

INTERACTIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS:

INSIGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

by

John Keith Chick

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
KEY TO TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS	vii
ABSTRACT	viii
1.0 LINGUISTICS. SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND INTERACTIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 The positivist philosophy of science	4
1.3 Positivism in linguistics	10
1.4 Positivism in sociolinguistics and the humanist alternative	28
1.5 Summary and overview of the remaining chapters	36
2.0 THE INTERACTIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTS' TREATMENT OF CONTEXT	
2.1 Introduction	41
2.2 Different approaches to the study of micro contexts	44
2.2.1 Analysis of speech events	44
2.2.2 Analysis of speech acts	50
2.2.3 Analysis of politeness behaviours in micro settings	66

## II

2.2.4 Analysis of the role of schemata	85
2.2.5 Analysis of interactionally constituted contexts	96
2.3 Summary	105
<b>3.0 METHODS USED BY INTERACTIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTS AND WHAT THEY REVEAL ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND CONTEXT</b>	
3.1 Introduction	109
3.2 Methods employed in interactional sociolinguistic research and their limitations	111
3.3 Language and power	120
3.4 Summary	134
<b>4.0 SOURCES AND CONSEQUENCES OF ASYNCHRONY IN SOUTH AFRICAN ENGLISH - ZULU ENGLISH INTERACTION</b>	
4.1 Introduction	136
4.2 What is meant by interactional communication	137
4.3 Background to the study	140
4.4 Methods of data collection and analysis	144
4.5 Differences in schemata and contextualization cues as sources of asynchrony	146
4.6 Face-threatening behaviour as sources of asynchrony	159
4.7 Culturally-specific interactional styles as sources of asynchrony	164

### III

4.8 Summary and conclusion	176
<b>5.0 SOURCES AND CONSEQUENCES OF ASYNCHRONY IN AFRIKAANS ENGLISH - S.A. ENGLISH INTERACTION</b>	
5.1 Introduction	178
5.2 Background to the study	179
5.3 Methods of data collection and limitations of the data collected	181
5.4 Methods of data analysis	185
5.5 Culturally-specific styles as sources of of asynchrony	188
5.6 Summary and conclusion	224
<b>6.0 EXPLANATION OF PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTH AFRICA</b>	
6.1 Introduction	227
6.2 The limitations of interactional sociolinguistic accounts	232
6.3 Negative system of prejudice and discrimination	236
6.4 Conclusion	240
<b>7.0 IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AS A MEANS OF REDUCING DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTH AFRICA</b>	
7.1 Introduction	245
7.2 What interactional sociolinguistics contributes to the notion of communicative	

competence	251
7.3 Course design proposals	255
7.3 Conclusion to the chapter and the thesis	270
APPENDIX A	274
APPENDIX B	281
APPENDIX C	293
BIBLIOGRAPHY	296

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## KEY TO TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

┌ = latch mark, indicating no gap or overlap  
 └ in speech between turns

┌ = overlapping speech /  
 └ two people talking at the same time

... = noticeable pause (+0.5 second)

underline = accentuation (nucleus or accent placement)

(brackets) = information about paralinguistic (e.g. laughter)  
 and kinesic features (e.g. smiles)

/ = rise tone

\ = fall tone

^ = rise/fall tone

v = fall/rise tone



## ABSTRACT

The research reported in this thesis is basically applied in purpose. However the theoretical significance of interactional sociolinguistics is explored by showing that it is based on a philosophy of science which differs fundamentally from the versions of positivism which have informed linguistics over the years. The research methods consistent with this methodology are also outlined. The applied significance of the sub-field is demonstrated more generally at first, by examining its contribution to the understanding of the relationship between language and context. Thereafter the contribution to the understanding of this relationship is explored in more specific terms by examining the role of contextual information in the form of culturally-specific interactional styles in the accomplishing of prejudice and negative cultural stereotypes in intercultural communication in South Africa. The significance of this explanation is explored further by showing how such an interactional account fits into a more comprehensive explanation of the causes of discrimination in South Africa, one that includes, also, structural explanations, and explanations in terms of the psychology of individuals. This prepares the way for a consideration of the possible contribution of interactional sociolinguistics to solutions to the problem of discrimination both in South Africa and elsewhere.

