMs in attitudinal functions by the learners. Thus, these findings corroborate results of previous L2 studies on PMs (Aijmer 2011; Buysse 2015) in that learners seem to overindulge in speech management functions but do not exploit PMs to their full potential, especially if attitudinal macro-functions are considered.

At the micro-level, in order to assess whether learners approached NSs' way of using PMs, the three most common functions for each group were analysed. As previously mentioned, a selection of pragmatic functions for the discussion of the analysis was

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[79] The PM 'yeah' was not considered for the tests as it was found to be used in propositional functions only by all groups.

considered necessary because of the number of functions for each marker. Moreover, since these functions are the most frequent ones, they have been considered interesting for the analysis as they occurred frequently in the data. Therefore, they were not characterised by the presence of a few sporadic occurrences and were gauged to be more indicative of trends among the different samples. Results will be presented by following the same order used in the preceding sections of this chapter.

The following Tables show the results for 'you know'. More specifically, Table 61 summarises the three most frequent functions for each group. Tables 62 & 63 show the results of the ANOVA and two-sample paired t-tests. Table 64 outlines the main findings.

Table 61 – Most frequent functions in each group – you know

YOU KNOW – PRAGMATIC USES								
ES GROUP			AU GROUP			NS GROUP		
	Micro-function	T2 Mean		Micro-function	T2 Mean		Micro-function	T2 Mean
1	Hes	50.231%	1	Hes	39.536%	1	Cla	33.503%
2	Cla	19.385%	2	Cla	21.472%	2	Hes	16.630%
3	WS	18.456%	3	SeT	11.421%	3	SeT	15.311%

As shown in Table 61, two main similarities seem to emerge from the comparative analysis among the three groups. First of all, the three groups share two functions (i.e. Hesitation, Clarification). Therefore, the assumption that these two functions could be characteristic of the learner data appears to have been disproven. Secondly, the AU group was found to use exactly the same functions as the NS group. Therefore, it may be supposed that they approached more NS use than the other group. The ANOVA and two-sample paired t-test allowed a further investigation into the data, which are displayed in Table 61. A summary of the tests is provided in Tables 62 & 63.

Table 62 – Summary of the results – ANOVA test – you know

YOU KNOW – PRAGMATIC USES		
Function	P-value	Significant
Hes	0.007	Yes
Cla	0.163	No
WS	0.040	Yes
SeT	0.045	Yes

Table 63 – Summary of the results – two-sample paired t-tests – you know

YOU KNOW – PRAGMATIC USES						
Functions	ES vs AU	Significant	ES vs NS	Significant	AU vs NS	Significant
Hes	0.402	No	0.001	Yes	0.013	Yes
WS	0.071	No	0.076	No	0.689	No
SeT	0.141	No	0.002	Yes	0.436	No

As evident from Table 62, no statistically significant differences were found for the use of 'you know' as a clarification device. Thus, a similar use for the learner groups and the native group can be presumed. With regard to the other functions, a number of statistically significant differences were found and two-sample paired t-tests were conducted to locate the difference. As Table 63 shows, the learner groups did not present significant differences (ES vs AU) in their production and therefore, it can be assumed that learners, despite minor differences[80], use this PM similarly.

From the comparison with the NS group, a number of differences emerged. If the use of 'you know' to express 'Hesitation' is considered, statistically significant differences were found for both learner groups. Therefore, it can be affirmed that the use of 'you know' by NSs was common but not to such an extent that it was in the learner data. Indeed, learners used it quite frequently and, in some cases, for most of the occurrences. With regard to the use of 'you know' to search for the correct word, the ANOVA tests showed a significant difference among the three groups. As evident from Table 61, the ES group used this function quite frequently at T2 (18.456%). Conversely, this function was not that frequent for the NS (1.345%) and AU (1.040%) group. However, the t-tests did not show any significant differences for this function. Thus, although the ES group used 'you know' to search for words to a greater degree, the difference with the two other groups was not statistically significant. Finally, the analysis of the function 'self-evident truth' revealed that only the AU group approached NS usage. Indeed, the percentage of SeT for the ES group was rather low (4.048%).

In conclusion, from the comparison with the three different groups, the following findings emerged (Table 64).

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[80] Discussed in §6.2.2.

Table 64 – You know – learner and native pragmatic uses

YOU KNOW		
Function	**T-TEST**	**RESULT**
Hes	Both groups statistically differed	Learners used this function more than NSs
Cla	No statistical differences	The three groups performed similarly
WS	Some differences (ANOVA) but no statistically significant differences (two sample paired t-tests)	The ES group outperformed the other two but not to a significant degree
SeT	ES statistically differed	AU approached NS use

Both groups performed differently in terms of 'hesitation' and, more specifically, they were found to overindulge in the use of 'you know' as a filler. As a clarification device, 'you know' was used with no extensive differences by learners and NSs. As a strategy for searching for words, the ES group presented a higher percentage but no statistically differences were found. In right position, as a marker of self-evident truth, 'you know' was used more frequently by the au pairs, who used it with a frequency which is similar to Irish speakers. Thus, it can be concluded that the AU group approached NS usage more. Indeed, they presented the same most frequent functions and they were found to use two pragmatic functions (i.e. SeT and WS) in a way which was more similar to NS usage.

The following Tables present the findings for 'I mean'.

Table 65 – Most frequent functions in each group – I mean

I MEAN – PRAGMATIC USES								
ES GROUP			**AU GROUP**			**NS GROUP**		
	Micro-function	**T2 Mean**		**Micro-function**	**T2 Mean**		**Micro-function**	**T2 Mean**
1	Cla	25.181%	1	Cla	23.444%	1	Cla	26.298%
2	Hes	18.353%	2	Hes	20.667%	2	Hed	24.456%
3	Jus	9.795%	3	Hed	14.333%	3	Hes	12.897%

Table 66 – Summary of the results – ANOVA test – I mean

I MEAN – PRAGMATIC USES		
Function	**P-value**	**Significant**
Hes	0.714	No
Cla	0.968	No
Hed	0.171	No
Jus	0.313	No

As Table 65 shows, the three groups shared two functions, namely Clarification and Hesitation, and the AU group presented the same pragmatic functions as the NS group. The ANOVA tests (Table 66) showed that in terms of the most frequent functions, the three groups behaved similarly as no statistical differences were found. With regard to the function of 'hedging', it was not among the most frequent ones (6.056%) within the ES group and among the three most frequent ones in the AU data. Results of the two sample t-tests showed that the differences for both groups in relation to the NS group were not significant (ES: 0.054, AU: 0.385). However, the p-value of the t-test conducted between ES and NS was very close to the significant level (0.054). Thus, it can be assumed that the AU group slightly outperformed the other group with regard to this function as the difference was close to statistical significance. With regard to the function of 'justification' (9.795%), it was one of the top three recurring functions for the ES group, while it was the least used for the AU and NS group (respectively 0.333%, 4.529%). However, no significant differences were found from the results of the two-sample paired t-tests.

In conclusion, the results of the analysis suggest that for the use of 'I mean', the three groups were almost on par. A number of similarities, although not to a significant degree, were present between the AU and the NS group. Thus, it can be affirmed that this group approached more NS pragmatic uses, especially in terms of the typology and frequency of the different functions.

Tables 67-69 present the results for 'I think'.

Table 67 – Most frequent functions in each group – I think

I THINK – PRAGMATIC USES								
ES GROUP			**AU GROUP**			**NS GROUP**		
	Micro-function	**T2 Mean**		**Micro-function**	**T2 Mean**		**Micro-function**	**T2 Mean**
1	Hed	98.000%	1	Hed	80.000%	1	Hed	68.675%
2	Hes	2.000%	2	Hes	0.000%	2	Hes	24.658%

Table 68 – Summary of the results – ANOVA test – I think

I THINK – PRAGMATIC USES		
Function	**P-value**	**Significant**
Hed	0.023	Yes
Hes	0.000	Yes

Table 69 – Summary of the results – two-sample paired t-tests – I think

I THINK – PRAGMATIC USES						
Functions	ES vs AU	Significant	ES vs NS	Significant	AU vs NS	Significant
Hed	0.109	No	0.000	Yes	0.373	No
Hes	0.326	No	0.000	Yes	0.000	Yes

As is evident from Tables 67-69, the learners used 'I think' mainly as a hedge. The use of 'I think' as a filler is very limited (ES: 2.000%) or totally absent (AU: 0.000%) in the learner data. The ANOVA tests corroborated this finding by showing significant differences among the three groups. Subsequent two-sample paired t-tests showed that this difference is significant for both groups. Thus, the learners did not approach NS use. Conversely, for the hedging function, statistically significant difference was found only for the ES group, who tended to overindulge in the use of 'I think' in this function (98.000%). Consequently, it may be affirmed that the AU group approached the NS use of 'I think' more. Findings are summarised in the Table below:

Table 70 – You know – learner and native pragmatic uses

I THINK		
Function	T-TEST	RESULT
Hed	ES statistically differed	AU were closer to NS use
Hes	ES and AU statistically differed	Learners did not approach NS use

Tables 71-75 are devoted to 'well'. As is possible to see from Table 71, 'well' presented results similar to 'you know'. Indeed, all groups shared two most frequent functions and the AU and NS group shared all functions. This finding may lead one to conclude that the AU group approached more NS use. ANOVA and t-tests were conducted to investigate this phenomenon further. A summary of test results is available in Tables 72 & 73.

Table 71 – Most frequent functions in each group – well

WELL – PRAGMATIC USES								
ES GROUP			AU GROUP			NS GROUP		
	Micro-function	T2 Mean		Micro-function	T2 Mean		Micro-function	T2 Mean
1	Hes	38.330%	1	Hes	34.135%	1	Tra	31.523%
2	Tra	14.887%	2	Rep	13.409%	2	Rep	19.499%
3	Obj	6.593%	3	Tra	10.394%	3	Hes	13.734%

Table 72 – Summary of the results – ANOVA test – well

WELL – PRAGMATIC USES		
Function	**P-value**	**Significant**
Hes	0.069	No
Tra	0.026	Yes
Rep	0.051	No
Obj	0.160	No

Table 73 – Summary of the results – two-sample paired t-tests – well

WELL – PRAGMATIC USES						
Functions	**ES vs AU**	**Significant**	**ES vs NS**	**Significant**	**AU vs NS**	**Significant**
Hes	0.750	No	0.022	Yes	0.043	Yes
Tra	0.525	No	0.072	No	0.011	Yes
Rep	0.079	No	0.014	Yes	0.404	No
Obj	0.433	No	0.260	No	0.085	No

The ANOVA tests showed that the ES and AU group performed similarly for all functions analysed. Significant difference was solely present for the function of 'Transition'. More specifically, the AU group tended to deviate from the Irish NSs (Table 73). For all the other functions, ANOVA did not report significant differences. However, since the results were close to significant difference (Hes: 0.069, Rep: 0.051), two-sample t-tests were still conducted. The results of the tests suggest that the learners tended to overproduce 'well' as a filler in comparison with the NS corpus. Similarly, significant difference was found for 'self-correction' for the ES group. As previously mentioned, this function was not among the most frequently used (4.284%) by the ES group. If compared to NSs, the ES group under-produced this function in conversation to a significant degree. With regard to objection, this function was not among the top three ones in the AU (4.359%) and ES (13.126%) group. However, the ANOVA and two-sample paired t-tests showed similar use.

In conclusion, for the production of 'well' the AU group was found to have frequent pragmatic functions (Hes, Rep, Tra) which were more similar to the NS group. Thus, it can be affirmed that this group was closer to NS use in terms of the typology of functions. However, the tests evidenced a number of similarities and dissimilarities if compared to the NS corpus. Table 74 presents a summary of the results. With regard to the function of repairing, which was not present among the most frequent ones of the ES group, the au pairs approached NS use. However, if the function of 'transition' is considered, the

reverse of the previous findings is true. With reference to the functions of 'hesitation' and 'objection', learners performed rather similarly. However, while for the former they were found to have both overproduced the use of 'well' as a filler, for the latter they showed use which was not very different if compared to the NS group. Thus, even though the AU group was found to be more similar to the NS group in terms of typology of functions, on a general note, it may be affirmed that the two learner groups had rather similar outcomes for the production of 'well' in conversation.

Table 74 – Well – learner and native pragmatic uses

WELL		
Function	**T-TEST**	**RESULT**
Hes	ES and AU statistically differed	Learners overproduced this function to a significant degree
Tra	AU statistically differed	ES approached more NS use
Rep	ES statistically differed	AU approached more NS use
Obj	No significant differences	Similar production can be assumed, even though the ES group presented a higher percentage.

Regarding the use of 'like', the comparison with the NS corpus evidenced the following similarities and differences. Results are summarised in Tables 75-78.

Table 75 – Most frequent functions in each group – like

LIKE – PRAGMATIC USES								
ES GROUP			**AU GROUP**			**NS GROUP**		
	Micro-function	**T2 Mean**		**Micro-function**	**T2 Mean**		**Micro-function**	**T2 Mean**
1	DM	33.553%	1	DM	34.745%	1	DM	37.887%
2	Exe	20.491%	2	Exe	22.750%	2	Foc	13.245%
3	Hes	16.672%	3	Quo	13.299%	3	Quo	12.502%

Table 76 – Summary of the results – ANOVA test – like

LIKE – PRAGMATIC USES		
Function	**P-value**	**Significant**
DM	0.815	No
Foc	0.219	No
Quo	0.437	No
Hes	0.025	Yes
Exe	0.314	No

As Table 75 shows, the Irish NSs presented as the most frequent functions the use of 'like' to mark narratives (DM), to highlight a segment (Foc), and to express a quotation or inner thought (Quo). These results also corroborate previous studies on the main pragmatic functions of 'like' in IrE (Hickey 2007, 2015; Murphy 2015). The comparative analysis with the learner data showed that the three groups presented a number of similarities. The most frequent function for all groups was the use of 'like' to mark discourse in narratives. As shown in previous sub-sections, learners increased the use of 'like' in this function and the ANOVA tests showed that the use of 'like' in this function approached NS use. With regard to the other most frequently occurring functions, the three groups presented different scenarios. The au pairs were more akin to Irish speakers because they also used 'like' quite frequently as a quotative. Conversely, both learner groups still indulged in the use of 'like' to introduce examples and this function was not among the most frequent ones in the NS data (12.336%). Additionally, as is possible to see in Table 75, the ES group tended to use 'like' as a filler, whereas this function was rather infrequent in the other two groups (NS: 8.009&, AU: 8.952%). With reference to the use of 'like' as a highlighter device, the NS group presented it as one of the most frequent functions. In the learner data, 'like' as a focuser was used more at T2 (ES: 11.966%) or began being used at T2 (AU: 8.174%).

However, despite the aforementioned dissimilarities, results of the ANOVA tests (Table 76) show that no significant difference was present among the three groups, with the exception of the function of hesitation. Therefore, it may be assumed that the three groups presented similar use for the functions of 'like'. With regard to 'hesitation', two-sample paired t-tests (Table 78) showed that the ES group statistically deviated from NS use and, more specifically, overindulged in this function, whereas the AU group was found to have a similar percentage of frequency. If the results are analysed with reference to the most common functions in IrE (quotative, focuser, hedge), the two groups presented similar use of 'like' as a quotation and highlighter device. Conversely, the learners presented a different scenario for the use of 'like' as a hedge. As previously mentioned, this function was not present in the AU data and significant differences were found both in the comparison with the NS corpus as well as the ES corpus.

LIKE – PRAGMATIC USES						
Functions	ES vs AU	Significant	ES vs NS	Significant	AU vs NS	Significant
Hes	0.750	No	0.022	Yes	0.043	Yes
Hed	0.525	No	0.072	No	0.011	Yes

In conclusion, results of this study suggest that after a six-month experience in Ireland, learners can extensively change their use of 'like'. The use of this PM as a DM approached native-like use despite the type of SA experience. Thus, this effect can be considered as context-related, as learners developed it even if they undertook different learning paths. The AU group presented an outcome which can be considered more similar to NSs; however, results of the two-sample paired t-tests point to a similar use in all functions except for hesitation and hedging. In that regard, the ES group was found to overindulge in the use of 'like' as a filler to a statistically significant degree. With regard to hedging, both learner groups did not approach NS use.

Tables 78-80 present the findings on 'yeah'.

Table 78 - Most frequent functions in each group – yeah

YEAH – PRAGMATIC USES								
ES GROUP			AU GROUP			NS GROUP		
	Micro-function	T2 Mean		Micro-function	T2 Mean		Micro-function	T2 Mean
1	Hes	52.826%	1	Hes	58.871%	1	Hes	54.902%
2	Exp	20.877%	2	En_Tu	21.777%	2	Exp	22.885%
3	En_Tu	15.644%	3	Exp	16.021%	3	En_Tu	10.355%

Table 79 – Summary of the results – ANOVA test – yeah

YEAH – PRAGMATIC USES		
Function	P-value	Significant
Hes	0.859	No
Exp	0.156	No
En_Tu	0.029	Yes

Table 80 - Summary of the results – two-sample paired t-tests – yeah

WELL – PRAGMATIC USES						
Functions	ES vs AU	Significant	ES vs NS	Significant	AU vs NS	Significant
En_Tu	0.216	No	0.161	No	0.006	Yes

As Table 78 shows, the three groups presented the same functions for the PM 'yeah' and the two groups (NS & ES) were found to use them in the same frequency ranking order. The ANOVA tests did not show substantial differences with the exception of the function 'En_Tu'. Subsequent two-samples paired t-tests demonstrated that the AU group performed differently from the other groups with reference to this function. However, the use of 'yeah' by the three groups, despite minor differences, can be considered rather similar by the participants in the study.

6.3.3 Comparative analysis: learner data & Irish speaker data

The findings of this study suggest that the learners upon completion of their SA experience abroad presented a number of linguistic outcomes, which may lead one to assume that in terms of frequency of PMs in conversation, both learner groups tended to approach NS values. More specifically, similar frequency in all groups was found for the PMs 'I mean' and 'well' and the rate of 'you know' and 'yeah' (Table 55). These findings may be gauged as context-specific as both groups presented them despite their type of SA experience. However, the learners presented similar results even when they deviated from NS values. For instance, neither of them approached NS values with regard to the attitudinal macro-functions (Tables 59 & 60), the rate of 'you know' and the IPV of 'like' (Table 58) despite an overall increase in these values at T2. Thus, they were still learner-like concerning these aforementioned values. Moreover, as often stressed throughout the chapter, if 'like' is considered, it may be supposed that TL contact was not that extensive, since this PM has been considered characteristic of the language spoken by the host community.

However, a number of dissimilarities were also present and, more specifically, for certain values one group presented more native-like values. The ES group was found to approach NS frequency for the IPV of 'you know', the rate of 'I think' and 'like'. Conversely, the AU group approached native-like frequency for the IPV of 'I think' and 'yeah'. Thus, it may be affirmed that, although very similar outcomes emerged from the analysis, the ES group produced more PMs in conversation and tended to approach more NS frequency in comparison with the AU group because fewer statistically significant differences between the ES and the NS group were found. These results may be ascribed to a higher diff. value, discussed in the previous sections and the different type of input abroad. Hence, it may be concluded that in terms of frequency the ES group slightly outperformed the other group and these results can be interpreted as experience-related, as the results for the two

learner groups were somewhat different in respect of the different type of SA experience. The different findings may be related to the type of input. Indeed, the au pairs presumably spent most of their time with children, who were found by Romero-Trillo (§2.3.3) to under-produce PMs in conversation in comparison to adult NSs.

The analysis conducted on the pragmatic functions presented a more complex picture. At the micro-level, a number of similarities were present. The most frequent pragmatic functions were the same for all groups for two markers only (i.e. 'I think', 'yeah'). In addition, the AU group was found to have similar top three functions for one item ('like') and the same pragmatic functions for all the other PMs under analysis (i.e. 'you know', 'I mean', 'well'). In a number of functions, they were also found to be more similar to NS use (i.e. 'you know'- self-truth, 'I mean' – hedge, 'I think' – hedge, 'like' – hesitation). They tended to deviate from NS use in three functions (i.e. 'well' - transition, 'yeah' – end turn, 'like' – hedge).[81] Thus, from the results of the analysis hitherto analysed, it can be affirmed that, although no extensive differences were present, the AU production of PMs was more similar to the Irish NSs and these findings can be considered experience-related as the two learner groups presented different outcomes.

With regard to the function of 'hesitation', some considerations need to be highlighted. As mentioned in the previous sections of this chapter, this function was found for almost all markers under analysis in the learner data. Thus, an assumption was made that this function could be characteristic of the learner language. However, from the lists of most frequently occurring functions in the NS data, this hypothesis was not proven. Indeed, the function of hesitation was present also in the NS corpus. Nonetheless, if analysed under closer inspection, a number of dissimilarities emerged. More specifically, the two-sample paired t-tests showed that learners tended to overindulge in this function in the case of 'you know' and 'well'. These findings corroborate Denke (2009) and House (2009), whose studies were presented in §2.3.3. With regard to 'like', the AU group presented more similar use to NS use, whereas ES presented a higher production of this marker as a filler at a significant level. Thus, the AU group's production of PMs was more similar to the Irish NSs.

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[81] With regard to the use of 'like' as a hedge, results were statistically significant as the AU group did not present any occurrences in this function.

In conclusion, the results of the comparative analysis among the three groups showed that the two groups of learners were almost on par with regard to the frequency and characteristics of use of PMs in relation to NS frequency and use. Indeed, in most cases, they both tended to approach or deviate from NS values. However, a number of subtle differences were still present. More specifically, it seems that the ES approached NS values in terms of frequency, whereas the au pairs, although they presented fewer occurrences of markers, were closer to NS use.

6.4 Quantitative analysis: concluding remarks

This chapter analysed the use of PMs with respect to frequency and characteristics of use in the oral data of the informants according to four foci of investigation:

1- longitudinal analysis on the ES data

2- longitudinal analysis on the AU data

3- comparative analysis between learner data

4- comparative analysis between learner and NS data.

The longitudinal analysis of the learner data revealed that both groups, notwithstanding the type of SA experience, benefitted from their six-month sojourn abroad if the production of PMs is considered (context-related linguistic benefits). Indeed, as the previous sub-sections have shown, the size of difference between the T1 mean and the T2 mean was a positive value both in terms of frequency and the most frequent pragmatic functions. However, as often stressed throughout the chapter, it is not possible to generalise the findings of the current study and, more specifically, it cannot be claimed that a period of SA abroad aids the production of all linguistic items analysed. Indeed, only a number of statistically significant differences were found. Considerable differences in the longitudinal analysis were found for the PM 'like', whose longitudinal use underwent extensive differences in terms of frequency and pragmatic functions for both groups (context/destination-related linguistic benefits).

With regard to the first comparative analysis, on a general note, the two groups presented similar results. However, under closer inspection, a number of subtle differences were evident. More specifically, the ES group slightly outperformed their counterpart in terms of frequency, especially if the results on the IPV are considered. Moreover, the size of

difference between the T1 and the T2 mean was higher for the ES group. However, this group also seemed to rely on the same pragmatic functions at T2 and were found to produce them to a higher degree. More specifically, the ES group seems to mainly use PMs for speech management, whereas attitudinal functions were also assessed among the most frequent ones for the AU group. Therefore, the type of learning experience seems to have played a role in the language outcomes of these participants, especially if frequency and macro pragmatic functions are considered (experience-related linguistic benefits).

From the comparison of the learner data with the Irish NS corpus two main tendencies emerged. The ES group seems to have approached more NS frequency, whereas the pragmatic functions used by the AU group were more typologically similar to the NS data. Thus, an effect of the different learner status can be posited and the different outcomes can be ascribed to the different input while abroad. Indeed, the lower frequency of PMs in the AU production may be ascribed to the fact that they presumably spent long hours with NS children, who have been found to use PMs in conversation four times less than NS adults (Romero-Trillo 2002). The next chapter will investigate this aspect further by referring to a number of questions of the survey and quotes and anecdotes taken from the interviews. Moreover, an idea of the dispersal of the PMs within the same group will be also provided by focusing on the experience of a number of participants.

Chapter 7

Discussion – A quali/quantitative approach to contextual features

As mentioned in §3.1.3, SA abroad contexts offer learners the possibility to be exposed to a higher quantity and greater quality of input. However, the findings of SA research hitherto conducted suggest that not all learners can manage to exploit the full potential of this learning context. Indeed, SA research has presented different and somewhat contradictory results regarding the beneficial effects of these learning contexts on FL skills. The different outcomes have also been related to considerable individual variation which has characterised SA research to date (Kinginger and Blattner 2008). As mentioned in chapter 3, this in-group variability can be related to a number of contextual factors, which can affect the type and the amount of TL exposure during an SA sojourn. This chapter will attempt to investigate the issue of individual variation and TL exposure by relating the findings of the quantitative analysis to the experience of a number of participants (§7.1) and the responses provided by the informants in the survey and the interviews (§7.2).

7.1 Qualitative focus on a number of participants

> RQ4 - Is it possible to identify differences across participants in their longitudinal use of PMs in the L2?

The quantitative analysis, presented in chapter 6, has analysed the effects of an SA sojourn on the production of PMs by considering the participants as a group. However, this approach does not allow an investigation into the within-group variation and the dispersion of these items in the same group. Indeed, informants belonging to the same group were found to use PMs differently. For instance, Figure 18 shows the rate of 'like' by both learner groups with specific reference to the per-person rate value. As is possible to see from the chart, a number of peaks and troughs are evident in the per-person use of this marker at T2. More specifically, the ES group alternated high values with low values. Conversely, the rate of 'like' was rather similar for all participants in the AU group with the exception of a substantial rise for AU5.

Figure 18 – Rate of 'like at T2 - ES & AU group
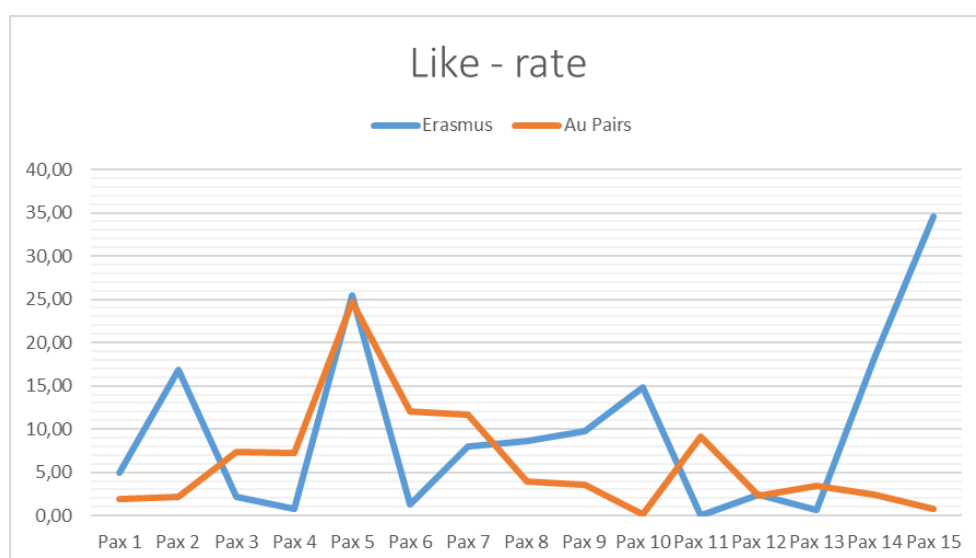
However, all this in-group variation is inevitably lost when analysing data quantitatively. Thus, this sub-section will attempt to provide insights into individual variability by focusing on the experience of four participants. In particular, their SA experiences will be analysed in view of their production of 'like' at the micro-level. This marker has been selected among the six analysed in the quantitative analysis because it underwent the most striking changes for both groups over time. Moreover, as previously mentioned, a number of studies conducted on IrE gauged the use of 'like' in certain pragmatic functions as a characteristic of the language of the host community.

7.1.1 Erasmus group

This sub-section will be devoted to the analysis of the experience of ES1 and ES5. These participants were both female and both students of Modern Languages. Therefore, they were considered to have very similar conditions for the comparative analysis.

ES1[82] lived in student accommodation on campus with a Spanish and a Chinese student during her sojourn in Ireland. She had a very outgoing personality and she was a member of many student organisations. She was quite determined to use her SA experience to practise her English and meet people of other cultures. However, during the interviews, she often stressed the difficulty that she experienced to interact with her housemates and

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[82] A profile for all participants is available in Appendix E.

classmates, as is evident from extracts (extr)[83] 1 and 2, taken respectively from the interviews at T1 and T2:

> Extr1. […] generally speaking she prefers to stay in her room - bedroom […] I can't see her in the house apart from the lunchtime because em - so I don't know if she is at home - or at - or outside […] - sometimes I have the feeling that I am bother - I am bothering her so I em - - I don't like to go at her door often […] after noticing that she prefers to stay in her room and not to stay with us - I - I don't know what to say - I am not so em - I don't like to bother her - because I have this feeling - so when I see her out *from her room - I will stay - I will *told with her

> Extr2. […] we are not so close -- I don't know why actually - because I tried to be - em closer with them *(classmates)* -- but - I don't know - there was like - a barrier that - I don't know - maybe because they didn't want to keep very closer with me because they know that I will leave soon […] I don't know if they don't want to be close to me because I am not Irish and maybe because I am leaving or - just because they are like this

As shown in extract 2, ES1 affirmed that, despite her attempts, she did not manage to create strong bonds with members of the TL community. As a result, her closest social network was comprised of predominantly English NNSs, as she also affirmed in extract 3:

> Extr3. […] I have like - em - a few very special friends that I shared a lot of experience with so I think I am going to miss them a lot -- yeah - so I have four Spanish and - em one from Netherland - one Korean girl - and -- yeah - and one German.

Conversely, the SA experience of ES5 was totally different. Actually, this participant managed to live the mythical experience of an SA immersion. During her stay in the country, she lived in student accommodation with three English NSs[84] and an English NNS. They were really close and engaged in a number of activities together such as excursions, outings, dinners and even the weekly cleaning of the flat. She also realised that her relationship with her housemates was rather exceptional, because other Erasmus students reported different situations, even though they were also living with English NSs. Her comments are available in the extracts which follow:

> Extr4. [we] *(housemates)* were always like in the kitchen em - preparing dinner or after dinner just chatting or watching a movie […]

> Extr5. […] I'm really lucky of living with them' cause I know about other *international that - like are not so lucky or em like a - I have a French friend that changed em - changed her - the accommodation because she was living with these Irish girls and they *are - younger and

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[83] Unless explicitly mentioned, extracts were taken from the interviews at T2. This meeting took place a few days before the departure of the informants. Thus, participants commented retrospectively on their SA experiences.

[84] American and Irish students.

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they didn't talk to each other much […] another friend of mine living just - em above me - is Italian and is living with some Irish and an American girl and - but they don't have the same kind of relationship that I have with my flatmates.

Moreover, she managed to engage in long and varied conversations with her flatmates, especially with an American student, as she also stressed in extract 6:

<u>Extr6</u>. […] the American girl is - is always in the in the living room because - she feels like segregated in the bedroom […] she's the person to - like we -- whom I talk the most I'd say - and at times she just starts *[laughter]* - em we just start really philosophical and deep discourses em - like "yeah do you feel there's an afterlife?"

Thus, it can be affirmed that ES5 benefitted more, both qualitatively and quantitatively, from NS input.

If these findings are analysed in relation to the production of 'like' of these two learners, a number of considerations can be outlined. In Tables 81-82, results of the longitudinal use of 'like' by these two learners are summarised.

Table 81 – Frequency of 'like' – ES1 & ES5

	IPV			RATE		
	T1	T2	Diff.	T1	T2	Diff.
ES1	30.000%	52.830%	+22.830%	2.678	4.935	+2.257
ES5	27.660%	76.606%	+48.964%	2.384	25.457	+23.073

Table 82 – Functions of 'like' – ES1 & ES5

	ES1			ES5		
	T1	T2	Diff.	T1	T2	Diff.
Exe	50.000%	17.857%	-32.143%	100.000%	19.760%	-80.240%
Appr	50.000%	14.286%	-35.714%	0.000%	4.790%	+23.073%
Quo	0.000%	32.143%	+32.143%	0.000%	8.982%	+8.982%
DM	0.000%	17.857%	+17.857%	0.000%	38.922%	+38.922%
Foc	0.000%	20.264%	+20.264%	0.000%	39.281%	+39.281%
Hed	0.000%	0.000%	+0.000%	0.000%	2.994%	+2.994%
Hes	0.000%	14.286%	+14.286%	0.000%	18.563%	+18.563%

Both learners attested an increase in all values and a decrease for the 'core' functions of 'like' (exemplifier, appproximator). However, the production of 'like' by ES5 underwent the most striking changes. Indeed, the Diff. between T1 and T2 was higher for almost all frequency values and pragmatic functions, with the exception of quotative 'like'. Moreover, the emergence of 'like' as a hedge was only found for ES5.

Thus, individual variation was also a feature of this study and a correlation between the production of this PM and TL exposure can be posited at an individual level. Although both learners evidenced a more frequent and varied use of 'like' at T2, they did so to different degrees. A connection between the production of PMs and NS input has been therefore surmised. More specifically, ES5 was probably in a more advantageous position since she lived with English NSs. Thus, it may be deduced that place of residence resulted in having a pivotal role in the SA experience of these students and the student who lived with NSs presented the more striking changes at the end of the SA sojourn. However, results cannot be generalised as they are based on the SA experience of only two participants. Thus, this assumption will be further analysed in the following sub-section, by comparing the experience of two au pairs, and the next section, where results of the quantitative analysis will be examined in relation to the responses of the informants to questionnaires and interviews.

7.1.2 Au pair group

For the qualitative focus on the AU group, two students of Modern Languages were also selected in order to allow comparability with the results presented in §7.1.1. More specifically, this sub-section will focus on the experience of AU5 and AU12.

During her stay in Ireland, AU5 first lived with an Irish family where she had to take care of two young children (3,5) and a baby boy, and then she moved to another family where she was responsible for three young teenagers and a seven-year old girl. As she also stressed, the two experiences were very different. In the first family, she had many responsibilities but fewer occasions to use the language, although she was very close to the host mother. Conversely, she had the impression that her use of the language in the second family was qualitatively better (extr7), even though she mainly interacted with the daughters, as extract 8 shows.

> Extr7. […] it's completely different you can like with fourteen-*years-old - we can talk about
> our passions and -- also with the twelve -*years-old -- ok the eleven and the seven they are -
> a little bit childish but - absolutely normal - and - but -- I can't compare with the five-*years-
> old like - I fina-(+finally) I finally have em - serious conversations.

> Extr8. *I: And with the parents?*
> AU5: Well it's harder […] we talk *in dinner - well the - father is always away - he works -
> like *sixty days em - *at week and like in Dublin - or somewhere else - and - I talk with the
> mother just - *in the dinner time - or in the morning - and - it's - em you know - not really
> important conversations like "How was your day?"

Although AU5 affirmed that she had no Irish friends during her SA sojourn, it seems that she benefitted, qualitatively and quantitatively, from NS input while abroad. She also mentioned that she managed to have long conversations with strangers while she was travelling around Ireland. In one of her journeys she also met her Irish/Canadian boyfriend. A number of anecdotes are provided in the extracts below.

> Extr9. […] when I was travelling I met so many - good people good Irish people it's -- I was so s-(+so) ama-(+amazed) amazed em - and they *was so kind - yeah

> Extr10. I was travelling with my bike - and I was really tired I did like - seven hours - one day and I was too much tired […] I was just walking with my bike - and a woman - em - stopped - in like the middle of the street in the street - in the part /// and em she asked me if I wanted some help - and I was like "Well - * doesn't matter I just have other thirty minutes I have to go in that city" and she said - "Oh yeah that's why I ask you because there's a huge hill - before that" and I was - "Yes I need help!" *[laughter]*.

> Extr11. […] one day […] it was raining really bad […] a guy asked me "Do you want a lif-(+lift)?" […] We started to talk and we were so - em - they were so friendly!

The experience of AU12 was instead slightly different. She was living in a family with two children: a young teenager and a seven-year old boy. She was living a bit far from the city and she found her AU experience very isolating; therefore, when she met some Italian au pairs, she decided to spend most of her time off with them.

> Extr12. […] now I'm always in Cork - in during the weekends and - (( )) in October I was always in Coachford in my small town and now I'm always with ((*Italian name*)) because it was kind of depressing staying all the weekends in Coachford that's too small - you know /// […] it's sad because I speak Italian a lot - so it's just the only thing I can complain about.

Despite the loneliness, she mentioned that her host family had been very pleasant and supportive. However, with the exception of the host father, AU12 does not seem to have interacted much with the members of the family. The host mother was often tired after work and the children were busy with their activities. Thus, from what she mentioned in the interviews, AU12 was probably mainly responsible for housekeeping and managed to have long conversations exclusively with the host dad and predominantly after dinner (extr13-15).

> Extr13. […] it's a fabulous family 'cause er they see if I have problem they they they they just don't - I mean -- em make me work and (( )) they really care like like a if I was their daughter - so yeah -- yesterday with the host dad er he told me "oh I saw you (( )) different in these months I saw you very happy something changed something - something good happened or what?"

Extr14. the host dad is more (( )) relaxed - so we can talk about anything I talk with like he was my best friend (( )) no it's it's good and yeah I *said him "oh I met this guy (( )) Saturday night" and then he said "no don't tell me more don't tell me more" and yeah yeah I can tell him like secrets […] the host mom she's she's very nice she is more serious because I don't know and -- yeah but she's always tired when come from from work so she we-(+went) she *go to bed so we we don't speak too much

Extr15. […] in these months because they *(children)* went to their homework clubs - so I didn't have to help them too much - and yeah they come home and they have already done their homework - so I just make their lunches and then they play together so - yeah.

If these two experiences are analysed in relation to the longitudinal production of 'like' (Tables 83-84), some considerations can be outlined. Both learners increased their production of 'like' and presented a more varied use of 'like' upon completion of the experience. However, AU5 presented the most striking findings which may be ascribed to a more frequent and varied NS input. AU12 was also exposed to NS input but, according to what she said, TL exposure was not that extensive. Moreover, the age of the interlocutors could also have played a role. Indeed, as Beeching (2016) affirmed, 'like' is often more common among young speakers. Therefore, as AU5 mainly related to young people, she may have developed the use of 'like' in conversation to a greater extent. Conversely, AU12 seems to have conversed mainly with people in their forties and the use of this PM by these interlocutors may have affected the use of this marker in the learner's production as well.

Table 83 – Frequency of 'like' – AU5 & AU12

	IPV			RATE		
	T1	T2	Diff.	T1	T2	Diff.
AU5	35.294%	94.444%	+59.150%	5.069	24.649	+19.580
AU12	3.448%	25.000%	+21.552%	0.335	2.357	+2.022

Table 84 – Functions of 'like' – AU5 & AU12

	AU5			AU12		
	T1	T2	Diff.	T1	T2	Diff.
Exe	12.500%	9.677%	-2.823%	100.000%	0.000%	-100.000%
Appr	16.667%	7.527%	-9.140%	0.000%	11.111%	+11.111%
Quo	54.167%	10.753%	-43.415%	0.000%	0.000%	+0.000%
DM	12.500%	49.462%	+36.962%	0.000%	77.778%	+77.778%
Foc	0.000%	11.868%	+11.868%	0.000%	0.000%	+0.000%
Hed	0.000%	0.000%	+0.000%	0.000%	0.000%	+0.000%
Hes	4.167%	10.753%	+6.586%	0.000%	11.111%	+11.111%

7.1.3 Qualitative focus on a number of participants: concluding remarks

In conclusion, the response to the fourth RQ of this study can be understood as positive. Indeed, this section has shown that individual variability has strongly affected the production of PMs in conversation by the participants. Although all learners presented changes in their use of 'like' after their SA sojourn, they were found to do so to different degrees. Thus, a number of contextual features may have played a part in the language outcomes of these learners. More specifically, learners who lived with NSs were presumably in a more advantageous position and presented a more frequent and varied use of 'like' at T2. Nonetheless, a few exceptions were still present. For example, AU12, although she was living in a friendly home environment, she did not report extensive use of the L2 with members of the family.

Thus, the assessment of input in SA contexts is extremely complex as a wide range of variables may come into play when assessing the findings. Likewise, as this sub-section has shown, the experience of learners who live in very similar conditions may inevitably produce different outcomes. Therefore, definite conclusions cannot be easily drawn. However, from the qualitative focus on the experience of four informants, a number of factors (i.e. nationality and age of housemates, L1 of friends) seem to have intervened in the language outcomes of the participants. The following sub-section will investigate them further by relying on the responses to the survey and the comments of the informants in the interviews in order to provide a more nuanced picture of the type of TL exposure while abroad.

7.2 The role of TL exposure in the production of PMs

> RQ5- Is it possible to link the linguistic outcomes with their contact with the TL and Irish speakers?

As previously mentioned, the assessment of input in SA contexts has been quite a challenge for SLA researchers due the amount and diversification of conversational opportunities while abroad. In the following sub-sections, the findings of the quantitative analysis will be investigated considering the input that participants received during their SA sojourn. More specifically, TL exposure of the participants in this study will be analysed by referring to the responses that each informant provided in the questionnaires

(§7.2.1) as well as a number of answers and anecdotes that the learners provided in the sociolinguistic interviews (§7.2.2).

7.2.1 Survey

In questionnaire two, as outlined in §4.2.3, participants were asked to provide some information about their SA experience. In this sub-section, a selection of questions, taken from section three ("Your daily use of the language") and six ("Your closest friends in Ireland") will be analysed. More specifically, from section three, the questions aimed at assessing the characteristics of conversations in English (i.e. short vs long), the L1 and the type of interlocutors (i.e. English NSs or NNSs, housemates, classmates, strangers) have been selected. The questions from section 6, instead, were chosen to provide a more nuanced picture of the closest social circle of the participants. Special attention will also be given to the environment where learners managed to create social bonds while abroad. Results will then be analysed in the light of the findings of the quantitative analysis.

With regard to the type of conversations, as shown in Figures 19-20, the AU group claimed to have been involved in longer conversations (Q28[85]) in English during their stay abroad, if compared to the other group. Indeed, only a third of the ES group reported long conversations in English during the SA experience.

Figure 19 – ES - Type of conversations

Do you feel you engaged more in SHORT conversations (a couple of minutes) or LONG conversations (more than 30 minutes)?

33.3%

66.7%
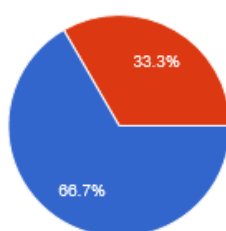
| Short conversations | 10 | 66.7% |
| Long conversations | 5 | 33.3% |

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[85] The questions will be referenced as 'Qx, where Q stands for 'question' and 'x' is the progressive number of the question in the questionnaire.

Figure 20 – AU - Type of conversations

Do you feel you engaged more in SHORT conversations (a couple of minutes) or LONG conversations (more than 30 minutes)?