## 1.0 LINGUISTICS, SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND INTERACTIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

As can be inferred from the title of the thesis (INTERACTIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS: INSIGHTS AND APPLICATIONS), the research reported on here is more applied and less theoretical in purpose. My primary concern is not to add to existing knowledge about the nature of the phenomenon of language in general, or about particular languages. Rather it is to show what the emerging field of interactional sociolinguistics has to contribute to the better understanding of how social context enters into the interpretation of meaning in conversational settings (particularly intercultural encounters), and of the relationship between language and such features of the wider social context as prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, and inequalities in the distribution of power in societies. In this thesis I report, in particular, on research which investigates these relationships as they are manifested in South African society, and then suggest how insights from this source can contribute to the solution of the problems of discrimination in that society.

However, it is important to note that the work of

interactional sociolinguists and, in particular, their investigations of intercultural miscommunication has also important theoretical implications, some of which are examined in the early chapters of this thesis. Tannen (1984:189), for example, argues that the study of intercultural communication "is a paradigm example of the inseparability of linguistic theory and application". She points out that apart from its enormous applied significance, it contributes to linguistic theory by providing a discourse analog to the starred (ungrammatical) sentence in linguistic argumentation. By examining interaction in which there is a mismatch in the participants' discourse conventions and expectations about how to show what is meant, it is possible to see more clearly the semantic processes which are harder to observe in communication between people who share backgrounds (intracultural communication). Michaels and Reir (1981:181) make much the same point in explaining that "interethnic encounters often provide the clearest picture of the unconscious, systematic nature of conversational processes, highlighting the interactional work that generally goes unnoticed in smooth exchanges".

Moreover, it is only within the context of a linguistics which is stripped of its social significance that investigations of the relationship between language and context could be thought of as not contributing to the major goal of theoretical linguistics, namely to add to our knowledge about language or about particular languages. As I

explain in this, the first chapter of the thesis, such a linguistics had its genesis in positivistic methodology in terms of which all properties of language which apparently could not be investigated by means of methods modelled on those of the natural sciences were considered outside the domain of linguistics. These included all aspects of language study which require a social explanation such as the relationship between language and social context. As a means of highlighting the theoretical significance of interactional sociolinguistics, I attempt to show that the distinctive methodology (chapter 1) and methods (chapter 3) associated with interactional sociolinguistics not only allow the relationship between language and context to be seen as a central (theoretical as well as applied) concern of linguistics rather than a fringe one, but greatly facilitate the investigation of this relationship.

In this chapter, then, I focus on the methodology of interactional sociolinguistics and the philosophy of science which informs it. (See page 109) for the distinction between methods and methodology). I argue that the major distinguishing feature of interactional sociolinguistics is that it represents a break with positivistic thinking that has dominated linguistic research ever since attempts were made to establish the legitimacy of linguistics as a science by abandoning the methods of conjecture and speculative thinking (which characterize traditional grammar) in favour of methods which are empirical and objective i.e. which

involve findings being based on verifiable data obtained from observation or experiment and the rejection of folk-linguistic notions informed by social, cultural or nationalistic prejudices and of impressionistic descriptive terms which cannot be clearly defined.

To demonstrate the uniqueness of the interactional sociolinguistic approach to language study, I compare it with approaches informed by positivist thinking. After explaining the nature of the positivist philosophy of science, I provide a brief, schematic, historical survey of the positivist tradition in linguistics, including early sociolinguistics, pointing out, at the same time, how this tradition has inhibited the investigation of the relationship between language and features of the social context. I also outline the ontological (assumptions about what exists) and epistemological (assumptions about how one can know) foundations of the humanistic philosophy of science which informs the methodology of interactional sociolinguistics, and explain why this methodology facilitates the investigation of the relationship between language and context. I conclude the chapter by providing a brief overview of the remaining chapters of the thesis.