53.3%

46.7%
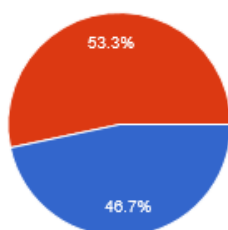
Short conversations	7	46.7%
Long conversations	8	53.3%

With regard to the L1 of interlocutors, results of the survey suggest that the AU group spent more time conversing with English NSs (Q20), as Figures 21 and 20 show and, with the exception of a sole participant, conversations lasted at least 30 minutes per day. Conversely, the ES group also reported smaller time intervals (1-5 minutes, 20-30 minutes). Thus, it seems plausible that interaction with NSs was more intense and frequent for the AU group, if compared to the other group.

Figure 21 – ES - Conversation with NSs

How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English OUTSIDE CLASS to native speakers?
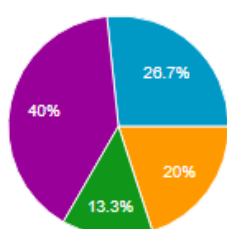
0 minutes	0	0%
1 -5 minutes	0	0%
5- 10 minutes	3	20%
20- 30 minutes	2	13.3%
30 - 60 minutes	6	40%
more than 1 hour	4	26.7%

Figure 22 – AU - Conversation with NSs

How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English OUTSIDE CLASS to native speakers?
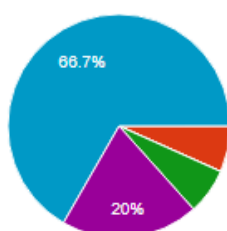
0 minutes	0	0%
1 -5 minutes	1	6.7%
5- 10 minutes	0	0%
20- 30 minutes	1	6.7%
30 - 60 minutes	3	20%
more than 1 hour	10	66.7%

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Communication with NNSs (Q21) was, instead, the norm for both groups. Indeed, most participants reported to have spoken English for 'more than one hour' per day to NNSs. However, the higher value was assessed for the ES group (ES: 66.7%, AU: 40%). Moreover, the ES group perceived to have used the language quite extensively with English NNSs (at least 20 minutes per day), whereas the AU group also reported smaller time intervals (1-5 minutes, 5-10 minutes). Thus, it may be assumed that the au pairs interacted less frequently with English NNSs than the ES group. The summary of the responses of the participants is available in the pie charts of Figure 23 and 24.

Figure 23 – ES - Interaction with NNSs

How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English outside class to NON-NATIVE speakers of English?
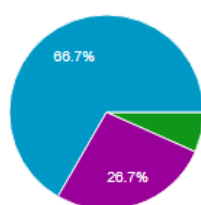
0 minutes	0	0%
1 -5 minutes	0	0%
5- 10 minutes	0	0%
20- 30 minutes	1	6.7%
30 - 60 minutes	4	26.7%
more than 1 hour	10	66.7%

Figure 24 – AU Interaction with NNSs

How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English outside class to NON-NATIVE speakers of English?
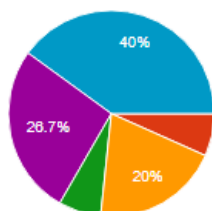
0 minutes	0	0%
1 -5 minutes	1	6.7%
5- 10 minutes	3	20%
20- 30 minutes	1	6.7%
30 - 60 minutes	4	26.7%
more than 1 hour	6	40%

With regard to the typology of the interlocutors, the majority of the participants in each group reported quite lengthy conversations in English with housemates (Q23). Indeed, eight participants in each group responded that they had the impression of speaking English for 'more than one hour' at home. However, a number of subtle differences can still be mentioned. The AU group, with the exception of a sole participant, reported having used the language at home for at least 20 minutes per day (Figure 26), whereas the ES group also reported smaller time intervals, such as '1-5 minutes' and even no use of English in the home environment (Figure 25).

Figure 25 – ES - Interaction in English at home

How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English to your housemates?
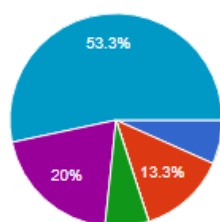
0 minutes	1	6.7%
1 -5 minutes	2	13.3%
5- 10 minutes	0	0%
20- 30 minutes	1	6.7%
30 - 60 minutes	3	20%
more than 1 hour	8	53.3%

Figure 26 – AU - Interaction in English at home

How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English to your housemates?
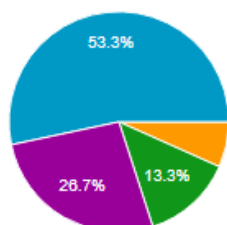
0 minutes	0	0%
1 -5 minutes	0	0%
5- 10 minutes	1	6.7%
20- 30 minutes	2	13.3%
30 - 60 minutes	4	26.7%
more than 1 hour	8	53.3%

Conversation with classmates was, instead, more frequent for the ES group (Figure 27), as the majority of the participants reported having used the language with classmates for 'more than one hour'. Conversely, long conversations with classmates appeared to be more limited for the AU group (Figure 28). With regard to conversation with strangers (Q25), both groups assessed, on a general note, very short conversations with people they met by accident while waiting for the bus or at the gym (Figures 29-30). Indeed, most informants selected as time intervals "1-5 minutes" and "5-10 minutes". In some cases, participants also reported no conversation with strangers. Results are summarised in Figures 29 and 30 which follow.

Figure 27 – ES - Interaction with classmates

How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English to your classmates?
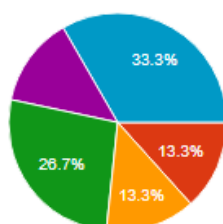
0 minutes	0	0%
1 -5 minutes	2	13.3%
5- 10 minutes	2	13.3%
20- 30 minutes	4	26.7%
30 - 60 minutes	2	13.3%
more than 1 hour	5	33.3%

Figure 28 – AU Interaction with classmates

How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English to your classmates?
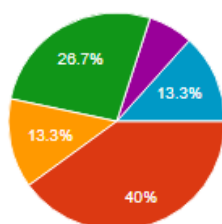
0 minutes	0	0%
1 -5 minutes	6	40%
5- 10 minutes	2	13.3%
20- 30 minutes	4	26.7%
30 - 60 minutes	1	6.7%
more than 1 hour	2	13.3%

Figure 29 – ES - Interaction with strangers

How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English to strangers?
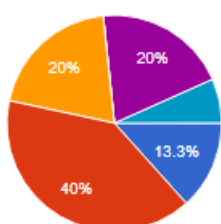
0 minutes	2	13.3%
1 -5 minutes	6	40%
5- 10 minutes	3	20%
20- 30 minutes	0	0%
30 - 60 minutes	3	20%
more than 1 hour	1	6.7%

Figure 30 – AU - Interaction with strangers

How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English to strangers?
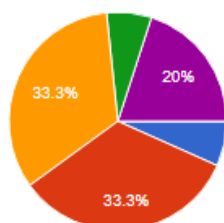
0 minutes	1	6.7%
1 -5 minutes	5	33.3%
5- 10 minutes	5	33.3%
20- 30 minutes	1	6.7%
30 - 60 minutes	3	20%
more than 1 hour	0	0%

Thus, from the analysis exposed above, the AU group seems to have been in a more advantageous position as they availed of long conversations with mainly English NSs. Moreover, they were found to have had long conversations with housemates, who were members of the local community. With regard to strangers, the two groups were almost on par, whereas the ES group seems to have interacted more with classmates. This finding may also be ascribed to the fact that Erasmus students were living in a university context, whereas the AU group was solely attending English language classes.

As previously mentioned, in addition to the self-assessment of the type and frequency of interactions, informants were also asked to provide some information about their three closest friends in Ireland. These people were chosen because they were presumably the ones with whom participants conversed more frequently during their SA sojourn. In the

following paragraphs, a number of questions taken from questionnaire two will be analysed to further investigate the type of input that informants received while living abroad. More specifically, participants were asked about the L1 of their friends (Q62, Q63, Q64) and the language used in their closest social circle (Q65, Q66, Q67) and the environment where they met their friends (Q68, Q69, Q70). The analysis of the responses aimed at investigating a) the use of the English language while abroad, b) the amount of input from members of the TL community and c) the conditions which allowed the expansion of social networks while abroad.

As evident in Figures 31-32, the majority of the participants reported mainly English NNSs in their closest social circle, with whom they presumably spoke English, as both groups indicated extensive use of the English language with their three closest friends (Figures 33-34). Differences between the two groups were present concerning English NSs and co-nationals. While the ES group seems to have established more relationships with Italian people while abroad (33.33% - 40%), the AU group reported fewer Italian friends (13.3% - 26.7%). Conversely, the au pairs were found to have slightly more English NSs as close friends (AU: 26.7% - 33.3%, ES: 13.3%-20%).

Figure 31 – ES - Closest social circle

Your closest friends in Ireland

Is person 1

a native-speaker of English	2	13.3%
a non-native speaker of English	7	46.7%
a speaker of your mother tongue	6	40%

Is person 2

a native-speaker of English	3	20%
a non-native speaker of English	7	46.7%
a speaker of your mother tongue	5	33.3%

Is person 3

a native-speaker of English	3	20%
a non-native speaker of English	7	46.7%
a speaker of your mother tongue	5	33.3%

Figure 32 – AU - Closest social circle

Your closest friends in Ireland

Is person 1

a native-speaker of English	5	33.3%
a non-native speaker of English	6	40%
a speaker of your mother tongue	4	26.7%

Is person 2

a native-speaker of English	5	33.3%
a non-native speaker of English	6	40%
a speaker of your mother tongue	4	26.7%

Is person 3

a native-speaker of English	4	26.7%
a non-native speaker of English	9	60%
a speaker of your mother tongue	2	13.3%

Figure 33 – ES social network - interaction in English

From 0% to 100% how much did you interact in English with person 1?

0-10%	1	6.7%
20-40%	4	26.7%
50-70%	1	6.7%
80-100%	9	60%

From 0% to 100% how much did you interact in English with person 2?

0-10%	3	20%
20-40%	1	6.7%
50-70%	1	6.7%
80-100%	10	66.7%

From 0% to 100% how much did you interact in English with person 3?

0-10%	0	0%
20-40%	2	13.3%
50-70%	2	13.3%
80-100%	11	73.3%
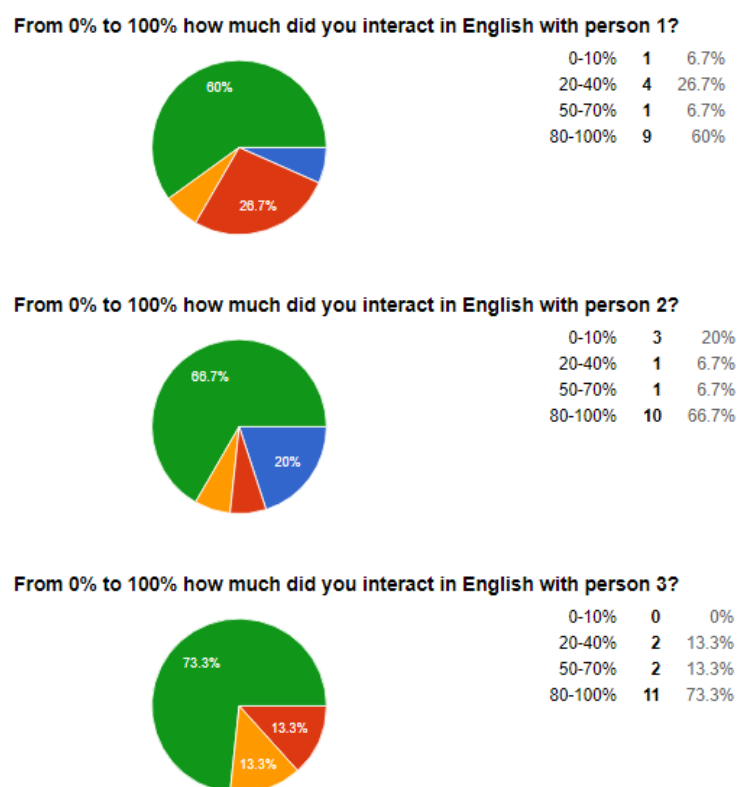
Figure 34 – AU social network - interaction in English

From 0% to 100% how much did you interact in English with person 1?
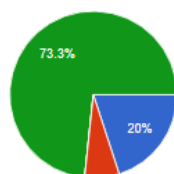
0-10%	3	20%
20-40%	1	6.7%
50-70%	0	0%
80-100%	11	73.3%

From 0% to 100% how much did you interact in English with person 2?
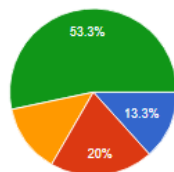
0-10%	2	13.3%
20-40%	3	20%
50-70%	2	13.3%
80-100%	8	53.3%

From 0% to 100% how much did you interact in English with person 3?
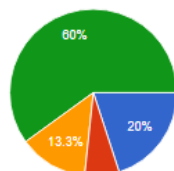
0-10%	3	20%
20-40%	1	6.7%
50-70%	2	13.3%
80-100%	9	60%

With regard to the context (Q68, Q69, Q70), the two groups seem to have made most friends in two environments: home and social events (Figures 35-36). With regard to the former, the ES group were in a somewhat unfavourable position, as in most cases, housemates often included at least one English NNS. Conversely, the AU group was living with an Irish family; therefore, more input from Irish NSs can be assumed. Moreover, this assumption seems to be in line with the results shown in Figure 21, as the AU group reported having had longer interactions with NSs during the SA experience. Social events, instead, were mainly occasions to meet other fellow sojourners. Indeed, as will be seen in the next sub-section, participants mentioned participating in a series of events for international students or for au pairs during their stay abroad. Consequently, they predominantly met people whose L1 was not English.

Thus, in terms of TL contact, the results of the responses to the survey seem to indicate that the AU group was in a more favourable position. Indeed, they reported more contact with English NSs and fewer conversations with their co-nationals. Therefore, it may be assumed that they were probably more exposed to NS input. Moreover, they also reported having used the language for 'long conversations' more often. This result is particularly revealing if analysed in the light of the linguistic items under analysis. Indeed, as stressed

in §2.3.3, the more widespread use of markers often requires interactive scaffolding and embeds personal opinions and attitudes towards what is being uttered (Romero-Trillo 2002). Thus, PMs more plausibly occur in long conversations rather than short or mundane interactions and the au pairs, who reported having had a great deal of long conversations and having interacted more with English NSs, were probably more exposed to PMs in their daily interactions.

If these findings are analysed with reference to the results of the quantitative analysis, a number of correlations can be surmised. As previously mentioned, at T2 the AU group was found to use functions which were typologically more similar to the NS group. Thus, the correspondence in the type of pragmatic functions can be ascribed to more input from the members of the TL community. Conversely, the ES group was also found to be learner-like in their use of PMs. Indeed, they overindulged in the use of PMs as fillers if compared to the NS group and the other learner group. These findings may be related to the fact that they mainly related to English NNSs and used the language in contexts where English was used as a lingua franca (LF). Thus, the use of PMs to express hesitation can be considered a phenomenon connected to the LF context of learning. This assumption also corroborates results of other studies on PMs in the L2 (Aijmer 2011; Buysse 2015; House 2009), presented in the literature review. Moreover, the higher frequency in conversation may also be ascribed to the abundance of short conversations during the sojourn. Indeed, when these learners had to use the language for a long conversation, such as the sociolinguistic interview used for the data collection, they plausibly had to resort to a greater amount of PMs to surmount communication gaps and keep the conversation going.

The following sub-section will investigate these findings further with a more qualitative approach, by referring to a number of extracts taken from the interviews with the participants.

7.2.2 Participants' voice

As often stressed throughout this dissertation, SA abroad experiences have been traditionally considered as a promising venue for FL improvement and practice. This folk belief has been found to be also shared by the participants in this study and with reference to Ireland, NS8 affirms that her country is definitely a destination where learners can practise their language skills because of the friendliness of its people:

Extr15. […] I think em - Ireland is a good place to - for people to come for learning English - em because what - ok - I know we have accents and I know we speak quite fast - but we love to talk - the Irish - like we have a reputation like - we love - you know like - we are quite friendly like - I'm being so vain here now! - but you know what I mean like? We are like - you know - they're always very welcoming like and - you know - that's great practice for foreign people - to come over cause you're always going to be talking to somebody like - you know - *[laughter]* - so I think it's good - it's good practice for them - yeah [NS8]

However, results of the survey indicated that this idea of immersion and continuous practice with members of the TL community was far from what the learners actually experienced. In this section, a number of quotes and anecdotes, taken from the interviews, will be presented in order to provide a better picture of the type of input that the participants of this study had while living in Ireland.

With regard to the ES group, there seems to be a correlation between the results of the survey and what the learners mentioned in the interview. Indeed, they confirmed that their closest social network was comprised of Italian people or international students. A number of extracts are listed below:

Extr16. "[…] I *didn't know a lot of Irish people - this is the problem - I think because I knew only people who came from different countries and so they don't speak very well English […]" [ES3]

Extr17. "[…] all my friends are Erasmus students" [ES4]

Extr18. "most of my friends are Italian […] seventy percent […] when I go out for - I don't know - discos or - other things - I have only international students *friend - em - but in class - I - I don't have class with friends - with my - with my friends - so - the people that I met in class are - only Irish […]" [ES7]

Extr19. "my -- I - interacted with them not - that - em - much - that I can have even a proper opinion about - them as - a population […]" [ES9]

Extr20. […] I had a lot of - international - people - as friends. [ES10]

As is evident from the extracts, the Erasmus students affirmed having mainly related to other fellow sojourners (ES3, ES4, ES10) or co-nationals (ES7). Communication with Irish speakers was rare (ES9) and mainly occurred in contexts where co-nationals or other International students were not present (ES7). Moreover, Erasmus students managed to expand their social networks in international events, which mainly targeted international students. Thus, participation in these events had a snowball effect on the type of bonds they managed to establish in the TL community. In that regard, participants also ascribed the lack of contact with members of the TL community to the short LoS (ES11) and the

nationality of students in the same complex (ES13), as evident from the following excerpts:

> Extr21. […] I think that in -- six months it's not enough - to - to stay in contact with these Irish people because probably they think that you are just here for six months and - I don't know - probably it's something - that is related to us -- em - Erasmus students that - we always organise something just for Erasmus students […] [ES11]

> Extr22. Just two Irish friends […] just these two - the -- with the others it was not easy because they - first of all in the student accommodation - we were more international students - in that one -- so we -- we went out - all together - with the guys but - all international students that meet other international students […] [ES13]

With regard to the accommodation option, although most participants lived with at least one English NS (Figure 35), conversations with housemates, as the results of the survey evidenced, were limited to small talk or short conversations. The anecdotes provided by the participants in the interview (extracts 9 and 10) seem to corroborate the results of the survey. Thus, the findings are in line with the conclusions of the study by Yang and Kim (2011), because living with NSs does not necessarily correspond to more practice in the TL.

Figure 35 – ES accommodation type

House/Flatmates [Who are you sharing with?]

English native speakers only	3	20%
Non-native English speakers	2	13.3%
Speakers of your mother tongue	1	6.7%
Native & non-native English speakers	6	40%
Native, non-native English speakers & speakers of your own language	3	20%

> Extr23. […] one has her friends and the other one is a - sometimes goes out with us - yes - she is a little bit shy. [ES4]

> Extr24. ES10: […] my two flat mates are - Irish - but I'm not really close to them […] we are nice to each other but if you don't re-(+really) if you don't go out and if you don't - share the same interests - or - hobbies or whatever you don't really get close to that person - I can't really say that there are differences of mind - I mean - they are nice - I'm nice to them
> I: *You don't talk that much to them*
> ES10: Well not that much yeah - "how was your day?" - "how was your exam?" - "relax for that".

If the AU group is considered, results of the survey suggest that they interacted more with members of the host community and this may explain their production of PMs which was more typologically similar to that of Irish NSs. However, the quantitative analysis also revealed that the frequency of PMs for the AU group was relatively limited. This result

was interpreted in the light of the type of interlocutors with whom the au pairs presumably interacted more, i.e. NS children, who have been found to produce fewer PMs in conversation (Romero-Trillo 2002). Thus, the lower frequency of these linguistic items has been ascribed to the type of input received. Moreover, on a general note, participants did not attest extensive interactions with the family members.

In particular, the AU experience was very isolating and participants spent most of the time with the children, with whom they could not interact that much, as extracts 25 and 26 show. Moreover, interactions with the rest of the family were limited to mundane and short conversations (extr27).

> Extr25. […] with em three little boys - ok I talk to them - but it's not a real conversation with *a adult -- em - you - you can't learn for example *expression or they can't - correct me […] [AU2]
>
> Extr26. […] with a child you can talk that much - yes - we play - we watch cartoon - but with an adult is different [AU4]
>
> Extr27. […] they're *(host parents)* not very talkative actually - my host dad is really nice […] he always asks you if you're fine if you're good […] - my host mum is not - really like that […] sometimes she's in a - em - very bad mood and it's better not to talk to her too much - so I was like - "Ok - Hi how was work?" and - that's all […] we have - *a small *talks […] [AU3]
>
> Extr28. [...] I need to talk with her *(host mother)* because - sometimes -- em you know em - you can't talk with kids [AU15]

Participants also reported situations where no interaction occurred between them and their host family while having dinner (extr30) or spending some time in the sitting room (extr29). Thus, the au pairs lost interest in interacting with the members of the family and tended to isolate themselves even more (extr30).

> Extr29. […] when I was with them in the sitting room - nobody was speaking - and we were just sitting on the couch - and - watching the telly - it was just a weird situation [AU7]
>
> Extr30. […] they speak - but - yeah for me -- some – some *phrase but - nothing more - I just eat and stay quiet […] sometimes I don-(+don't) /// em I refuse the dinner […] so when they make *this food and they *told me "Oh do you want?" I tell "Oh no thank I will make something later [AU14]

Most participants reported having spent most of their time in their rooms during their SA stay, both as a voluntary decision to relax after a working day (extr31) and as a sign of

respect towards the privacy of the family (extr32). In some cases, the isolation from the family members was ascribed to a poverty of input of the homestay environment (extr33).

Extr31. the *most weird thing - it's to live - in - with the family - just you are working /// is like if you work in a pub - and you have your bedroom in the same place - it's weird because when you finish work - you need to relax and you need em - em just - space for yourself - I don't mind to speak with them or - spend time with them but […] I like when I finish the day of work to be in my room and just relax. [AU7]

Extr32. I make dinner for him at about six o' clock (( )) and when em his parents come - come back home em -- I go to my bedroom […] because they they come back home em in the evening after em after work and I don't want to - to disturb them - because if they are tired or they want to talk to their child […] [AU15]

Extr33. […] when I'm off - I spend a lot of time in my room - to do my things - because I don't want to disturb them - but *sometimes maybe they think that I want to hide in my room […] but ho-(+how) uh what can I do? Because - I don't have nothing to tell you and you you don't have nothing to tell me - so [AU14]

Thus, the results of the analysis on the interviews with the au pairs corroborates previous SA research on the role of the homestay in language learning (§3.2.2). Indeed, students spent most of their time on their own when they were not working (Rivers 1998) and communication was often limited to a few formulaic exchanges (Segalowitz and Freed 2004; DuFon 2006, Magnan and Lafford 2012). Thus, the AU experience of the participants of this study was similar to the SA sojourns of learners in homestay settings described in the literature review. However, the au pairs, who were also working for the family, reported a greater amount of interactions in English in the home environment, although they revealed that interactions with the host family were qualitatively rather poor. Thus, it may be presumed that interactions were mainly transactional and about house management or child care. Consequently, the role of learner status apparently can affect the amount of input within the walls of the homestay environment. Indeed, the participants in this study still reported having conversed considerably with their housemates. Conversely, the studies mentioned in §3.2.2 reported that conversation was limited to a number of formulaic exchanges in a homestay setting.

7.2.3 The role of TL exposure in the production of PMs: concluding remarks

In conclusion, this section analysed TL exposure of the participants during their sojourn in Ireland. The responses to the survey and the anecdotes provided by the participants in the interview may lead one to conclude that TL exposure was not that extensive for both groups. Although both groups were found to have similar lengths of conversation with

housemates and strangers, a number of differences were found, especially for the type of conversations and the L1 of the interlocutors. The ES group affirmed having interacted mainly with NNSs of English and having been engaged mostly in short conversations. Conversely, the au pairs felt they conversed predominantly with English NSs and engaged largely in long conversations. These findings have been analysed considering the results of the quantitative analysis. More specifically, it was assumed that the au pairs used pragmatic functions which were more typologically similar to NSs because of exposure to NS input. On the other hand, the ES group tended to use PMs in a manner which was still learner-like because of interactions in LF contexts.

However, under closer investigation, interactions of au pairs with NSs seem to have been characterised by qualitatively poor input. Indeed, it was hypothesised that interactions were presumably related to the job that the au pairs did for the family. Moreover, the participants also lamented that they did not manage to have real conversations with the NS children, who, as stressed by Romero-Trillo (2002), do not extensively use PMs in conversation. Thus, these findings may explain why the au pairs were found to use PMs to a lesser degree in the quantitative analysis. Additionally, if these findings are also analysed considering previous studies on the homestay setting, it may be assumed that learner status, even within the walls of a homestay setting, may affect the amount of input while abroad. Indeed, most SA research to date points to limited interactions with host families, whereas the participants in this study reported long conversations with housemates. However, the role of learner status in a homestay environment was far beyond the scope of this study and some considerations were presented by referring to the theoretical framework presented in chapter 3. Thus, further research needs to be conducted in this direction in order to investigate this aspect of SA research further.

7.3 Contextual features: conclusions

In conclusion, this chapter investigated a number of contextual variables which may have intervened in the use of PMs while abroad. As often mentioned in this dissertation, these linguistic items have often been considered to be a symptom of TL exposure; therefore, an attempt to assess the amount and the quality of input has been made. The analysis has been conducted with a quali-quantitative approach by examining first the experience of four participants and then by correlating the results of the quantitative analysis with the

responses to the survey and the questions in the interviews. It was found that participants, despite very similar living conditions, presented considerable individual variation in relation to their production of 'like' and a number of variables (i.e. place of residence, closest friends, L1 of the interlocutors) seem to have played an important role in the language outcomes of these informants.

Thus, these factors have been analysed further by examining the responses of the participants to the surveys and the interviews. The ES group was found to have mainly interacted with English NNSs and, consequently, they presumably used PMs in a more learner-like way. Conversely, the exposure to NS input for the au pairs was probably more extensive and may have resulted in more typologically similar functions. However, the anecdotes provided by the au pairs also showed that interactions in the family were reduced to conversations with children, who have been found by Romero-Trillo (2002) to under produce PMs in conversation. Thus, an effect of TL exposure and the type of input on PMs can be posited and these findings provide corroboration for previous studies conducted on PMs in the L2, presented in the literature review. However, while these studies simply posited that PMs can be indices of TL exposure, the findings of this study allow broadening the perspective. Indeed, they suggest that PMs can be considered an index of the amount as well as the quality of TL exposure while abroad.

Chapter 8

Discussion & Concluding remarks

8.1 Main findings of this study

From the quantitative analysis, a number of trends seem to have emerged from the data. Results were interpreted according to the role of the SA context (context-related), the type of SA experience (experience-related) or in relation to their destination of stay (destination-related). With regard to context-related findings, both learner groups, despite the type of SA experience, were found to produce more PMs upon completion of their SA sojourn. Thus, it was hypothesised that SA experiences can aid the production of PMs in conversation. However, not all results were found to be statistically significant; therefore, findings could not be generalised to all SA learners, all SA experiences and all types of PMs. Consequently, although it was found that the SA experience aided the overall production of PMs in conversation, the frequency and the use of these linguistic items in the L2 was not substantially affected and learners presented different linguistic outcomes.

More specifically, the ES group was found to outperform the other group in terms of frequency and, in that regard, they were also more similar to the reference group. Conversely, the AU group presented functions which were more similar to the NS group. Therefore, while in terms of frequency the ES group seems to have outperformed the other, in relation to characteristics of use, the au pairs approached more NS use. Moreover, the ES group was found to indulge in speech management functions, whereas the au pairs tended to use more attitudinal ones. Thus, an effect of the type of experience (experience-related findings) was posited both in terms of the frequency and the characteristics of use of these linguistic items in the learner language.

However, despite a more widespread use of PMs at the end of the experience, with regard to the function of 'hesitation', both groups appeared to deviate from NS use and frequency and, more specifically, learners were found to overindulge in the use of 'you know' and 'well' as fillers in conversation to a statistically significant degree. Thus, it was hypothesised that the use of this function may be characteristic of the learner language, because it was present and quite frequent both at T1 and T2. However, with regard to 'like' as a filler, one of the two groups (the Erasmus students) was found to statistically diverge from the NS group at T2. Morever, since the ES group presented more statistically

significant differences even for other PMs in relation to the 'hesitation' function, it was posited that the use of PMs as fillers to surmount a communication gap may also have been related to the input that these learners had during their SA experience.

As analysed in chapter 6, the longitudinal frequency and use of 'like' underwent the most striking changes. Both groups were found to significantly increase the frequency of this marker in terms of the IPV and the rate. However, notwithstanding the longitudinal increase, learners did not approach NS levels of frequency. Moreover, learners were also found to use a number of functions which were quite frequent in the language of the TL community. Indeed, at T2, both learner groups were found to use 'like' as a discourse structurer, which was the most frequent function in the NS data. Likewise, with regard to other pragmatic functions which have been claimed to be common in IrE (i.e. quotative, focuser and hedge), they were also found to use them, albeit to a different degree. Thus, despite minor differences, both groups extensively changed the use of 'like', both quantitatively and qualitatively, after the SA sojourn. Since previous studies conducted on IrE claim that 'like' is very common in Ireland, especially in certain pragmatic functions, the changes in the longitudinal use of this PM may presumably be ascribed to the input received during the SA sojourn. Thus, these findings can be considered as destination-related.

Thus, the amount and the type of input may have played a role in the longitudinal use of these linguistic items over time. Indeed, as often stressed in this dissertation, PMs can be an index of TL exposure as their acquisition occurs predominantly outside the classroom. Consequently, their use in conversation by L2 learners can be a symptom of TL contact. On these grounds, this study attempted to investigate TL exposure of the participants during the SA experience and the findings of the quantitative analysis were interpreted in connection with the amount and type of input. More specifically, the analysis of input was two-fold: after an in-depth focus on the experience of a number of participants, results were also analysed in relation to the responses that the informants provided in the survey and the interviews.

Overall, striking differences in the longitudinal use and frequency of these linguistic items were not present and the findings may be related to limited exposure to the TL that participants claimed to have had during their SA sojourn. In particular, it appears that the participants in this study mainly related to fellow sojourners or co-nationals. Interactions with members of the TL community, with the exception of rare cases, was rather limited.

However, some dissimilarities between the two groups were present. While the AU group claimed having interacted with members of the host community, especially in the home environment, the Erasmus students reported difficulties in establishing social bonds with Irish people. Therefore, the type of input to which the AU group was exposed may explain why they tended to use pragmatic functions which were more similar to the reference group. Conversely, the Erasmus students, who mainly used the language in LF contexts, were found to rely more on the use of fillers at statistically significant level when compared with the AU and NS group. Additionally, with regard to the most frequently occurring micro-functions, this group tended to use fewer attitudinal functions. Thus, it was assumed that the use of PMs to express hesitation and propositional macro-functions in general may be related to the LF context of learning.

However, in comparison with the other group, the au pairs produced PMs less frequently, which may seem surprising considering that they reported having interacted with members of the TL community. However, the findings could be ascribed to the type of NS input they received. Indeed, although they claimed to have interacted quite often with the members of the family, conversations were often limited to small talk. Moreover, they mostly spent time with NS children, who have been found to produce fewer PMs and who, in most cases, were too young to be involved in real and long conversations. Thus, this type of input may have affected the frequency of PMs in the AU data and it is possible to assume a correlation between the type of input and the frequency of PMs in conversation. However, while previous research has simply posited a correspondence between the use of PMs in conversation and TL exposure, the findings of the current study allow broadening the perspective. Indeed, PMs can be an index of the amount as well as the type of input while abroad. Therefore, since learner status abroad is strongly related to the type and the quality of input while abroad, it is possible to conclude that learner status is a pivotal variable which may affect the emergence and use of PMs in conversation after an SA sojourn.

If these findings are interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework presented in the first chapters, a number of similarities seem to emerge. With regard to pragmatic development, SA contexts were found to have beneficial effects on the pragmatic skills of the learners in the spoken production (Barron 2003; Schauer 2009; Schively 2011; Woodfield 2015) and SA learners were found to be in a more favourable position in comparison with their AH counterpart (Schauer 2009; Félix-Brasdefer 2013; Ren 2015).

However, similar to the results of this study, research to date conducted on the development of sociopragmatic competence suggests that SA learners, despite some improvements, do not approach NS frequency and pragmatic uses after the SA experience.

Likewise, if analysed in relation to the studies on sociolinguistic variants in SA contexts (§2.2.4), the acquisition of these linguistic items seems to undergo paths which may be considered similar to the acquisition of informal sociolinguistic variants. Indeed, their acquisition mainly occurs outside the walls of a classroom. Moreover, their emergence and use in the L2 seems to be strongly correlated with TL exposure. Indeed, the frequent authentic interactions with NSs of the TL allowed some participants in this study to extend their stylistic range in the oral production of PMs; however, despite more informality in conversation, exposure to the TL language was not enough to bring about NS levels of frequency of use.

Consequently, contrary to folk belief which seems to stress that a period of residence abroad can enhance FL skills, the findings of this study also corroborate what was presented in §1.1.3. Indeed, SA contexts can potentially provide more opportunities of learning, but as Serrano *et al.* (2012) stressed, the word 'potentially' needs to be emphasised as results may vary from one experience to another. Moreover, the participants in this study lamented that they did not manage to create social bonds with members of the TL community. Thus, the results of this study are in line with the model of the concentric circles presented by Coleman (2013, 2015). Indeed, informants mainly related to co-nationals and fellow sojourners and struggled to create social bonds in the outer circle, i.e. the circle of NSs, as also stressed by McManus *et al.* (2014), Mitchell (2015) and Mitchell *et al.* (2015).

With regard to the frequency and the pragmatic uses of PMs in the L2, similar findings also emerge from the literature review presented in §2.3.3. More specifically, results of the current study posited that the SA experience abroad aided the production of PMs in conversation. In that regard, they seem to be in line with Lafford (1995), Müller (2005), Rehner (2005), Iwasaki (2011, 2013), Polat (2011) and Beeching (2015), who claimed that NS contact can favour a more widespread use of these linguistic phenomena in conversation. However, as also stressed by Denke (2009), House (2009, 2013), Aijmer (2011) and Buysse (2015), the use of PMs in learner language still appears to be limited and may be ascribed to the poverty of input previously outlined. Moreover, their use in

conversation seems to respond to specific conversational needs, i.e. avoidance of interactional silence. This tendency was also present in the learner data of this study as participants were found to overindulge in the use of a number of PMs in this function to a statistically significant degree.

8.2 Contribution to the field

Despite a number of similarities with the findings of previous SA research, this study also allowed an investigation into a number of under-researched aspects. More specifically, as stressed in chapter 1, SA research has been predominantly characterised by studies conducted with cross-sectional designs. Therefore, this study responded to the call for more longitudinal studies in SA research, by analysing over time linguistic items which have not been extensively investigated in SLA research. Moreover, their analysis according to an SA perspective has been rather limited, with only two studies conducted on PMs in SA contexts through longitudinal lenses (Iwasaki 2010, 2013), to the best of hitherto found knowledge. The dearth of studies on these items according to an SA perspective appears to be rather surprising. Indeed, if folk-linguistic belief holds that SA constitutes an optimal combination of instructed and naturalistic language exposure, then the analysis of these linguistic items in the L2 raises pivotal questions surrounding the issue of input/exposure to the FL while abroad.

Thus, the study also provided useful insights into one of the most crucial issues in SA research, namely the assessment of input and conversational opportunities in such contexts. Indeed, although these learning settings have been anecdotally considered to provide more TL exposure, the amount and the type of input in these learning contexts have been found very difficult to assess (§3.1.3). This study, by relying on quali/quantitative approach, attempted to depict a more nuanced picture of the type and the amount of interactions in the TL language that the participants had while living abroad. More specifically, a number of contextual variables (i.e. social networks, living arrangements) were considered for the interpretation of the findings of the quantitative analysis.

In particular, in the analysis of all possible factors which may have intervened in the learning outcomes of the participants, this study has mainly focused on the variable of learner status, by comparing two different types of SA experiences. This approach, to the

best of hitherto found knowledge, appears to be quite innovative in SA research, which has predominantly analysed the experience of university students in SA contexts by comparing them with the AH counterpart. Moreover, because of the wide range of SA experiences that learners can avail themselves of, the analysis of the optimal status in the TL community may respond to the practical concern that learners may have when they find themselves choosing among different types of SA experiences.

Likewise, this study has also provided a focus on the experiences of au pairs, whose SA sojourn has not been extensively investigated in SA research to date. Indeed, SA research seems to have predominantly focused on learners hosted by a family of the TL community. However, different results may be related to a different learner status, even within the host family environment. This study has not addressed the role of learner status in the homestay environment; however, the experiences of the participants in this study appeared to be slightly different from the ones outlined in §3.2.2. Thus, it was posited that the role of learner status may have affected the type of input even within the walls of homestay environment. However, more studies are needed to investigate this aspect further. Moreover, future studies conducted on the au pair experience may also have practical implications. Indeed, this type of SA/RA is still often characterised by private arrangements between the learners and the host family. Further research conducted in this direction may contribute to shed more light on the linguistic outcomes of these types of learners as well as bringing to the attention of policy makers the need for a better regulation of this type of SA experience.

Finally, although these linguistic items have been mainly analysed according to the pragmatic functions they performed, a number of sociolinguistic considerations still emerged from the analysis. As Beeching (2016) mentioned, sociolinguistic features can be analysed according to the macro categories of class, gender and age. Although this study has not analysed the use of PMs according to these sociolinguistic variables, with regard to exposure to the TL while abroad, the findings suggest that the age of the interlocutors played a role in the amount of PMs used in conversation by a group of the participants.

8.3 Limitations and directions for future research

However, despite a number of contributions to the research, limitations are inevitably present. An initial limitation of the study is the relatively small sample size involved. Indeed, 15 participants per group may not appear to be a considerable number; however, the sample size needs to be considered in relation to the longitudinal focus as well as the type of the analysis on the oral data. Indeed, the longitudinal nature of the project has been, under some circumstances, an impediment to a larger number of participants in the study, which was completely voluntary-based. However, given the relatively small number of this type of studies in SA research, the merits of this study lie precisely in its longitudinal focus as it can allow an investigation on developmental patterns. Moreover, the limitation concerning the sample size can be minimised if analysed in relation to the type and the amount of data collected from each informant. Indeed, each meeting involved a conversation of about 40 minutes and data were manually transcribed and coded.

With regard to the study design, although the criteria used for the selection of the participants were mainly aimed to have similar onset conditions, they did not permit a further investigation into a number of variables, which may still play a role in the linguistic outcomes of the learners. More specifically, in terms of onset proficiency, participants were all upper-intermediate learners; thus, this variable has probably not affected the within-group production of PMs in this study. However, as emerged in the studies by Wei (2011) and Pauletto and Bardel (2016), the onset proficiency may play a role in the production of PMs in conversation and further research is needed in order to assess the role of this variable in the production of PMs. In particular, a comparative analysis based on the onset proficiency of learners may allow researchers to investigate whether there is a correlation between the proficiency level and the emergence and use of PMs in conversation.

Likewise, in order to avoid in-group variability which may have been related to the L1 of the participants, all informants were speakers whose mother tongue was Italian. However, as mentioned in §2.2.4, transfer can have a positive effect on the production of sociolinguistic variants in the event that a correspondence to L1 structures or forms is present. Thus, although L1 transfer may not have strongly affected the within-group production of these informants because all participants were Italian, the study did not allow assessing whether students of different L1s can achieve the same results. Indeed, the use and the frequency of a particular marker in this study may have been affected by

the convergence to or divergence from the use of an equivalent marker in Italian. Moreover, with regard to LoS, this study has focused on a six-month SA sojourn. This selection was based on the frequency of programmes of this length as well as the practicality of the study, which needed to compare learners in similar conditions. However, the study did not allow us to investigate what is the optimal duration of SA experience for PMs to emerge or to be used more extensively in conversation.

Additionally, as often stressed throughout this dissertation, the key question of this study was to assess linguistic outcomes in different types of SA experience. Therefore, the study relied on a non-traditional study design by comparing two types of SA students. However, a comparison with an AH group would have probably shed more light on the beneficial effects of SA contexts on the production of these linguistic data. Likewise, since the study aimed at correlating the findings of the quantitative analyses with the quantity and quality of input, a number of contextual factors were necessarily considered. However, despite not being the focus of this study, cognitive factors may still have played a role in the linguistic outcomes of the participants in this study.

Some considerations need to be mentioned even in relation to the instrument chosen for the data collection. As mentioned in chapter 4, the sociolinguistic interview was used because of intrinsic features of the linguistic items under analysis. However, as Liao (2009) noted, the use of different instruments may affect the use and frequency of PMs in conversation. This perspective was actually taken into consideration when the study was designed and, in its earlier phase, the study also involved the analysis of data produced by the same participants in dyadic tasks. However, due to the amount of data and the time required for the transcription and analysis, this perspective was then no longer considered.

With regard to individual variation, this study evidenced that learners, even in the same group, presented different frequencies and uses over time. However, this study did not allow an investigation into within-individual variation. Indeed, as mentioned in §2.3.3, the use of PMs is part of the idiolect of the speaker; therefore, learners may present different outcomes for the markers under analysis. More specifically, they may prefer the use of certain markers and not the use of others. Additionally, the PMs under analysis were selected according to the criterion of frequency in the TL community. However, the question whether these frequency tendencies were reflected in the learner data was not assessed. Moreover, this type of analysis may not have been totally feasible. Indeed, as

mentioned in §2.3.2, it is still very controversial what items to include in the vast category of PMs.

Another limitation of the study can be connected to the identity that the speaker wishes to portray in the L2, i.e. if the speaker is consciously aware of the pragmatic value that the linguistic item conveys and uses it purposely to sound more native-like or if the learner is using PMs as formulaic routines without being totally aware of their appropriateness and function in context. This study has not allowed an investigation into this aspect as learners were not aware of the linguistic items under investigation when data were collected. In that regard, a post-test reflective interview could have provided some insights into L2 identity as well. However, since the participation in the study was voluntary-based, an additional step in the data collection would not have been totally practicable.

Other individual variables may also have played a role in the opportunities of TL exposure and development of PMs are motivation and personality. As stressed in §3.2.2, these two factors may affect the conversational opportunities that learners may seek while they are abroad. Although participants in this study claimed to be instrumentally motivated and appeared to the interviewer to be quite extrovert and open, a proper assessment of these two factors and their development over time was not conducted to draw definitive conclusions on their possible role on the development of PMs in learner production. Thus, further research is also needed in this direction.