## 1.2 THE POSITIVIST PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

The positivist philosophy of science includes a wide range of

different proposals made by different individuals or groups at different times. However, ignoring the differences, it is possible to identify certain basic ontological and epistemological assumptions which these perspectives share. Important ontological assumptions are that human behaviour, like natural behaviour, is subject to natural laws, and that it is determined in the sense that every event has a cause. Associated with these assumptions are the epistemological assumptions that the task of the social scientist is to provide causal explanations of human behaviour which reveal the laws by which it is governed, and that this is to be accomplished, as with the natural sciences, by systematic observation and/or measurement. Accordingly, positivists tend to ignore or idealize-out factors which are not directly observable, or objectively definable or quantifiable, and admit as acceptable data, only knowledge which has its source in empiricist methods developed within natural sciences, or rationalist methods developed within mathematics and the study of logic.

Generally speaking, positivists have tended to emphasize sensory experience as the primary source of scientific knowledge i.e. to be empiricist in orientation. Indeed, according to the earliest versions of positivism, laws or (more accurately speaking) generalizations stating the causal relationships between phenomena, are to be arrived at by :

a. theoretically uncontrolled observation of a particular

case or cases suggestive of such causal relationships, and  
b. inductive reasoning which involves the researcher inferring that what is known to be true in particular cases is generalizable to all other cases which resemble the observed cases in certain specifiable respects.

The most influential formulation of this empiricist version of positivism is that provided by the logical positivists, whose goal was to produce "a single system of unified science, in which the whole body of positive knowledge would be represented, ultimately, as a set of precisely formulated propositions" (Lyons 1981:41). As Lyons explains, central to this proposal are two principles formulated by the logical positivists, namely, the verification and reductionist principles. According to the verification principle "no statement was meaningful unless it could be verified by observation or standard scientific methods applied to data provided by observation" (1981:41). The reductionist principle expressed their view that some sciences are in some sense more basic than others (e.g. that physics is more basic than biology and the latter more basic than linguistics) and that "in the grand synthesis of unified science the concepts and propositions of the less basic sciences were to be reduced to (i.e. reinterpreted in terms of) the concepts and propositions of the more basic sciences" (Lyons 1981:42). As I explain below, the application of these principles (particularly reductionism) has been a significant characteristic of the positivist tradition in linguistics.

However, empiricist versions of positivism have tended to be superseded by hypo-deductive, rationalist, interpretations of science. Advocates of such interpretations argue that causal generalizations based on evidence gathered in the past and present, can predicate future probabilities, but not certainties. Accordingly, they conclude that such generalizations cannot be considered as having the status of universal laws. For this goal to be accomplished, so they argue, a model of scientific explanation involving "a marriage of an empirical interpretation with the certainties of deductive logic" (Hughes 1980:50) is required. Deductive logic provides certainty, they claim, because in logic the validity of an argument depends not on the verified truth of the content of propositions but on their deductive consequences. A deductive argument is valid if the statements in the premise imply the conclusion. For example, the statement "He opened the door" may be false but it implies the statement "The door was closed". This means that no new observational information is needed for one to know for certain that if the premises are true the conclusions are true and vice versa.

In the hypo-deductive model, the search for universal laws begins not with observation but with premises in the form of hypothetical law statements. Implications which may be tested by observation are then deduced from these premises. The next step involves comparing these implications with empirical



observation. If observational evidence contradicts the implications, the hypothesised law statements are rejected or modified, but if it is consistent with it, then it can be inductively inferred that the hypothetical law statements are confirmed as probable.

The fact that a researcher working within the hypo-deductive model is ultimately dependent on inductive reasoning to establish the truth of a law statement (as distinct from its logical consequences, which are arrived at by deduction) suggests that, despite references to "certainties", hypo-deductive interpretations, like more narrowly empiricist interpretations, offer essentially probabilistic explanations. As Polkinghorne (1983:100) observes, "laws cannot be verified through testing deduced inferences; all that can be obtained are degrees of confirmation. The 'problem of induction' leaves the deductively-tied network hovering about the instances of reality without offering any surety that the network actually describes genuine relationships". Thus, while researchers, by using increasingly sophisticated statistical methods, have been able to make stronger claims about the probability of generalizations induced from a sample of observations, they have not been able to establish the certainty of law statements. It is worthwhile to note, as an aside, the obvious attractiveness of such quantitative methods to social scientists seeking to account for social phenomena objectively and precisely in ways that resemble what natural

scientists do.

However, it should be apparent from the description provided above, that where the hypo-deductive interpretations do differ very markedly from the empiricist interpretations, is in respect of the status accorded to theory. Clearly the hypo-deductive interpretations of science require some relaxation of the verification principle, according to which any statement which is not directly verifiable is dismissed as non-scientific, such that science may include in addition to empirical propositions and logical rules, the language of theory. It is for this reason that, just as narrowly empiricist interpretations of science tended to discourage theory development in the social sciences, so hypo-deductive interpretations tended to encourage it. As Polkinghorne (1983:77) explains, "it is the aim of the deductive system of science to generate theories which consist of unified deductively related networks of laws in which lesser laws are deduced from more general laws". Of particular relevance to linguistics, it encouraged the heuristic use of hypothetical models. These are representations of the phenomenon the researcher is investigating, and, as Bell (1976::42) explains, "are simplified and idealized, since they include only what are thought to be the relevant properties of the system being modelled". Highly abstract, symbolic models tend to be preferred to those in which the relationships between the elements in the model and the reality they represent are easily grasped, because the former allow "easy manipulation

of the variables and hence rapid revision of the models themselves and of the theories underlying them" (Bell 1976:43).

### 1.3 POSITIVISM IN LINGUISTICS

Historically, the first evidence of the influence of positivist thinking is to be found in the research of the nineteenth century Neogrammarians. Like the traditional grammarians, they focused on the phenomenon of linguistic change but, whereas the traditional grammarians tended to be prescriptive, the Neogrammarians tended to be descriptive in their approach. Their concern was with the facts of change, which they attempted to collect, sort and analyse objectively, in an attempt to provide a causal explanation of the phenomena of language.

In tune with positivistic thinking, the Neogrammarians made the ontological assumption that languages are entities which can be described objectively, akin to the phenomena which are the object of study of the natural sciences. Noting that historical linguistic change is seldom a consequence of conscious decision-making on the part of users, they concluded that languages have, in some sense, a life of their own. Noting, further, that there are resemblances between languages, and that some "newer" languages (e.g. Romance languages) have apparently evolved from "older" languages

(Latin), they concluded that languages are natural organisms like plants and animals, and group in "family trees" just as biological species do. Influenced by Darwinian accounts of the origin of species, they hypothesized that each of the various language "families" sprang from some common source (proto-language) and that change, as with natural species, can be accounted for in terms of the struggle for survival.

Further modelling their inquiry on that of the "more basic" science of biology, they worked from the epistemological assumptions that linguistic change is systematic, in the sense that it is governed by "laws" which applied uniformly to all examples, and that these "laws" or generalizations are to be arrived at by inductive methods. They attempted to explain languages by establishing the nature of the genetic relationships amongst the world's languages and determining the laws of derivation of phonological forms of "daughter" languages from the putative phonological proto-forms of "parent" languages i.e. to understand the phenomenon of language one needs to establish what changes have taken place in it over the years.

A number of factors, subsequently, contributed to declining confidence in this genetic explanation of language. One such was doubts about the scientific status of the sound "laws" which, according to some critics of a positivist persuasion, need to apply universally to be worthy of the name i.e. to be independent of particular times and places. Sampson (1980:28)

points out that Grimm's Law, for example, applied to just the Germanic dialect of Indo-European in a particular century, and not to all languages at all times. Moreover, despite progress made by the Neogrammarians in formulating supplementary generalizations to account for whole classes of apparent exceptions to their laws, there remained many facts which their laws could not explain.