Finally, as previously mentioned, PMs can also be considered as social indices and can be analysed according to sociolinguistic analysis. With regard to gender, sociolinguistic studies (Beeching 2016) claimed that the production of PMs and the dispersal of different pragmatic functions may be ascribed to the gender of the speaker. However, if these gender variation patterns are mirrored in L2 production of PMs, it has yet to be investigated in SA research. Moreover, the data collected for this study did not allow for an assessment as to whether extensive differences in the use of PMs could be gender bound. This limitation was related to the practicalities of the study, as the majority of the learner participants were female speakers.

Nonetheless, although the analysis was mainly addressed at analysing these linguistic items at the pragmatic level, a number of considerations at thee sociolinguistic level have still been mentioned. More specifically, some considerations have been made with regard

to the role of learner status in the home environment, the effect of the sociolinguistic variable of age on the type of input of the participants as well as the acquisition of the PM 'like' in an Irish SA context. Further research is needed to assess whether a) the role of the learner status can affect the amount and the quality of input in a homestay environment, b) the factor of 'age' in the input while abroad can interfere with the linguistic outcomes of the learners, c) similar findings on the use of PMs can be found in other English-speaking countries.

All the abovementioned factors may allow researchers to shed more light on the development of PMs in the learner language in SA contexts and to investigate the intervening factors which can make some PMs more prone to development. Thus, in conclusion, the aforementioned limitations presented in this sub-section can be taken as *desiderata* and questions for future research. Indeed, the questions that this sub-section have raised will allow a more detailed investigation into PM development and a more in-depth depiction of the factors intervening in sociopragmatic development during SA experiences in general.

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Transcription conventions

Pauses

- short pause

-- medium pause

--- long pause

/// long interruption of discourse

Overlapping

The words or part of the word in in question were underlined. Ex. <u>Be</u>cause.

Numerals

They were written out as complete words. Ex. Five.

Punctuation

It was limited to periods, exclamations and question marks. Quotation marks (i.e. "speech") were used to indicate direct speech or thought within the narrative.

Disfluent speech

- **Fillers**

Common fillers transcribed were ah, uh, em, um, uh huh.

- **Partial words**

When a speaker interrupted in the middle of a word, the annotator transcribed as much as can be discerned. A single dash without preceding space was used to indicate the point at which word was interrupted. When the transcriber could make a reasonable guess at which word was intended by the speaker, the full form of the word was written in brackets, preceded by a plus sign (+).

Ex. absolu-(+absolutely)

- **Mispronounced and incorrect words**

An asterisk (*) was used for mispronounced words or incorrect words. The annotator transcribed mispronounced or incorrect words using the standard spelling without attempting to represent the pronunciation or correcting the error. Ex. *informations

- **Unclear or unintelligible speech**

If a part of the speech was difficult to understand, double rounded parentheses were used. If it was possible to make a guess about the speakers' words, they were put in the double brackets. Ex ((London))

- **Other symbols**

[laughter], [sigh] and other similar noises were added to the text in italics and in square brackets.

The main modules of the interviews

The order of the modules was not fixed, but the modules were interconnected. Thus, one topic often led to another one during the interview, as the following diagram shows.
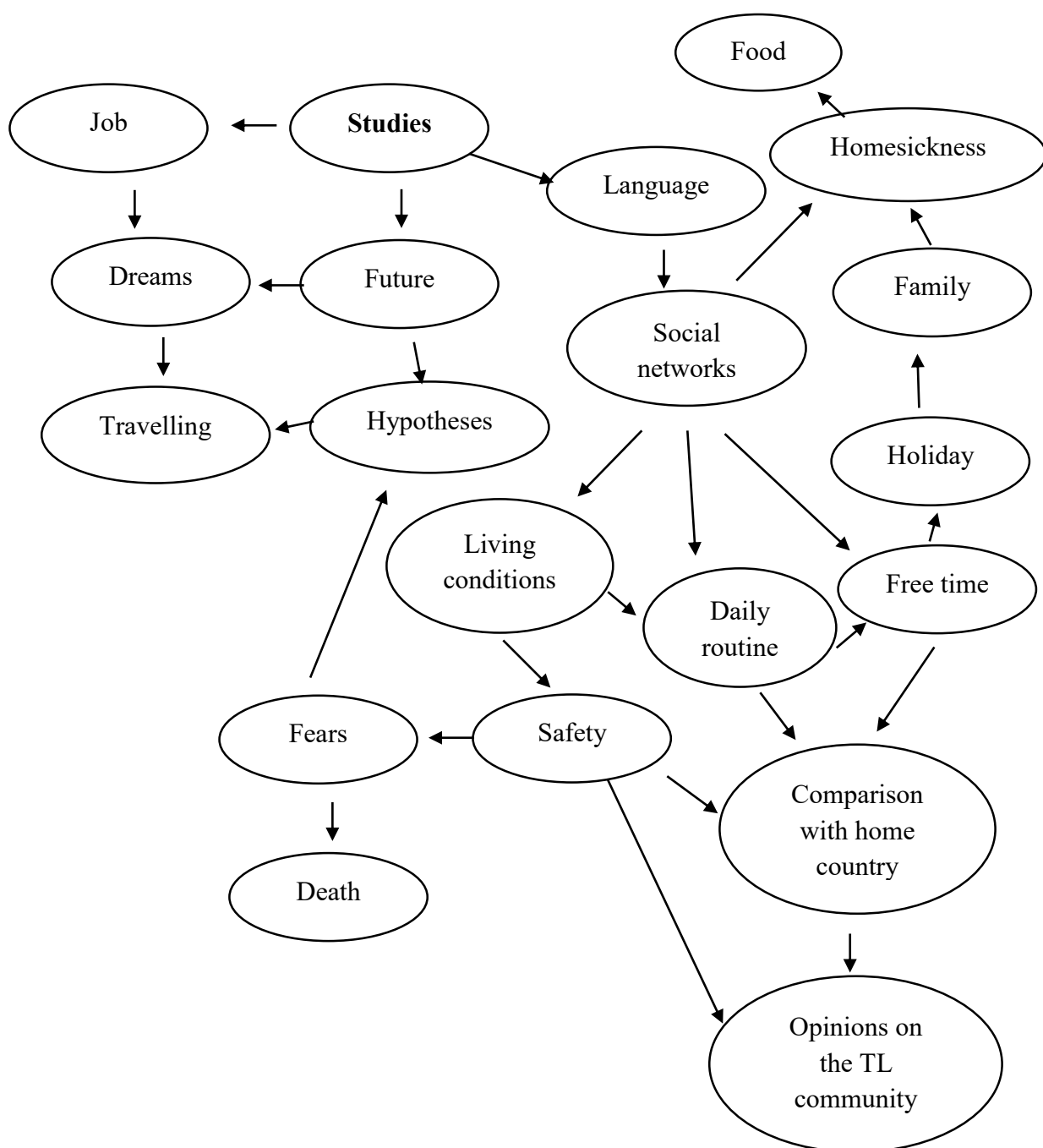
Questionnaire 1

In this questionnaire you will be asked some information about yourself, your knowledge of English and your previous study abroad experiences. Please allow yourself about 15 minutes to answer the following questions. Your honest and detailed responses will be greatly appreciated.

Section 1 – General Information

In this section you will be asked general information about yourself

*Required question

1. Name*

   _____

2. Gender*

   _____

3. Year of birth*

   _____

4. Where are you from?*

   _____

5. What is your native language?*

   _____

6. What language(s) do you speak at home?*

   _____

7. What do you study in your country?*

   _____

8. When did you arrive in Ireland?*

   _____

9. How long are you planning to stay in Ireland?*

   _____

10. What are you doing in Ireland?*

   _____

Section 2 – Foreign language(s) knowledge

In this section, you will be asked some information about your knowledge of English or other foreign languages before your study abroad experience in Ireland

11. How many languages can you speak?*

_____

12. Did you study English at school? If yes, for how long?*

_____

13. Have you taken any English language assessment tests?*

Please mark one oval

- o   yes

- o   no

14. If yes, which one?

_____

15. In what language(s) did you receive the majority of your pre-university education?*

_____

16. Is your university degree in English?*

Please mark one oval

- o   yes, all lectures and exams are in English

- o   some lectures and exams are in English

- o   only one course and one exam in English

- o   no, all lectures and courses are in my mother tongue

- o   Other: _____

17. How good do you think you are in English?*

Please mark one oval

- o   Very good

- o   Pretty good

- o   Good enough to understand Irish people

- o   Not so good

- o   Pretty basic

- o   Other: _____

Section 3 – Study abroad experiences

In this section, you will be asked some information about previous study abroad experiences

18. Is this your first experience abroad?*

Please mark one oval

       o   yes

       o   no

19. If no, did you visit an English speaking country before?

Please mark one oval

       o   yes

       o   no

20. If 18 is no, could you mention the intention of your stay?

Please mark one oval per row (if applicable)

	Holiday	Study	Work
First experience	o	o	o
Second experience	o	o	o
Third experience	o	o	o

21. If 18 is no, how long did you spend there?

Please mark one oval per row (if applicable)

	Less than 2 weeks	About a month	3-6 months	3 months - a year	More than a year
First experience	o	o	o	o	o
Second experience	o	o	o	o	o
Third experience	o	o	o	o	o

22. If 18 is no, where did you live while living abroad?

Please mark one oval per row (if applicable)

	Hotel/Hostel	Host family	Student accommodation	Private house/flat
First experience	O	O	O	O
Second experience	O	O	O	O
Third experience	O	O	O	O

23. If 18 is no, who did you share with?

Please mark one oval per row (if applicable)

	Native English speakers only	Speakers of your own language	Non-native English speakers	Non-native English speakers & speakers of your own language	Native and non-native English speakers (no speakers of your own language)	Native, non-native English speakers & speakers of your own language
First experience	O	O	O	O	O	O
Second experience	O	O	O	O	O	O
Third experience	O	O	O	O	O	O

24. Would you like to add any comments to your answers in this section?

Feel free to add comments or elaborate your questions

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section 4 – Your study abroad experience in Ireland

25. Do you like Ireland?*

Please mark one oval

- o   Yes, I love it
- o   Yes, to some extent
- o   No, I don't

26. Before coming to Ireland, what did you know about the country?*

Please mark one oval

- o   A lot
- o   Very little
- o   Nothing at all

27. Where are you living in Ireland?*

Please mark one oval

- o   Student accommodation
- o   Host family

28. Who are you sharing with?*

Please mark one oval per row

	Native English speakers only	Speakers of your own language	Non-native English speakers	Non-native English speakers & speakers of your own language	Native and non-native English speakers (no speakers of your own language)	Native, non-native English speakers & speakers of your own language
House/ Flatmates	O	O	O	O	O	O

29. From 0 to 4, how much do you think you interact with your housemates in English?*

Please mark one oval

- o   0 - I use my mother tongue only
- o   1 - I rarely use it
- o   2 - I sometimes use English
- o   3 - I use English very often
- o   4 - I use only English

30. What do you normally talk about with your housemates?*

Please mark one oval

- o   Topics related to household chores & bills
- o   Daily routine
- o   The weather
- o   University life
- o   Only greetings
- o   I don't speak English with them
- o   Other: _____

31. Do you have Irish friends?*

Please mark one oval

- o   yes
- o   no

32. Do you think it is difficult to have Irish friends?*

Please mark one oval

- o   yes
- o   no
- o   Other: _____

33. If yes, why?

Please mark one oval

- o   The language is a barrier
- o   Our cultures are very different
- o   We have different lifestyles and routines
- o   Their accent is too difficult for me
- o   I don't have many chances of meeting Irish people
- o   Other: _____

34. Are you taking English language classes in Ireland?*

Please mark one oval

- o yes

- o no

35. If yes, can you specific the type of course (private classes, courses…) and how many classes you are attending per week?

_____

_____

_____

_____

36. Would you like to add any comments to your answers in this section?

Feel free to add comments or elaborate your questions

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section 5 – Your expectations

In this part of the survey you will be asked to what extent you agree or disagree to some statements, according to what you have experienced in your first weeks in Ireland.

37. Living in Ireland will help me to learn English faster*

Please mark one oval

- o 1- I do not agree

- o 2- I agree to some extent

- o 3- I partially agree

- o 4- I totally agree

- o Other:_____

38. I will have many Irish friends*

Please mark one oval

- o 1- I do not agree

- o 2- I agree to some extent

- o 3- I partially agree

- o 4- I totally agree

- o Other:_____

39. Understanding Irish culture will help my English*

Please mark one oval

- o 1- I do not agree
- o 2- I agree to some extent
- o 3- I partially agree
- o 4- I totally agree
- o Other:_____

40. In Ireland I will learn English better than my country*

Please mark one oval

- o 1- I do not agree
- o 2- I agree to some extent
- o 3- I partially agree
- o 4- I totally agree
- o Other:_____

41. I will learn English also outside school and university*

Please mark one oval

- o 1- I do not agree
- o 2- I agree to some extent
- o 3- I partially agree
- o 4- I totally agree
- o Other:_____

42. Learning English in a native country is the best*

Please mark one oval

- o 1- I do not agree
- o 2- I agree to some extent
- o 3- I partially agree
- o 4- I totally agree
- o Other:_____

43. Speaking to native speakers will help my English*

Please mark one oval

- o 1- I do not agree
- o 2- I agree to some extent
- o 3- I partially agree
- o 4- I totally agree

o   Other:_____

44. People from different countries will help my English*

Please mark one oval

    o   1- I do not agree

    o   2- I agree to some extent

    o   3- I partially agree

    o   4- I totally agree

    o   Other:_____

45. I will learn English mostly at school/university*

Please mark one oval

    o   1- I do not agree

    o   2- I agree to some extent

    o   3- I partially agree

    o   4- I totally agree

    o   Other:_____

46. People from my country will slow my learning*

Please mark one oval

    o   1- I do not agree

    o   2- I agree to some extent

    o   3- I partially agree

    o   4- I totally agree

    o   Other:_____

47. I will learn to speak English like native speakers*

Please mark one oval

    o   1- I do not agree

    o   2- I agree to some extent

    o   3- I partially agree

    o   4- I totally agree

    o   Other:_____

48. Would you like to add any comments to your answers in this section?

Feel free to add comments or elaborate your questions

_____

_____

49. By ticking the answer below, I agree to participate in this research

If you have questions about this, please feel free to contact me at a.magliacane@ucc.ie

- o I understand that my responses will be used for research purposes only and will be kept anonymous.

50. Thank you!

Questionnaire 2

In this questionnaire you will be asked some information about your daily routine in Ireland. The responses that you will give in this questionnaire will be kept confidential. Thank you for your cooperation. The information that you will provide will help u sto understand the learning experience of students of English. Your honest and detailed responses will be greatly appreciated.

*Required question

Section 1 - Your personal biodata

This information will help the researcher to associate your responses to your name. All information will be kept anonymous.

    1.   What's your name?*

_____

    2.   What's the name of your hometown?*

_____

    3.   How long have you stayed in Ireland?*

_____

    4.   Arrival date*

Ex. 02 October 2016

_____

    5.   Departure date*

Ex. 02 October 2016

_____

    6.   Why did you come to Ireland?*

Please mark one oval

        o   Erasmus experience

        o   Au pair experience

    7.   What exactly did you do?*

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Did you attend any English language courses while living in Ireland?*

Please mark one oval

- o yes
- o no

9. If yes, can you provide further details about them?

Please provide information about length, number of hours per week, level

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. Would you like to add any comments to your answers in this section?

Feel free to add comments or elaborate your questions

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section 2 – Living arrangements

11. Which situation best describe your living arrangements in Ireland?*

Please mark one oval

- o Host family
- o Student dormitory
- o Private apartment
- o Other: _____

12. Have you lived in the same accommodation since your arrival?*

Please mark one oval

- o Yes
- o No

13. If no, why did you change your accommodation?

You may pass on this question if you feel uncomfortable

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. If yes, who are you living with now?

Please mark one oval per row

	Native English speakers only	Speakers of your own language	Non-native English speakers	Non-native English speakers & speakers of your own language	Native and non-native English speakers (no speakers of your own language)	Native, non-native English speakers & speakers of your own language
House/ Flatmates	○	○	○	○	○	○

15. Since your arrival, do you feel your relationship with your housemates has changed?*

Please mark one oval

- o Yes
- o No

16. How did it change? Why didn't it change in your opinion?*

Please add further details or comments to the answer above

_____

_____

_____

_____

17. What did you speak about with your housemates?*

Please mark one oval

- o Household chores & bills
- o Daily routine
- o University life
- o The weather
- o Greetings only
- o Personal things
- o Cooking
- o I don't speak English to them
- o Other: _____

18. From 0 to 4, how much did you interact with your housemates in English?*

Please mark one oval

- o   0 - I use my mother tongue only
- o   1 - I rarely use it
- o   2 - I sometimes use English
- o   3 - I use English very often
- o   4 - I use only English

19. Would you like to add any comments to your answers in this section?

Feel free to add comments or elaborate your questions

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section 3 – Your daily use of the language

In this section, you will be asked on average how much you used English while living in Ireland. On average, how many minutes per day do you think you spoke English in the following circumstances? You can choose from 0, which means 'never', to 'more than one hour', which 'really a lot'.

20. How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English OUTSIDE CLASS to native speakers?*

Please mark one oval

- o   0 minutes
- o   1 -5 minutes
- o   5-10 minutes
- o   20-30 minutes
- o   30-60 minutes
- o   More than 1 hour

21. How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke ENGLISH outside class to non-native speakers of English?*

Please mark one oval

- o   0 minutes
- o   1 -5 minutes
- o   5-10 minutes
- o   20-30 minutes

- 30-60 minutes
- More than 1 hour

22. How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English to your Instructor/Lecturer/Supervisor/Teacher?*

Please mark one oval

- 0 minutes
- 1 -5 minutes
- 5-10 minutes
- 20-30 minutes
- 30-60 minutes
- More than 1 hour

23. How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English to your housemates?*

Housemates or people you were living with

Please mark one oval

- 0 minutes
- 1 -5 minutes
- 5-10 minutes
- 20-30 minutes
- 30-60 minutes
- More than 1 hour

24. How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English to your classmates?*

People you attended classes or lectures with, not necessarily English classes

Please mark one oval

- 0 minutes
- 1 -5 minutes
- 5-10 minutes
- 20-30 minutes
- 30-60 minutes
- More than 1 hour

25. How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English to strangers?*

You started a conversation at the gym or while waiting for the bus or similar

Please mark one oval

- o 0 minutes
- o 1 -5 minutes
- o 5-10 minutes
- o 20-30 minutes
- o 30-60 minutes
- o More than 1 hour

26. How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English in relation to homework or classroom assignment?*

Please mark one oval

- o 0 minutes
- o 1 -5 minutes
- o 5-10 minutes
- o 20-30 minutes
- o 30-60 minutes
- o More than 1 hour

27. How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English to obtain directions or information?*

Such as 'how much is it?' or 'where is the bus stop?' or similar
Please mark one oval

- o 0 minutes
- o 1 -5 minutes
- o 5-10 minutes
- o 20-30 minutes
- o 30-60 minutes
- o More than 1 hour

28. Do you feel you engaged more in SHORT (couple of minutes) or LONG (more than 30 minutes) conversation?*

- o Short
- o Long

29. How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English for SHORT exchanges?*

Such as 'please pass the salt', 'how was your day' or similar
Please mark one oval

- o   0 minutes
- o   1 -5 minutes
- o   5-10 minutes
- o   20-30 minutes
- o   30-60 minutes
- o   More than 1 hour

30. How many minutes per day do you feel you spoke English for LONG exchanges?*

Such as a personal account of an event

Please mark one oval

- o   0 minutes
- o   1 -5 minutes
- o   5-10 minutes
- o   20-30 minutes
- o   30-60 minutes
- o   More than 1 hour

31. How many minutes per day do you feel you read in English for pleasure?*

Such as books magazines websites that you liked
Please mark one oval

- o   0 minutes
- o   1 -5 minutes
- o   5-10 minutes
- o   20-30 minutes
- o   30-60 minutes
- o   More than 1 hour

32. How many minutes per day do you feel you read in English related to homework or course materials?*

Such as academic articles
Please mark one oval

- o   0 minutes
- o   1 -5 minutes
- o   5-10 minutes
- o   20-30 minutes
- o   30-60 minutes
- o   More than 1 hour

33. How many minutes per day do you feel you watched television/films in English?*

Please mark one oval

- o   0 minutes
- o   1 -5 minutes
- o   5-10 minutes
- o   20-30 minutes
- o   30-60 minutes
- o   More than 1 hour

34. How many minutes per day do you feel you listened to English songs?*

Please mark one oval

- o   0 minutes
- o   1 -5 minutes
- o   5-10 minutes
- o   20-30 minutes
- o   30-60 minutes
- o   More than 1 hour

35. How many minutes per day do you feel you used English for writing for personal reasons?*

Such as emails or personal notes
Please mark one oval

- o   0 minutes
- o   1 -5 minutes
- o   5-10 minutes
- o   20-30 minutes
- o   30-60 minutes
- o   More than 1 hour

36. How many minutes per day do you feel you used English for chatting or texting?*

Please mark one oval

- o   0 minutes
- o   1 -5 minutes
- o   5-10 minutes
- o   20-30 minutes
- o   30-60 minutes
- o   More than 1 hour

37. How many minutes per day do you feel you used English for writing for homework or classroom related materials?*

Such as assignments, thesis, articles
Please mark one oval

- o   0 minutes
- o   1 -5 minutes
- o   5-10 minutes
- o   20-30 minutes
- o   30-60 minutes
- o   More than 1 hour