A more telling factor was that the Neogrammarians were unable to demonstrate unambiguously that sound change proceeds regularly in a particular direction. As Sampson (1980:26) explains, if one gives up this idea, it becomes difficult to apply to language Darwin's concepts of "natural selection" and "struggle for survival" because "it is central to the evolutionary view of biology that the replacement of old species by new is not merely a process of random changes (even if the individual mutations on which evolution depends are random), but rather is a movement from lower to higher". This failure to demonstrate directionality of change, therefore, represented a direct challenge to the fundamental ontological and epistemological assumptions of the Neogrammarians that languages are organisms and that linguistics can be assimilated to biology.

In hindsight one could criticise the critics for their assumption that laws in the social sciences are the equivalent of laws in the natural sciences. August Cluver (personal communication) points out that the Neogrammarians

described regularities that had already taken place, and that the "laws" of the social sciences are tied up with a myriad of pre-conditions, which means that they are valid only for a short time when these pre-conditions hold. By contrast the laws of physics, for example, have predictive value i.e. apply universally. Such an assumption is, however, consistent with the positivist assumption that a single system of unified science is a realistic goal.

Be that as it may, linguists came to prefer an explanation which, though different, is no less positivistic in nature. This is the structuralist explanation first outlined by Saussure, according to which an understanding of language is to be accomplished, not by noting the changes that have taken place in what is conceived of as a biological organism, but by demonstrating that "all the forms and meanings are interrelated at a particular point in time in a particular language-system" (Lyons 1981:218). In response to the question of whether, if languages are, indeed, not akin to organisms it were possible, in any legitimate sense, to regard them as "things" that could be studied scientifically using methods developed within the natural sciences, Saussure made use of the notion of "social facts", which the sociologist Durkheim had done most to articulate. Durkheim argued that the phenomena which the sociologists study differ from those which are the object of study of the natural sciences in that they are not directly accessible to sensory observation, but that they are just as real because they have

concrete effects. Sampson (1980) provides an amusing example to illustrate this point. He asks the reader to suppose that all his trousers were at the cleaners and that the one he was wearing was ripped in pieces by the dog. He states that his reader will not be surprised to learn that he would absolutely resist the obvious and simplest solution to wear his wife's dress. Although the "rules" prescribing distinctive dress for the two sexes cannot be directly observed, and may not even be part of the conscious awareness of those who obey them, they nevertheless clearly have tangible effects. Durkheim's argument, according to Sampson, gives Saussure the answer to the ontological problem of what sort of phenomenon language is. " 'French' is not a thing in the same sense as a chair or a table; but, if there is a category of 'things' which includes legal systems and structures of convention, then languages surely fit squarely into that category too" (1980:45).

The language facts which are the subject matter of linguistics, according to Saussure, are, however, not those that can be directly observed. Such facts, he says, belong to the domain of "parole" (speaking) which, he claims, cannot be studied scientifically because, being the possession of individual speakers, it is too heterogeneous. Instead, linguistics is concerned with establishing the facts of the non-physical language system, "langue" (language), which is the common possession of the members of the language community.

It is important to note, since it is further evidence of the influence of positivistic thinking on linguistics, the high degree of idealization involved in Saussure's limitation of the scope of linguistics to *langue*. As noted above, it is common practice within the natural sciences to reduce the scope of inquiry to only what, according to the investigator, can be accounted for in an objective and rigorous way. Saussure makes it clear that, in idealizing out the facts of historical (diachronic) change and of *parole* (speaking), both of which he claims lack essential systematic character (1959:95), he is following tried and tested models of inquiry. As he puts it, "in static linguistics, as in most sciences, no course of reasoning is possible without the usual simplification of data" (1959:102).