38. How many minutes per day do you feel you used ITALIAN to interact with people in Ireland?*

Please mark one oval

- o 0 minutes
- o 1 -5 minutes
- o 5-10 minutes
- o 20-30 minutes
- o 30-60 minutes
- o More than 1 hour

39. How many minutes per day do you feel you used a language (other than English or Italian) to interact with people in Ireland?*

Such as French, Spanish, Portuguese, German…
Please mark one oval

- o 0 minutes
- o 1 -5 minutes
- o 5-10 minutes
- o 20-30 minutes
- o 30-60 minutes
- o More than 1 hour

40. How many minutes per day do you feel you used ITALIAN to interact with people AT HOME?*

Such as your family, your boyfriend, your friends
Please mark one oval

- o 0 minutes
- o 1 -5 minutes
- o 5-10 minutes
- o 20-30 minutes
- o 30-60 minutes
- o More than 1 hour

41. What were the most frequent topics you talked about to <u>native speakers</u> in Ireland?*

Please mention at least 3

_____

42. What were the most frequent topics you talked about to <u>non- native speakers</u> in Ireland?*

Please mention at least 3

_____

43. Would you like to add any comments to this section?

Feel free to add comments or elaborate your questions

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section 4 – Your expectations

In this part of the survey you will be asked to what extent you agree or disagree to some statements, according to what you have experienced in the last semester

44. Living in Ireland will help me to learn English faster*

Please mark one oval

o   1- I do not agree

o   2- I agree to some extent

o   3- I partially agree

o   4- I totally agree

o   Other:_____

45. I had many Irish friends*

Please mark one oval

o   1- I do not agree

o   2- I agree to some extent

o   3- I partially agree

o   4- I totally agree

o   Other:_____

46. Understanding Irish culture helped my English*

Please mark one oval

- o 1- I do not agree
- o 2- I agree to some extent
- o 3- I partially agree
- o 4- I totally agree
- o Other:_____

47. In Ireland I learnt English better than my country*

Please mark one oval

- o 1- I do not agree
- o 2- I agree to some extent
- o 3- I partially agree
- o 4- I totally agree
- o Other:_____

48. I learnt English also outside school and university*

Please mark one oval

- o 1- I do not agree
- o 2- I agree to some extent
- o 3- I partially agree
- o 4- I totally agree
- o Other:_____

49. Learning English in a native country was the best*

Please mark one oval

- o 1- I do not agree
- o 2- I agree to some extent
- o 3- I partially agree
- o 4- I totally agree
- o Other:_____

50. Speaking to native speakers helped my English*

Please mark one oval

- o 1- I do not agree
- o 2- I agree to some extent
- o 3- I partially agree
- o 4- I totally agree

o   Other:_____

51. People from different countries helped my English*

Please mark one oval

        o   1- I do not agree

        o   2- I agree to some extent

        o   3- I partially agree

        o   4- I totally agree

        o   Other:_____

52. I learnt English mostly at school/university*

Please mark one oval

        o   1- I do not agree

        o   2- I agree to some extent

        o   3- I partially agree

        o   4- I totally agree

        o   Other:_____

53. People from my country slowed my learning*

Please mark one oval

        o   1- I do not agree

        o   2- I agree to some extent

        o   3- I partially agree

        o   4- I totally agree

        o   Other:_____

54. I learnt to speak English like native speakers*

Please mark one oval

        o   1- I do not agree

        o   2- I agree to some extent

        o   3- I partially agree

        o   4- I totally agree

        o   Other:_____

55. Would you like to add any comments to your answers in this section?

Feel free to add comments or elaborate your questions

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section 5 – Language development

56. To what extent, did this semester abroad meet your expectations, in terms of language improvement?*

Did you expect more or fewer improvements?

  o   0-10%

  o   20-40%

  o   50-70%

  o   80-100%

57. To what extent, did this semester abroad meet your expectations, in terms of social activities?*

Did you expect to meet more people or have more friends?

  o   0-10%

  o   20-40%

  o   50-70%

  o   80-100%

58. To what extent, did this semester abroad meet your expectations, in terms of cultural knowledge?*

Do you know enough about Irish culture and traditions?
Please mark one oval

  o   0-10%

  o   20-40%

  o   50-70%

  o   80-100%

59. Do you feel that language was a barrier while living in Ireland?*

  o   yes

  o   no

60. Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

61. Would you like to add any comments to your answers in this section?

Feel free to add comments or elaborate your questions

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section 6 – Your closest friends in Ireland

Think about three of your closest friends or three important people for you in Ireland

62. Is person 1*

Please mark one oval

- o   a native speaker of English
- o   a non-native speaker of English
- o   a speaker of your mother tongue

63. Is person 2*

Please mark one oval

- o   a native speaker of English
- o   a non-native speaker of English
- o   a speaker of your mother tongue

64. Is person 3*

Please mark one oval

- o   a native speaker of English
- o   a non-native speaker of English
- o   a speaker of your mother tongue

65. From 0% to 100%, how much did you interact in a language other than English with person 1?*

Please mark one oval

- o 0-10%
- o 20-40%
- o 50-70%
- o 80-100%

66. From 0% to 100%, how much did you interact in a language other than English with person 2?*

Please mark one oval

- o 0-10%
- o 20-40%
- o 50-70%
- o 80-100%

67. From 0% to 100%, how much did you interact in a language other than English with person 3?*

Please mark one oval

- o 0-10%
- o 20-40%
- o 50-70%
- o 80-100%

68. Where did you meet person 1?*

Please mark one oval

- o At home
- o At school/work
- o We have the same hobbies, that's how we met
- o Through other friends
- o At social events
- o We were friends before
- o Facebook/Internet/email
- o Other: _____

69. Where did you meet person 2?*
Please mark one oval

- o At home
- o At school/work
- o We have the same hobbies, that's how we met
- o Through other friends
- o At social events
- o We were friends before
- o Facebook/Internet/email
- o Other: _____

70. Where did you meet person 3?*
Please mark one oval

- o At home
- o At school/work
- o We have the same hobbies, that's how we met
- o Through other friends
- o At social events
- o We were friends before
- o Facebook/Internet/email
- o Other: _____

71. Would you like to add any comments to your answers in this section?

Feel free to add comments or elaborate your questions

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section 7 – Concluding remarks

72. In general, did you like your living experience in Ireland?

- o Yes
- o No

73. What is the best thing of living abroad?

_____

_____

_____

_____

74. What is the worst thing of living abroad?

_____

_____

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75. What is the easiest thing of living abroad?

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76. What is the most difficult thing of living abroad?

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77. Is it difficult to make friends in Ireland?

- o Yes
- o No

78. If you could stay longer, would you stay?

- o Yes
- o No
- o Other:_____

79. Are you planning to come back to Ireland?

- o Yes
- o No
- o Other:_____

80. What advice would you give to another student who is coming to Ireland for a semester/ a year?

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81. Would you like to add any comments to your answers in this section?

Feel free to add comments or elaborate your questions

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82. By ticking the answer below, I agree to participate in this research

If you have questions about this, please feel free to contact me at a.magliacane@ucc.ie

  o I understand that my responses will be used for research purposes only and will be kept anonymous.

83. Thank you!

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The AU group

AU1	AU1 was a student of Radiology. She was very talkative and she was really treated as a member of the family. She had to mind two little girls (6, 4) and in particular the little one. She had a very close relationship with all members of the family and engaged in many long and personal conversations with them. For instance, she mentioned: *they are so kind - they are - they beautiful - they have a very beautiful soul because - em -- they always em give me suggestion about life*. Unfortunately, the host dad was Italian so the two spoke Italian when the other family members were not present. However, the language in the house was mainly English (*[...] when my host mum em is - with us in the living - room we always speak English - we have to speak English because she - does understand *nothing and so - and also the two little girls*). In the interviews she mentioned amusing anecdotes about how the children taught her some vocabulary: *[...] the first days - every word in the house - every object - object - every - for example we went to the bathroom and I - I *have to ask her "pull down your tights" I - I didn't know tights - this - this was my level and so I -- em - [giggling] "(name of the child) can you pull down your ((towel))" "(Name of the au pair) that - this *is tights!* Sometimes she felt rather uneasy because her English was not strong enough to sound also authoritative. *Sometimes it's very hard because when I told them - when I have told them to tidy up - em- in - tidy up a specific room or a - specific - *toys I'm not able - I was not able to tell her [...] I didn't know about but this - em -- they pretend - pretended to - *don't understand me [laughter] because they - didn't want to *tidied up but now - but now I *hear one day my host mum she told them - simply - em "Get it from the floor and put in the basket" or in the /// "Get it get it get it" so [...] but - now I know that they - when I want that they *tidied up the floor I have to tell "get it get it".* She actually appreciated the fact that the children were correcting her as she managed to build a strong relationship of trust with them. She often mentioned she took part in international meetings in order to make friends.
AU2	AU2 was a student of Architecture who, after many years of English language courses, decided to undertake the au pair experience to improve

	her English. She was aware that for her work she needed good English so she decided to buy Netflix to practise her listening skills every evening and she was really determined to use TV to improve her listening skills before and during her SA experience. She had to mind a very little child of 2 years of age, who could not say much apart from 'all gone' or similar and two new born twins, as she stressed in the following extract: *[...] with em three little boys - ok I talk to them - but it's not a real conversation with *a adult -- em - you - you can't learn for example expression or they can't - correct me - but the thing that she has told me - like that they start to say something and you don't understand they continue to - say - continue saying this.* The host mother was on maternity leave. Thus, the au pair managed to interact quite frequently with her, especially when the host father was not at home: *[...] we talk a lot because she - now she's not working - so a lot of time - we spend a lot of time together so we have the time to talk and I have the time to practise English as well.* Apart from the family environment, (her host family and their relatives), she did not manage to make Irish friends. Her social circles were mainly of other international au pairs, either Italian or Spanish.
AU3	AU3 had a good level of English upon arrival as she was a student of Foreign Languages. She even sat C1 exam before leaving the country, which she passed with high marks. She had to mind two children of about 10 years old for three days a week and three hours a day. Her work with them mainly concerned playing and helping them with homework. When not with the children, she was mainly involved in light housework. She was keen not to have Italian friends but she did not manage to have Irish friends, as is possible to see from this short extract " [...] *unfortunately I didn't meet any Irish guys or girls in general - because I - got to know my friends in the - International meetings - or in the *aupair - aupairs' meeting in Ballincollig - so I didn't have the chance to meet Irish people unfortunately"*. Her friends were mainly German or Austrian, to whom she spoke English. She admitted that apart from the children she rarely spoke with the rest of the family. They were not very talkative and, in particular, she said that there were some days when it was better not to speak to the host mother. The host father was nice and carefully checked every day that she was ok, but apart from these questions, they did not interact extensively. AU3 described her interactions with the family in this extract: *[...] they're not very talkative actually - my host dad is really nice he's always - yeah - always want to - to help you about everything - he always asks you if you're fine if you're good or - if you need something - and he's - he's always smiling and - happy in general - my host mum is not - really like that - it depends on the day - sometimes she's in a - em - very bad mood and it's better not to talk to her too much - so I was like -*

	*"Ok - Hi how was work?" and - that's all - but it – it depends on the day sometimes she - feel talking more to you and we have - a small *talks about everything [...]* She was also very shy and the corrections of the children were an impediment to further conversation with the host family *([...]my host child - the girl at first was like that - she used to correct me everything and then I got stuck because I was always afraid to make - bad mistakes).* Towards the end of the experience she became more self-confident although conversations were still mainly limited to small talk *([...] as I said I was really shy - and I felt like my English wasn't good enough so - I couldn't really - speak - talk to my family and - I found it very difficult to - talk to them about - like - even just small *talks were difficult for me - but now I feel like I - I'm really comfortable with it [...]).* Towards the end of the experience she also met her boyfriend (Irish/Canadian).
AU4	AU4 was a student of Accountancy. She was an au pair in a family of a single mother and a child of four years old. The host mother was working from home. At the beginning, the constant presence of the host mother in the home environment had beneficial effects on the amount of input to which the au pair was exposed. Indeed, the host mother and the au pair interacted quite frequently during the day but, in terms of the types of interactions, the au pair reported being mainly the listener in their conversations (*[...] actually she *speak a lot [laughing] and I say yeah yeah*). Despite that, the au pair enjoyed these moments with her very much as she felt at ease with this young woman and she considered these type of conversations 'real', as she stressed in the following excerpt: *with a child you can't talk that much - yes - we play we watch cartoon - but with an adult is different.* This informant lived slightly outside the city and reported having experienced isolation and loneliness during her SA sojourn as it was difficult for her to make friends outside the family environment. Morever, the family did not use TV very often, apart from a number of TV series and cartoons for the child. Thus, the au pair had the impression of living in a bubble, where all negative events were kept outside the door of the house (*I don't know what's happening in the world, she does not want the child to listen to the news*). Unfortunately, towards the end of her stay, the constant presence of the host mother in the home environment were also the cause of a number of discussions between the two and their ideal relationship was completely destroyed. AU4 did not consider being part of this family and felt being simply a worker for them (*I do so much for this family and she treats me like that*); therefore, while at the very beginning she considered extending her SA experience after the planned six months, AU4 decided not to proceed with this idea. With regard to contact with Irish NSs, she mentioned that she did not create strong bonds with members of

	the TL community as the occasions of meeting members outside the family environments were extremely limited. In addition, she ascribed this lack of contact to her FL skills, as is possible to see from the following extract: *I'm not really close with Irish - I don't know why but I mean - I know some Irish people but - I think - actually it's quite difficult for them - because my English - it's - I can't really express um what I want to say so - I *knew it's quite maybe annoying for people that speak - a good English to - stay with people that - I don't know I it's my it's my idea - but I don't know - we'll see [laughter] - it's *mo-(+more) it's much easier to - em meet people from the other *country.*
AU5	AU5 was a student of Foreign Languages. Upon arrival she had a good level of English. She stayed for the first two months in a family where she had to take care of three children (5 years, 3 years & 20 days). The host mother was on maternity leave so this gave the au pair the chance of interacting with her very often. She often stressed that these kinds of conversations were 'real' as she could not really talk with the children (*I need to talk with her because - sometimes em you know em - you can't talk with kids*"). The host mother was very proactive and they often spent time together even outside the family environment. She joined her in many outings, although she mentioned that she felt rather uncomfortable in these situations as she could not follow all the discourse of the friends of the host mother. Thus, even though she was physically present, most of the times she was not carefully listening as, after a number of attempts, she found the conversations rather difficult for her. At the beginning, the relationship between the two was ideal but as time passed, they started having a number of discussions. These difficulties led the informant to leave this family and search for another one. In the second family, AU5 felt very at ease. She had to mind four girls (17, 15, 11, 7). She said that she considered herself more as "an older sister" rather than as an au pair. Although she did not interact very much with the host parents of the second family, simply because they were taken by their busy schedule, she engaged in very long conversations with the girls, with whom she shared opinions about future plans and hobbies (*[…] you can like with fourteen-*years-old - we can talk about our passions and - also with the twelve-*years-old*"). Towards the end of the experience she also met her boyfriend (Irish/Canadian). She engaged in long conversations even with strangers and she mentioned many amusing anecdotes about her journeys in Ireland and her conversations with Irish people that she met during her stay in Cork. Living with the second family also helped her to make more friends, as she was living in Cork city centre.

AU6	AU6 was a student of Primary Education, who after her degree, decided to do an SA study experience and decided to become an au pair. She was living with a family with two young children (5, 3) and a baby. The mother was actually still pregnant when AU6 started working for the family and she was at home on maternity leave. The two interacted quite often during the working schedule of the au pair, but after a while the host mother became quite cold, according to the perspective of this informant. The AU said many times *"I didn't live the family"* and with the children she had the impression of talking about "Power Rangers" all the time. After seven p.m., when she finished working, AU6 spent most of the time in her room, watching movies or TV series with her laptop. She did not watch TV with the family because "*they closed the door*" and also because the au pair needed to unwind and relax after a working day. However, despite that, she had the feeling of working 24/7 as she could still hear them talking in the other room. Dinner time was not an occasion for interaction, as she had dinner with the children while the host mother was in the living room watching TV. The host father was rarely at home and the au pair and the host father never spoke. The au pair did not even know what he did for living. The working schedule was very intense so she did not attend English language classes regularly, which was rather disappointing for the informant as her main goal was to improve her language skills. In her free time, she went to a gym, where she attended a course with middle aged women, but apart from small talk, she did not interact much with them. As close friends, she had two au pairs, one from Spain and one from Italy. She reported not having Irish friends and, although she occasionally spoke to them at the pub, conversation did not go beyond greetings and formulaic exchanges.
AU7	AU7 was a student of Philosophy. She also lived with two families. In the second family she took care of two children (2, 4). During the interviews she often stressed that working as an au pair could be extremely tiring and in the evening she often felt the need to unwind after her working day by spending some time alone in her room: *it's difficult - to be an au pair - and of course - the most weird thing [--] - is like if you work in a pub - and you have your bedroom in the same place - it's weird because when you finish work - you need to relax and you need em - em just - space for yourself - but when you are an au pair you are always - with the family so in the place where are you working - and you feel like - always never relax*. She also mentioned that time with the host family did not correspond to TL input/exposure as the members of the family were not actively interacting when the au pair spent her evening with them in the living room: *[…] when I was with them in the sitting room - nobody was speaking - and we were just sitting on the couch - and - watching the telly - it was just a weird*

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	situation. I don't mind to speak with them or - spend time with them but - not too much just because - when I finish work - I need time for myself. As for close friends, she mentioned two English NSs, an Irish and a Canadian young woman.
AU8	AU8 was a student of Modern Languages. She lived in a family where she had to mind three children. She mentioned that she had a pleasant time with the family. *I am very lucky because I - I've met a wonderful family and the boys - and the girl are really - friendly and they really want to spend time with me - em I'm not - like a servant that is there just to mind them --I'm a friend I'm part of the family so they really want to s-(+speak) - to talk to me and - so it's - really nice.* As main close friends, she mentioned mainly international students: *I also had em - a Polish girl - as a friend - and one from - Czech Republic - but - mainly they were Italian and Spanish - [laughing] because - they are everywhere! I haven't met a lot of Irish people [...] I would have liked to - to meet some Irish - people like - young people - my age - but I didn't have the chance - because I don't go out really often*". She mentioned that she managed to created a strong relationship with the host mother and the two often spent some free time together: *she's really nice and she's really into shopping - and I love shopping too - so sometimes we go shopping to-(+together) together.* With regard to the correction of her errors by the children, she affirmed that she was not totally at ease: *[...] sometimes the little one was - em telling me that I did mistakes - in a - really nasty way! So sometimes I - like one day I said "glitters" - instead of "glitter" and she was like - "Oh you don't say "glitters"! It's "glitter"!" - [Laughing] Sorry! - [Laughter] - I didn't think it was a - big mistake!*
AU9	AU9 was a student of Modern Languages from the South of Italy. She described her host family as a friendly and welcoming one, as is possible to see from the following extract: *it's a really amazing - family and it's in Carrigaline - so it's really near - Cork.* There were three children in her host family (10, 8, 2) and she was mainly responsible for the two-year old boy. During the interview she often stressed that sometimes it was difficult to understand what the child wanted to say: *he doesn't speak well - for example - he - he *put a D - instead of - of an S - and - he for example if he - if he has to say "sun" - he says "dun" - so - I - I -usually I - I don't understand well what - what he's saying - so - I take him -and - tell him - "Ok - show me what you want now.* In the interviews she mentioned that her friends were mainly other au pairs or international students.

AU10	AU10 was an Italian au pair from the North of Italy. She lived for six months in a family with three children: two twins of six years old and a little boy of three years old. During the interviews, she often stressed that working as an au pair was very tiring and she needed to have breaks and use her own language: *you can't - em speak all time in English - because your brain em - will be - em tired in the evening - so i-(+in) - "Go in your room - relaxi-(+relaxing) relaxing and watch em Italian DVD - watch Italian movies".* With regard to the usual conversations in the house, she often stressed that conversation was often limited to a number of formulaic exchanges: *[…] sometimes is very difficult have a conversation because the kids are *small - and *we didn't have a lot of time to - to give me and sometimes when they start with the conversation the kids are - are playing or making noise and it's difficult - in the normal routine it's difficult - so - the conversation in house is "It's all ok? What happened today?" And *the lunch and *the dinner and something else - but it's not long conversation - no.* She reported having mainly had NNSs of English as friends during her stay in Ireland.
AU11	AU11 had to take care of three little children (2, 3, 6 years old) during her au pair experience in Ireland. During her interviews, she often stressed that she found her working experience in Ireland very intense. Thus, she often needed to unwind and relax after her working day by watching Italian movies in the evening or spending her free time with her co-nationals. She reported that her friends in Ireland were all au pairs.
AU12	AU12 lived in a family with two children: a young teenager and a seven-year old boy. She lived slightly outside the city and she found her AU experience very isolating; therefore, when she met other Italian au pairs, she decided to spend most of her time-off with them. Despite the loneliness, she mentioned that her host family had been very pleasant and supportive. However, with the exception of the host father, AU12 did not seem to have interacted much with the members of the family. The host mother was often tired after work. Thus, from what she mentioned in the interviews, AU12 managed to have long conversations exclusively with the host father and predominantly after dinner: *the host dad is more (( )) relaxed - so we can talk about anything I talk with like he was my best friend (( )) no it's it's good and yeah I *said him "oh I met this guy (( )) Saturday night" and then he said "no don't tell me more don't tell me more" and yeah yeah I can tell him like secrets […] the host mom she's she's very nice she is more serious because I don't know and -- yeah but she's always tired when come from from work so she we-(+went) she *go to bed so we we don't speak too much.* She also stressed that she did not spend a great amount of time with the children, as they were taken by their own activities: *[…] in these months because they (children) went to their homework clubs - so I didn't have to*

	help them too much - and yeah they come home and they have already done their homework - so I just make their lunches and then they play together so - yeah.
AU13	AU13 was a student of Finance from the North of Italy. During her au pair experience in Ireland she had to mind three children of 5, 9 and 12 years of age. During her interviews, she often stressed the difficulties she had in conversing with the children, especially at the beginning: *with the little girl - when she *speak - she speaks -- *quick - and -- not -- um -- maybe - if I can't understand her - she -- starts to cry - because - I - I - don't understand her - but then -- I - try to explain her that - I'm here to - improve my English - so - she has to help me - and not to cry.* She was very determined not to interact with Italian people during her sojourn in Ireland and, at the beginning, she tried to create strong bonds predominantly with speakers whose L1s were different from Italian. However, during her stay, she realised that it was rather difficult for her to stick to her plan and in the end, she spent most of her free time with a number of co-nationals, as she mentioned in this extract: *even if at the beginning I was *determined to - not to speak and to go out with Italian people - but at the end if you meet them and you are in a group you can't say "oh no I don't want to go out with you because you are Italian" it's a silly thing if you are if you get on with a person - it's ok to stay with them and so I started to stay with Italian people as well and I spoke a lot of Italian and I'm not happy about that but what can I do - *is full of Italian people here - you know - and so - maybe I improved my language but not as I would desire".*
AU14	AU14 was a student of Economics from the North of Italy. She had to mind two twins of five years old. During the interviews she often stressed that her au pair experience was a rather isolating. She spent most of the time alone in her room and she also lost interest in interacting with the family members, as shown by this extract: *when I'm off - I spend a lot of time in my room - to do my things - because I don't want to disturb them - but *sometimes maybe they think that I want to hide in my room [...] but ho- (+how) uh what can I do? Because - I don't have nothing to tell you and you you don't have nothing to tell me - so.* Moreover, over the last weeks of her experience, she also decided not to join the family for dinner. She felt excluded from conversations over dinner; thus, she started having dinner on her own.
AU15	AU15 was a student of Italian literature from the South of Italy. During her au pair experience, she had to mind a young boy of eight years old. She often stressed that she lived in a welcoming environment and all members of the family had been extremely friendly to her. However, the quality of interactions in the home environment was rather low. When the parents

were back from work, AU15 often went to her room, as she mentioned in the following extract: *I make dinner for him at about six o' clock (( )) and when em his parents come - come back home em -- I go to my bedroom […] because they they come back home em in the evening after em after work and I don't want to - to disturb them - because if they are tired or they want to talk to their child […]*. She also stressed that she found her au pair experience quite intense and that she felt she needed to chat with a friend in Italian or watch a film in her own language after a long day using English to interact with her child.

The ES group

ES1

ES1 was a student of English and Chinese from the North of Italy. During her stay in Ireland, she lived in student accommodation on campus with a Spanish and a Chinese student. She had a very outgoing personality and she was a member of many student societies, such as the choir society and she was really keen to use this SA experience to practise her English and meet people of other cultures. She used to attend the meetings of university societies frequently and she managed to meet many students, both from Ireland and other countries. However, she also stressed that conversations with Irish students were also characterised by a series of formulaic exchanges or they were mainly about their assignments, group work or homework. In her second interview, she admitted that she had expected more interaction with local people, especially her classmates, as is possible to see from the following extract: "[…] *we are not so close - I don't know why actually - because I tried to be em closer with them - but - I don't know - there was like - a barrier that - I don't know - maybe because they didn't want to keep very closer with me because they know that I will leave soon […]*".

ES2

ES2 was a student of Geography from the North of Italy. Apart from attending classes, she was also studying on her own to prepare for the IELTS exam as she was planning to register for a Master's the following year. Her exam score showed that she reached an intermediate/advanced proficiency level upon completion of her SA experience. With regard to her living arrangements, she lived with three Irish girls. She spent a great amount of time with them and often engaged in long conversation on different and varied topics (i.e. future, university, weather, as well as blind dates), as is possible to see from the following extract: *[…] well - like - uhm --- how to apply for em a meeting website because they are looking for*

	*em *meet someone interesting [...] that's one topic [...] or we talk about uhm the weather! - because I always complain about the weather because the weather makes me homesick and sad and nervous and well it drives me crazy so - but *I said em you don't have you don't have to take care about the weather - not in Ireland.* When she was asked what she found linguistically difficult during her experience in Ireland, she pointed to the different nuances of the language and made also some considerations regarding the frequency of use of a number of PMs by her housemates: *[...] sometimes is not the slang that I find difficult to remember and understand completely but - but *is the way of saying something and the way of *emphasise everything that I find more - like - interesting and funny - like I don't know how if I can say like -- Jesus Christ - something like this [laughter] - and I don't know - yeah -- it's very funny - I can't remember now but there was something else - um - um --- oh they always say like like like - like like like - just just just - you know you know - you know what I mean - you know what I mean.*
ES3	ES3 was a student of Law from the North of Italy. She decided to embark on this SA experience in Ireland while her boyfriend was in Cork as a visiting student. The two lived together in a house which was mainly for them; as a result, ES3 interaction with Irish NSs was extremely limited and did not extend beyond her co-nationals and her classmates who were all international students. In her interview she often stressed that her interaction with NSs was limited and lengthy conversation with a NS rarely occurred. She was a very talkative person and she provided a series of anecdotes about her SA experience, her life and her expectations during her interview. However, despite the extrovert personality, ES3 told that she had a series of difficulties in interacting with Irish NSs, because they were beyond her main circle of friends and because of her receptive skills. In the interviews, for example, she mentioned: *I didn't know a lot of Irish people - this is the problem - I think because I knew only people who came from different countries and so they don't speak very well English.* She also often stressed that the Irish accent was still an issue for her, as is evident from the following extract: *when I speak with Irish people I don't understanding nothing - nothing - also in a pub in a restaurant - I don't understand nothing - so for my listening I think it's better if I talk with Irish people - yeah.* From what she reported in the interviews, it could be presumed that her TL exposure was extremely limited: apart from her living conditions and her main social circles of friends, ES3 was also preparing a number of Italian exams while living in Ireland and went often back to Italy in order to sit them. Thus, even extracurricular activities were limited as she spent most of her free time preparing for Italian exams and working on Italian manuals.

ES4	ES4 was a student of Finance from the South of Italy. She lived in student accommodation with three more students, two American girls and one French. She was very close to the French girl and through her she met many French students while in Ireland. Therefore, she also practised her French. With regard to the two American girls, she admitted that she had more occasions to speak with one of the two which may also be linked to the accent of one of these two girls. In her interviews she said: *one girl comes from Boston and her accent is very close - and em - is so difficult -- now *is too but *is a little bit better - and - the other girl is -- she studies em English and so her accent is em good -- you can understand better than other girl.* Despite being nice and friendly, the interaction with the two American girls was limited to conversation at home, as the student stressed: *one has her friends and the other one is a - sometimes goes out with us - yes - she is a little bit shy.* She mentioned that in her closest circle of friends, there were no Irish students and her closest friends in Ireland were mainly international students ("*all my friends are Erasmus students*"). Even though she did not return home and nobody visited her during her SA experience, she mentioned that she was every day in contact with "home" through Skype and Facebook.
ES5	ES5 was a student in Modern Languages (English and German), who had an intermediate/advanced level of English upon arrival in Ireland. She also took the CAE Cambridge exam at the end of the experience and her English was tested at proficiency level. During her stay in the country, she lived in student accommodation with three NSs of English and a NNS of English: two American girls, one Irish guy and one French girl. They were really close and engaged in a number of activities together such as excursions, outings, dinners and the weekly cleaning of the flat (*[we] were always like in the kitchen em - preparing dinner or after dinner just chatting or watching a movie*). She was very close with one of the two American girls and the Irish guy. When talking about them, she mentioned: *I love him - like is just too funny and is really really nice and kind with us and is like a a big brother you know - we say the the elder brother* and she often engaged in lenghty and varied conversations, as is evident from the following extract *she's the person to - like we - whom I talk the most I'd say - and at times she just starts [laughter] - em we just start really philosophical and deep discourses er - like "yeah do you feel there's an afterlife?".* During her stay in Cork, she joined the UCC fencing team and this allowed her to make more friends, most of whom were NSs. With regard to students from her own country she mentioned: *I only have - one Italian friend [...] I know other Italian people but em - I don't spend a lot a lot of time with them -- em so I'm trying not - of course - not to speak Italian too much while I'm here.* At the end of her experience she felt more confident in using the language (*[...] for Communicative Achievement of everyday life I feel I feel*

	perfectly confident like) even though she admitted having more anxiety when talking to NSs (*with most of native speakers [...] I might have - yes I might be more afraid of making mistakes [...]and when I have to talk with to them or when they're talking to me I'm always like "OK focus level – up" [...]*)
ES6	ES6 was a student of Engineering from the South of Italy. During his stay in Ireland, he lived with a Spanish girl and an American student. He mentioned that the relationship with the American student was not very strong and apart from very small talk, the conversation did not go beyond formulaic greetings. He mainly had international friends (German, Czeck) and also speakers of his L1. He mentioned that he did not use extensively Italian while abroad and his group of friends comprised non-Italian speakers; thus, he was quite at ease in switching into English and after a while language switching became almost a natural and unconscious process. He was the only Erasmus student of his modules and his studies often implied group work in the laboratory with Irish people or near NSs. He mentioned that he was more at ease with males. He also mentioned that in the laboratory his fellow colleagues were friendly and talkative whereas outside the university context, their conversations did not go beyond greetings such as "*Hi*", "*Hey man*", which was a cause of some uneasiness for the student. Although he felt that his knowledge of the English language improved, he still felt that he had problems with people with "a lot of vocabulary", so he did not felt at ease with speakers of a level higher than his. He acknowledged having had dreams in the L2. He was very willing to talk and very eager to tell his story and provide anecdotes about his SA experience.
ES7	ES7 was a student from the University of Genoa, where he was attending a Bachelor's Degree in Economics. During his SA experience he lived with two other students from his home institution and a German student. As a result, the language spoken at home was mainly Italian. In this regard, he mentioned: "*sometimes we speak in English but - em - when - I don't know we have - to discuss about the bill or - em - or problem with the rent or – problem with the - heaters - I don't know - we - I don't know - we came a bit angry - we start to speak in Italian because - it's - it's simpler.*". He also mentioned that the majority of his friends were Italian people: "*most of my friends are Italian [...] seventy percent [...]*". With regard to Irish people, he mentioned that the majority of Irish people that he met were students from his modules: "*Em - yeah - only classmates - because - em - yeah we - when I go out for - I don't know - discos or - other things - I have only international students *friend - em - but in class - I - I don't have class with friends - with my - with my friends - so - the people that I met in class*"

	are - only Irish". ES7's ties with home were very strong. He mentioned that he skyped and texted his family at home every day and he was almost never alone, as he often had "helicopter" friends and family members visiting him during his SA sojourn: *[...] the - second week that - I was in Cork - em - one of my *friend in It- (+Italy) - em - one of my Italian *friend came here for a week - and then for five days my mother came here - and then my - again - my best friend that is coming again went in - for Halloween - and - for my birthday - em - one of my friend came here - now again my best friends - and I think in May my brother and - his girlfriend* [...]. When he self-assessed his English skills, he felt having improved his receptive skills, especially in terms of a better understanding of local people, as well as his productive skills, especially writing.
ES8	ES8 was a student from Verona. In Italy, he was studying Modern Languages (English and Chinese). During his sojourn in Cork, he lived in a private flat with two French students and one Irish guy. In the first three months, his interaction with his Irish flatmate and Irish NSs in general was very limited as he remarked in this extract: *in the first three months em I went out with a lot of Erasmus *student but *no many Irish so - I used to spoke like - English but you know -- it's not like em - um when you speak with a mother *language [...] everybody is using the - the most British English they can so -- em it's not like - em Irish accent is completely different from British accent*. Towards the end of the third month in Ireland, this student managed to create closer bonds with the Irish flatmate and the two started doing a number of activities together and through him ES8 started meeting and interacting with more local people, as is possible to see from the following anecdote: *my housemate's best friend came in - in the kitchen and we ate together so -- em I've - ((with them)) it's -- two two guys I think yeah my flatmate and his two best friends - we we talked we just - spent time together when they came at my place em at our place - and that's nice*. ES8 seemed quite concerned about the correct way of saying things and the standard "RP" pronunciation. When asked if he had learnt any Irish expressions, he immediately focused on pronunciation and he mentioned that he would never pronounce words in the same way: *they ask me "can I take some of your butter?" "what's that? [...] I can't em -- can't speak with Irish accent [...] no way*. When asked if he felt he had improved in English, he affirmed that, despite some improvements, his expectations were not totally fulfilled.
ES9	ES9 was an Italian student from the North of Italy, near Venice. She studied Economics. During her SA experience, she lived in student accommodation with an American and Australian student. They managed to establish a very good relationship, they also cooked and had dinner together; therefore, dinner time for ES9 was an occasion for interaction and long conversations. Her Erasmus destination was not accidental as she was really fascinated

	with Ireland. She was really determined not to have Italian friends while abroad and apart from a close Italian friends, her social network mainly comprised International students and NSs, in particular American. She had, a very close relationship with an American girl, who lived in her same residence and who was studying foreign languages. According to ES9, as a result, she was more inclined to slow down her speech rate or explain terms which were unclear for ES9. She mentioned that she dreamt in English quite frequently over the last weeks of her SA experience. She took six modules while in Ireland, for a total of about 12 hours of lectures plus tutorials every week. Her contacts with home were limited to a Skype call once a week and a number of texts every day. However, she also mentioned that her contact with Irish people was rather limited.
ES10	ES10 was an Italian student of Biology from the South of Italy. During his Erasmus experience, he lived with two Irish twins and a Spanish girl. However, although his housemates were all friendly, conversations at home were mainly limited to greetings and formulaic routines. According to the student, the lack of long conversations with his housemates was mainly ascribed to the fact they did not have common interests: *[…] we are nice to each other but if you don't re-(+really) if you don't go out and if you don't - share the same interests - or - hobbies or whatever you don't really get close to that person.* He was really keen to practise the English language and avoided interactions with his co-nationals during the SA stay in Ireland. Thus, he felt he had greatly improved during his SA sojourn: *[…] my vocabulary - vocabulary got better and - em - well my fluency improved 'cos I had to take - to talk - every day and - and never stayed with the Italian people so I was - obliged to talk English.* He also mentioned that he felt that he had acquired a number of features of Irish English: *[…] I got some - habits from - Irish people - that's - language habits - em - like - same like […] I really appreciate the use of grand - because I have the same in Italian - like saying - in Italian I would say - it's - we don't use it in English - they would say - I would say - "how are you?" - normal […] I like grand so - it's something - probably it's - if I go outside - Ireland - probably no one would understand me because I - em - American people didn't - didn't know about grand - yeah so - oh I - I got the - well not - not as much as "like" but I got - a bit of - "you know" [little laughter] because they always say "you know" - "you know".* He also mentioned having been a member of many university and sport societies.
ES11	ES11 was a student from the South of Italy studying Political Science and International Relations. Her Erasmus experience in Cork was her second SA experience as she had previously been an SA student in Germany for nine months. She was living in a student residence with French and German students and she often spoke German with Germans. During her Erasmus experience, she attended German and English courses to practise both

	languages. She also decided to do a work experience while she was in Ireland and she managed to work as intern in one of the departments at UCC, where she helped a 50-year old Irish lady. Her work mainly involved administration. She attended on average 12 hours of lectures/lessons per week and all modules were in English. She also started a language exchange with an Irish student, but apart from a few meetings the exchange did not last long. She admitted not having Irish friends and she ascribed that to the length of the experience, probably too short for establishing friendships, as she stressed in the following extract: *[...] I think that in -- six months it's not enough - to - to stay in contact with these Irish people because probably they think that you are just here for six months and - I don't know - probably it's something - that is related to us -- em - Erasmus students that - we always organise something just for Erasmus students.*
ES12	ES12 was a student of Business and Administration from the North of Italy. He was living in student accommodation, where the majority of students were NNSs of English. When asked about the nationality of his best friends in Ireland, he affirmed that they were mainly people from his country ("*I think the sixty per cent of them are Italians*"). Although he affirmed that he had interacted with members of the TL community, these types of conversations were quite random and rare, as he mainly spent most of his free time with international students: *[...] I was talking about yeah Irish people in general but - em - I have met - - ah a lot of Irish people but I can't really say that all of them are friends because maybe I saw - I - I - I have seen them just two or three times while I have a few Irish guys that I - sometimes see. They are probably two or three but no more because we - as I said we - we mostly hang out with - em people from the - continental Europe so - it's mostly em - Italians - Germans and French - those - we too are - are really friends and - yeah I've met a couple of - these Irish guys - they were really nice - ah - but - I - I - I think I could stay in touch with them ah - but - they have thei- (+r) their own life you know.*
ES13	ES13 was a student of Engineering from the South of Italy. She was very energetic and engaged in a wide range of extracurricular activities during her stay in Ireland. She lived in student accommodation, where the majority of guests were NNSs of English (*I know just - a lot of Erasmus students*). Thus, she felt that her interactions with Irish speakers were rather limited as she had more chances of meeting members of the TL community: […] *in the student accommodation - we were more international students - in that one -- so we -- we went out - all together - with the guys but - all international students that meet other international students.* However, in order to practise her FL skills, she registered for language exchanges and in doing so, she regularly met two Irish students of Italian.

ES14	ES14 was a student of Modern Languages from the North of Italy. She lived in a private flat with two Irish twins; however, she mentioned that interactions with them was rather limited to greetings as they had different daily schedules (*I live with Irish people but we don't really meet - like - no because we have different times*) and the two Irish students were also quite reserved: *[…] one of them is really shy so sometimes is also difficult to talk with him but em -- they're they're yeah most of time the are friendly - so it's OK but we we are not friends - I mean.* She was fascinated by Irish culture and myths and she registered for many student organisations. Thus, she managed to create strong social bonds with students of similar interests *([…] another thing that I (( )) that I like a lot about UCC *it's the societies and clubs so like they are all free and so you have the chance to meet a lot of people also em - native people - and to talk about what you're interested in - and to share like em things you like yeah interest and it's very good).* However, she also mentioned that the majority of her friends were mainly NNSs of English (*[…] I met some Irish people in the classes but not really a lot and - yeah so - but I I think maybe I I met more Erasmus students than Irish people*). She also reported that with her co-nationals, she tended to speak English: *in my group the the group which - which I I hang out more often -- there are some Italians sometimes but like with -- there are some Italians who are very friends of mine but I don't know why we we usu- (+usually) - even we we are alone we usually speak English […].*
ES15	ES15 was a student of Modern Languages from the North of Italy. During her SA experience, she lived in student accommodation on campus with two Irish girls, an American and a Spanish student. With regard to her housemates, she affirmed that she did not spend much time with them: *well I have a - Irish roommate but we are not that close like - we share a room but - em we know that er we both need some space - so yeah we talk but like we talk more in the kitchen that actually in the room because maybe sometimes she is studying or - like watching a movie or something and -- things like this I have like some American flatmates but they are always going around with Americans ((as like)) yeah we talk it's nice but I'm not hanging out with them* She was really determined to use all opportunities to practise her English language skills and she also asked her co-nationals to address her in English (*[…] mostly we try to speak English and is not weird at all*). She also registered for a language exchange with an Irish learner of Italian to practise her FL skills even further.

APPENDIX F

Consent to participate in research

Introduction and Purpose

My name is Annarita Magliacane. I am a PhD student in "Applied Linguistics" at University College Cork. My research is jointly supervised with the University of Naples "Federico II". I would like to invite you to take part in my research study, which concerns Second Language Acquisition.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in my research, I will conduct two interviews with you over a time span of about a semester at a time of your choice. The interview will involve questions about your life, your previous language background and your future expectations and career. It should last about 45-60 minutes. With your permission, I will record the interview. You may pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Benefits and Risks

There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study, apart from practising your spoken English with a proficient user of English. There are no risks associated with participating in the study. It is hoped that the research will give new insights into English language learning and teaching.

Confidentiality

Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. All of your information and interview responses will be kept confidential. The researcher will not share your individual responses with anyone other than the research supervisors.

If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used, unless you give explicit permission for this below. When the research is completed, I may save the recordings for use in future research done by myself or others. I will retain these records for a few years after the study is over.

Compensation

You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

Rights

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at a.magliacane@ucc.ie.

****

CONSENT

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your own records.

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and date below.

_____

Participant's Name *(please print)*

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   Date

[Optional/If applicable]

If you agree to allow your name or other identifying information to be included in all final reports, publications, and/or presentations resulting from this research, please sign and date below.

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   Date

Results of the ANOVA Tests

IPV – You know

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	1220,431018	81,36207	507,3656		
AU	15	922,2944022	61,48629	1447,103		
NS	15	1353,568549	90,2379	210,2466		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	6502,409628	2	3251,205	4,505726	**0,016873832**	3,219942293
Within groups	30306,01591	42	721,5718			
Total	36808,42554	44				

IPV – I mean

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	965,7142857	64,38095	2255,238		
AU	15	935,7142857	62,38095	2248,299		
NS	15	1050	70	1753,968		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	468,1179138	2	234,059	0,112214	**0,894120435**	3,219942293
Within groups	87605,07937	42	2085,835			
Total	88073,19728	44				

IPV – I think

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	262,8284276	17,5219	64,89042		
AU	15	246,031457	16,4021	178,9448		
NS	15	439,8818675	29,32546	214,6043		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	1537,956454	2	768,9782	5,032146	**0,010987424**	3,219942293
Within groups	6418,153822	42	152,8132			
Total	7956,110276	44				

IPV – Well

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	628,006678	41,86711	1503,46		
AU	15	692,7659063	46,18439	377,5154		
NS	15	460,7964467	30,71976	307,976		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	1910,28554	2	955,1428	1,309042	**0,28087036**	3,219942293
Within groups	30645,31256	42	729,6503			
Total	32555,5981	44				

IPV – Like

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	745,9361499	49,72908	891,6904		
AU	15	723,9427239	48,26285	1729,489		
NS	15	1151,101729	76,74012	184,6882		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	7713,50383	2	3856,752	4,123594	**0,023167983**	3,219942293
Within groups	39282,13972	42	935,289			
Total	46995,64355	44				

IPV – Yeah

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	919,2226684	61,28151	318,7613885		
AU	15	676,6059999	45,10707	198,7108389		
NS	15	668,36555	44,5577	173,1441234		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	2708,001037	2	1354,001	5,881704872	**0,006**	3,219942293
Within groups	9668,628913	42	230,2055			
Total	12376,62995	44				

RATE – You know

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	44,78725847	2,985817	42,4519		
AU	15	23,95270902	1,596847	2,949361		
NS	15	81,60592734	5,440395	15,38125		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	113,6352536	2	56,81763	2,804308	**0,071918129**	3,219942293
Within groups	850,9551246	42	20,26084			
Total	964,5903781	44				

RATE – I mean

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	20,35023333	1,356682	2,476422		
AU	15	17,58351853	1,172235	6,158889		
NS	15	26,85262481	1,790175	13,236		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	3,018936376	2	1,509468	0,207048	**0,813805651**	3,219942293
Within groups	306,1983132	42	7,290436			
Total	309,2172496	44				

RATE – I think

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	14,77297475	0,984865	0,357351		
AU	15	11,82179563	0,78812	0,57434		
NS	15	24,96472018	1,664315	1,467715		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	6,340391085	2	3,170196	3,963725	**0,026491588**	3,219942293
Within groups	33,59168734	42	0,799802			
Total	39,93207842	44				

RATE – Well

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	18,58971169	1,239314	2,312734		
AU	15	20,30529989	1,353687	2,870071		
NS	15	21,11857264	1,407905	0,830163		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	0,222217626	2	0,111109	0,055435	**0,946143004**	3,219942293
Within groups	84,18155393	42	2,004323			
Total	84,40377155	44				

RATE – Like

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	148,591977	9,906132	105,7281		
AU	15	92,74586488	6,183058	40,29466		
NS	15	243,1523606	16,21016	90,22215		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	770,7237406	2	385,3619	4,893589	**0,012290453**	3,219942293
Within groups	3307,428991	42	78,74831			
Total	4078,152732	44				

RATE – Yeah

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	165,5847735	11,03898	97,69504386		
AU	15	122,5078395	8,167189	33,68117944		
NS	15	139,57103	9,304735	24,97579281		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	62,74421276	2	31,37211	0,601951427	**0,552398512**	3,219942293
Within groups	2188,928226	42	52,11734			
Total	2251,672438	44				

YOU KNOW – Propositional macro-functions

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	1262,035861	84,13572	733,9266447		
AU	15	996,2823639	66,41882	1495,146756		
NS	15	1060,714917	70,71433	173,142917		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	2562,368829	2	1281,184	1,60000297	**0,213957132**	3,219942293
Within groups	33631,02845	42	800,7388			
Total	36193,39728	44				

I MEAN – Propositional macro-functions

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	632,9427653	42,19618	1573,865		
AU	15	656,6666667	43,77778	2144,233		
NS	15	587,7818053	39,18545	1598,042		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	163,2768875	2	81,63844	0,04607	**0,955023166**	3,219942293
Within groups	74425,96121	42	1772,047			
Total	74589,2381	44				

I THINK – Propositional macro-functions

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	30	2	60		
AU	15	0	0	0		
NS	15	349,8710054	23,32473	358,7801		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	5013,937346	2	2506,969	17,95908	**0,000**	3,219942293
Within groups	5862,921295	42	139,5934			
Total	10876,85864	44				

WELL – Propositional macro-functions

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	824,8737374	54,99158	1805,567		
AU	15	884,1073271	58,94049	1590,743		
NS	15	958,1061628	63,87374	467,3175		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	594,1183342	2	297,0592	0,230658	**0,795009878**	3,219942293
Within groups	54090,77373	42	1287,876			
Total	54684,89207	44				

LIKE – Propositional macro-functions

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	250,081994	16,67213	162,9917		
AU	15	134,2861991	8,952413	50,12788		
NS	15	120,1303789	8,008692	39,55055		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	677,6994583	2	338,8497	4,023226	**0,025199732**	3,219942293
Within groups	3537,382344	42	84,22339			
Total	4215,081803	44				

YOU KNOW – Attitudinal macro-functions

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	137,9641393	9,197609	198,6543964		
AU	15	203,7176361	13,58118	362,9114306		
NS	15	439,2850826	29,28567	173,142917		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	3346,88567	2	1673,443	6,833086643	**0,002696599**	3,219942293
Within groups	10285,92242	42	244,9029			
Total	13632,80809	44				

I MEAN – Attitudinal macro-functions

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	367,0572347	24,47048	940,804		
AU	15	343,3333333	22,88889	1398,201		
NS	15	612,2181947	40,81455	1632,952		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	2954,7953	2	1477,398	1,115871	**0,337147548**	3,219942293
Within groups	55607,39354	42	1323,986			
Total	58562,18884	44				

I THINK – Attitudinal macro-functions

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	1470	98	60		
AU	15	1200	80	1714,286		
NS	15	1050,128995	70,0086	692,2363		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	6036,732877	2	3018,366	3,671202	**0,033931954**	3,219942293
Within groups	34531,30789	42	822,174			
Total	40568,04077	44				

WELL – Attitudinal macro-functions

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	175,1262626	11,67508	258,5488		
AU	15	215,8926729	14,39284	317,9528		
NS	15	541,8938372	36,12626	467,3175		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	5387,935846	2	2693,968	7,742629	**0,001372616**	3,219942293
Within groups	14613,46713	42	347,9397			
Total	20001,40297	44				

LIKE – Attitudinal macro-functions

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	175,1777135	11,67851	100,9073		
AU	15	190,5772368	12,70515	99,90292		
NS	15	319,8049536	21,32033	105,7935		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	841,1997046	2	420,5999	4,115408	**0,023327079**	3,219942293
Within groups	4292,453053	42	102,2013			
Total	5133,652757	44				

YOU KNOW – Hesitation

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	753,476864	50,23179	1301,723439		
AU	15	593,0343667	39,53562	1072,146144		
NS	15	249,4438603	16,62959	57,83677353		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	8841,011105	2	4420,506	5,453584733	**0,007842058**	3,219942293
Within groups	34043,88898	42	810,5688			
Total	42884,90008	44				

YOU KNOW – Clarification

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	290,7803195	19,38535	750,0682		
AU	15	322,0730291	21,47154	514,2368		
NS	15	502,5402256	33,50268	116,8544		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	1741,997789	2	870,9989	1,891886	**0,16341501**	3,219942293
Within groups	19336,23106	42	460,3865			
Total	21078,22885	44				

YOU KNOW – Self-evident truth

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	60,7187833	4,047919	79,85841		
AU	15	171,3102287	11,42068	275,0997		
NS	15	229,6619936	15,3108	88,842		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	981,7156575	2	490,8578	3,3181	**0,045928534**	3,219942293
Within groups	6213,202153	42	147,9334			
Total	7194,91781	44				

YOU KNOW – Word search

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	276,843318	18,45622	1287,065		
AU	15	15,60025543	1,040017	5,003951		
NS	15	20,17017272	1,344678	3,527799		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	2981,109453	2	1490,555	3,451431	**0,040946363**	3,219942293
Within groups	18138,3608	42	431,8657			
Total	21119,47026	44				

I MEAN – Hesitation

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	275,2951421	18,35301	594,3711777		
AU	15	310	20,66667	999,9206349		
NS	15	193,4520256	12,8968	519,4783593		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	477,4700717	2	238,735	0,338828278	**0,714534579**	3,219942293
Within groups	29592,78241	42	704,5901			
Total	30070,25248	44				

I MEAN – Clarification

Anova: Single Factor							
SUMMARY							
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*			
ES	15	377,7212557	25,18142	775,1099			
AU	15	351,6666667	23,44444	1058,122			
NS	15	394,3297797	26,28865	1058,335			
ANOVA							
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*	
Between groups	61,66279753	2	30,8314	0,031988	**0,968542185**	3,219942293	
Within groups	40481,92582	42	963,8554				
Total	40543,58862	44					

I MEAN – Hedge

Anova: Single Factor							
SUMMARY							
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*			
ES	15	90,8366346	6,055776	100,8674			
AU	15	215	14,33333	823,7302			
NS	15	366,8450604	24,45634	1150,523			
ANOVA							
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*	
Between groups	2547,869218	2	1273,935	1,841726	**0,171118842**	3,219942293	
Within groups	29051,68699	42	691,7068				
Total	31599,5562	44					

I MEAN – Justification

Anova: Single Factor							
SUMMARY							
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*			
ES	15	146,9298246	9,795322	677,9467			
AU	15	5	0,333333	1,666667			
NS	15	67,94029851	4,529353	169,3461			
ANOVA							
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*	
Between groups	674,3311445	2	337,1656	1,191455	**0,313836877**	3,219942293	
Within groups	11885,43217	42	282,9865				
Total	12559,76331	44					

I THINK – Hedge

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	1470	98	60		
AU	15	1200	80	1714,286		
NS	15	1030,128995	68,67527	633,2132		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	6560,947998	2	3280,474	4,08782	**0,023871726**	3,219942293
Within groups	33704,98521	42	802,4996			
Total	40265,93321	44				

I THINK – Hesitation

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	30	2	60		
AU	15	0	0	0		
NS	15	369,8710054	24,65807	318,8046629		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	5627,041355	2	2813,521	22,28209645	**0,0000003**	3,219942293
Within groups	5303,265281	42	126,2682			
Total	10930,30664	44				

WELL – Hesitation

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	574,9458874	38,32973	1349,709018		
AU	15	512,0184039	34,13456	1192,831551		
NS	15	206,0031489	13,73354	200,0762735		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	5193,865529	2	2596,933	2,840644078	**0,069651027**	3,219942293
Within groups	38396,63579	42	914,2056			
Total	43590,50132	44				

WELL – Transition

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
ES	15	223,1601732	14,87734	502,728		
AU	15	155,9124527	10,39416	224,1708		
NS	15	472,8475034	31,52317	686,0422		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between groups	3718,085447	2	1859,043	3,947177	**0,026863071**	3,219942293
Within groups	19781,17442	42	470,9803			
Total	23499,25986	44				

WELL – Repair

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
ES	15	64,26767677	4,284512	55,24779		
AU	15	201,130891	13,40873	320,533		
NS	15	292,4898785	19,49933	454,0918		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between groups	1759,186164	2	879,5931	3,17974	**0,051775111**	3,219942293
Within groups	11618,2171	42	276,6242			
Total	13377,40327	44				

WELL – Objection

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
ES	15	104,2929293	6,952862	114,5644		
AU	15	65,38097695	4,358732	44,63566		
NS	15	196,8938372	13,12626	318,1432		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between groups	608,5489016	2	304,2745	1,9123	**0,160384686**	3,219942293
Within groups	6682,805653	42	159,1144			
Total	7291,354555	44				

LIKE – Discourse marker

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	503,2916831	33,55278	339,604148		
AU	15	521,1684667	34,74456	551,7557367		
NS	15	568,3111154	37,88741	211,2345331		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	150,4341174	2	75,21706	0,204654742	**0,815736456**	3,219942293
Within groups	15436,32185	42	367,5315			
Total	15586,75597	44				

LIKE – Focuser

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	179,4844437	11,96563	143,8417		
AU	15	122,6127692	8,174185	59,94363		
NS	15	198,6819938	13,24547	42,58838		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	208,6546715	2	104,3273	1,270355	**0,291296565**	3,219942293
Within groups	3449,231954	42	82,12457			
Total	3657,886626	44				

LIKE – Quotative

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	109,5824278	7,305495	97,97885		
AU	15	199,4777862	13,29852	316,06		
NS	15	187,5288187	12,50192	151,4724		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	317,768736	2	158,8844	0,842871	**0,43762388**	3,219942293
Within groups	7917,157822	42	188,5038			
Total	8234,926558	44				

LIKE – Exemplifier

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	307,3713539	20,49142	424,4156		
AU	15	341,2573023	22,75049	628,0063		
NS	15	185,043513	12,33623	83,03258		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	900,3356913	2	450,1678	1,189395	**0,314449314**	3,219942293
Within groups	15896,36348	42	378,4848			
Total	16796,69917	44				

LIKE – Approximator

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	83,81292454	5,587528	41,28719		
AU	15	181,1974765	12,07983	175,6619		
NS	15	137,5435015	9,169567	105,642		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	317,2532309	2	158,6266	1,47518	**0,240346923**	3,219942293
Within groups	4516,275491	42	107,5304			
Total	4833,528722	44				

LIKE – Filler

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	250,081994	16,67213	162,9917		
AU	15	134,2861991	8,952413	50,12788		
NS	15	120,1303789	8,008692	39,55055		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	677,6994583	2	338,8497	4,023226	**0,025199732**	3,219942293
Within groups	3537,382344	42	84,22339			
Total	4215,081803	44				

LIKE – Hedge

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	39,1461655	2,609744	11,78874		
AU	15	0	0	0		
NS	15	102,7606786	6,850712	23,49063		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	358,6441249	2	179,3221	15,24874	**0,000**	3,219942293
Within groups	493,9112562	42	11,75979			
Total	852,5553812	44				

YEAH – Hesitation

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	792,838634	52,85591	154,6852087		
AU	15	823,0622145	54,87081	101,613245		
NS	15	823,5259931	54,90173	149,6540576		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	41,23097573	2	20,61549	0,152349011	**0,859160916**	3,219942293
Within groups	5683,335159	42	135,3175			
Total	5724,566135	44				

YEAH – Expansion

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	312,711639	20,84744	134,3121		
AU	15	240,3088601	16,02059	86,64306		
NS	15	343,2795395	22,8853	67,25846		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	372,8782166	2	186,4391	1,940634	**0,156275642**	3,219942293
Within groups	4034,991103	42	96,07122			
Total	4407,86932	44				

YEAH – End turn

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
ES	15	234,658537	15,6439	143,6754		
AU	15	317,6477601	21,17652	142,8587		
NS	15	155,3291295	10,35528	58,64814		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between groups	878,39342	2	439,1967	3,817086	**0,029980491**	3,219942293
Within groups	4832,550932	42	115,0607			
Total	5710,944352	44				

Within-group dispersal

Longitudinal use of 'like' by the ES group

	LIKE (percentage)													
	Exemplifier		Approximator		Quotative		DM		Focuser		Hedge		Filler	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
ES1	50,000	17,857	50,000	14,286	0,000	32,143	0,000	17,857	0,000	20,264	0,000	0,000	0,000	14,286
ES2	37,500	16,667	25,000	1,389	0,000	1,389	25,000	55,556	0,000	29,729	0,000	9,722	12,500	8,333
ES3	100,000	66,667	0,000	6,667	0,000	0,000	0,000	26,667	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
ES4	100,000	66,667	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	33,333
ES5	46,154	19,760	23,077	4,790	7,692	8,982	7,692	38,922	0,000	39,281	0,000	2,994	15,385	18,563
ES6	100,000	9,091	0,000	0,000	0,000	9,091	0,000	63,636	0,000	9,091	0,000	0,000	0,000	9,091
ES7	0,000	13,793	0,000	10,345	0,000	3,448	0,000	34,483	0,000	13,793	0,000	3,448	0,000	20,690
ES8	50,000	5,128	0,000	20,513	25,000	0,000	0,000	43,590	0,000	7,692	0,000	2,564	25,000	20,513
ES9	25,806	8,197	16,129	1,639	29,032	26,230	16,129	40,984	0,000	18,033	3,226	0,000	9,677	4,918
ES10	11,224	8,791	15,306	7,692	1,020	2,198	39,796	32,418	8,163	20,879	1,020	8,791	23,469	19,231
ES11	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
ES12	0,000	33,333	100,000	13,333	0,000	13,333	0,000	26,667	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	13,333
ES13	18,182	25,000	45,455	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	25,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	27,273	50,000
ES14	17,647	3,226	17,647	1,075	5,882	8,602	35,294	53,763	5,882	7,527	0,000	5,376	17,647	20,430
ES15	25,000	13,194	66,667	2,083	0,000	4,167	0,000	43,750	0,000	13,194	0,000	6,250	8,333	17,361
Mean	38,768	20,491	23,952	5,588	4,575	7,305	8,867	33,553	0,936	11,966	0,283	2,610	9,286	16,672
P-value	0,028		0,029		0,374		0,000		0,003		0,025		0,027	
Diff.	-18,276		-18,364		2,730		24,686		11,029		2,327		7,386	

Longitudinal use of 'I mean' by the ES group

	I MEAN (percentage)											
	Self-repair		Hesitation		Clarification		Justification		Concession		Hedge	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
ES1	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
ES2	0,000	12,500	0,000	25,000	0,000	37,500	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	25,000
ES3	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	100,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
ES4	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
ES5	9,091	11,111	36,364	5,556	54,545	27,778	0,000	16,667	0,000	11,111	0,000	27,778
ES6	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
ES7	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
ES8	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	100,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
ES9	0,000	25,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	50,000	0,000	25,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
ES10	4,762	10,526	52,381	47,368	19,048	31,579	0,000	5,263	0,000	0,000	23,810	5,263
ES11	18,182	19,355	27,273	29,032	36,364	32,258	0,000	0,000	0,000	3,226	18,182	16,129
ES12	20,000	0,000	60,000	66,667	20,000	16,667	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	16,667
ES13	0,000	8,696	50,000	47,826	50,000	43,478	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
ES14	0,000	7,692	60,000	53,846	40,000	38,462	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
ES15	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
mean	3,469	6,325	19,068	18,353	14,664	25,181	0,000	9,795	0,000	0,956	2,799	6,056
P-value	0,258		0,804		0,206		0,167		0,227		0,293	
Diff	2,856		-0,715		10,518		9,795		0,956		3,256	

Longitudinal use of 'I think' by the AU group

I THINK (percentage)				
	Hedge		Filler	
	T1	T2	T1	T2
AU1	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
AU2	100,000	100,000	0,000	0,000
AU3	100,000	100,000	0,000	0,000
AU4	100,000	100,000	0,000	0,000
AU5	100,000	100,000	0,000	0,000
AU6	100,000	100,000	0,000	0,000
AU7	100,000	100,000	0,000	0,000
AU8	100,000	100,000	0,000	0,000
AU9	100,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
AU10	100,000	100,000	0,000	0,000
AU11	100,000	100,000	0,000	0,000
AU12	100,000	100,000	0,000	0,000
AU13	100,000	100,000	0,000	0,000
AU14	100,000	100,000	0,000	0,000
AU15	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
mean	86,667	80,000	0,000	0,000
Pvalue	0,334		////	
Diff.	-6,667		0,000	

Longitudinal use of 'like' by the AU group

LIKE (percentage)														
	Exemplifier		Approximator		Quotative		DM		Focuser		Hedge		Filler	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
AU1	0,000	18,750	0,000	43,750	0,000	12,500	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	25,000
AU2	66,667	15,385	0,000	23,077	33,333	7,692	0,000	30,769	0,000	7,692	0,000	0,000	0,000	15,385
AU3	0,000	11,429	0,000	5,714	0,000	34,286	0,000	37,143	0,000	8,571	0,000	0,000	0,000	2,857
AU4	0,000	6,667	0,000	8,889	0,000	31,111	0,000	20,000	0,000	15,556	0,000	0,000	0,000	17,778
AU5	12,500	9,677	16,667	7,527	54,167	10,753	12,500	49,462	0,000	11,828	0,000	0,000	4,167	10,753
AU6	5,128	12,281	0,000	1,754	92,308	54,386	2,564	24,561	0,000	1,754	0,000	0,000	0,000	5,263
AU7	0,000	15,000	0,000	15,000	0,000	2,500	0,000	45,000	0,000	12,500	0,000	0,000	0,000	10,000
AU8	25,000	25,000	75,000	20,000	0,000	40,000	0,000	5,000	0,000	5,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	5,000
AU9	23,077	7,143	46,154	0,000	23,077	0,000	7,692	64,286	0,000	28,571	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
AU10	0,000	100,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
AU11	50,000	18,750	50,000	34,375	0,000	6,250	0,000	21,875	0,000	9,375	0,000	0,000	0,000	9,375
AU12	100,000	0,000	0,000	11,111	0,000	0,000	0,000	77,778	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	11,111
AU13	0,000	10,000	0,000	10,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	60,000	0,000	10,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	10,000
AU14	60,000	41,176	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	20,000	35,294	0,000	11,765	0,000	0,000	20,000	11,765
AU15	0,000	50,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	50,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	100,000	0,000
Mean	22,825	22,750	12,521	12,080	13,526	13,299	2,850	34,745	0,000	8,174	0,000	0,000	8,278	8,952
P-value	0,995		0,946		0,972		0,000		0,001		////		0,929	
Diff.	-0,074		-0,442		-0,227		31,894		8,174		0,000		0,675	