Significantly, though various linguistic schools differ in the abstractness of their conception of the language system, most linguists since Saussure have tended to follow his lead in constructing models "not of actual language behaviour, but of the system of regularities which underlie that behaviour" (Lyons 1979:57). They have attempted to separate out from "raw language data" that part which is unambiguously linguistic, by means of idealization procedures. These include the procedure of regularization, in which slips of the tongue, mispronunciations, hesitations, pauses etc. are discounted; the procedure of standardization, in which systematic variation between utterances (which is the



consequence of lectal differences), code-switching and so on are discounted; and the decontextualization procedure, in which sentences as isolated linguistic objects are abstracted from their verbal and situational context. Since the effects of idealization are particularly pertinent to the argument I develop in this chapter about how the positivist tradition in linguistics inhibited the investigation of the relationship between language and context, I will focus on them in examining the two remaining schools included in this brief survey.

According to Bell (1976:20), Saussure left an important epistemological problem unresolved. It was not clear how language could be investigated empirically since, being housed in the collective consciousness of the speech community, it (unlike parole) was not available to direct observation by the senses. As Bell observes, two different solutions to this problem have been tried by linguists belonging to the two remaining schools to be surveyed, namely, induction in the case of American structuralism, which was most clearly articulated by Bloomfield, and deduction in the case of generative linguistics.

As Sampson (1980:63) comments, "Bloomfield was not merely passively influenced by logical positivism but (after a flirtation in his twenties with very different views) became an active proponent of positivist ideas as they applied to the study of human behaviour, including language". Consistent

with the reductionist principle, he saw linguistics as a branch of psychology and, more specifically, the branch of psychology known as behaviourism. Such psychologists tended to reject introspection as a methodological procedure, on the grounds that the findings of investigations using this procedure cannot be empirically verified. They also rejected explanations in terms of such non-observable factors as the mind.

Following the lead of the behaviourists, the structuralists limited the scope of their inquiry to those aspects of language which are objective, observable and verifiable. A sample of the speech of a representative or of representatives of a speech community (what the behaviourists referred to as observable inputs and outputs) either on tape or transcribed constituted their data. These data were then analysed using inductive classificatory procedures which, it was claimed, avoided both reliance on non-observables (such as the meanings of items) in attempting to decide into which categories they belonged, and the imposition of preconceived categorizations on the structure of the language being studied. The avoidance of the imposition of preconceived categorizations, incidentally, is consistent with the structuralists' ontological assumption that each language has a unique relational structure. These procedures involved the segmenting of the data at the phonemic, morphemic and syntactic levels of linguistic organization, into progressively smaller units. As Bell (1981:93) observes, "the

parallel with physics is very clear: physical objects "cut" into smaller and smaller pieces until the ultimate - the atom - is reached".

As was the case with Saussurean linguistics, structuralists in the Bloomfieldian tradition employed a high degree of idealization. As Bell (1981:94) points out, although the data are "real" in the sense of being derived from actual speech, not only is the data base extremely narrow, but such typical features of situated language use as pause phenomena, overlapping speech and so on are edited out. Perhaps most significant, since it led to the neglect in linguistics of what is the central concern of this thesis, namely how context enters into the interpretation of meaning, is the exclusion of semantics from the scope of scientific linguistic inquiry. Following the lead of the behaviourists in attending only to observables, Bloomfield reduced the study of meaning to showing "what stimuli evoke given utterances as responses, and what behavioural responses are evoked by given spoken stimuli" (Sampson 1980:68). To account, in these terms, for a speaker's uttering of a word like "apple" when not currently being stimulated by the perception of an apple, Bloomfield claimed that he was responding "to some obscure internal stimuli of a type which was associated at some time in (his) past with the stimuli of an apple" (Bloomfield 1933:143). He concluded that since current levels of scientific knowledge did not provide an adequate basis for laying bare such obscure internal stimuli,

a scientific account of linguistic meaning was in practice impossible. As Coulthard explains, this conclusion led to the view that "it was no concern of linguists to explain how identical utterances can have different functions in different situations, nor how listeners correctly decode the intended message" (1977:2).

Bloomfieldian structuralism, therefore, clearly reflects the more narrowly empiricist versions of positivism referred to earlier in the chapter (p 5) which tended to inhibit the development of theory by dismissing statements such as those belonging to the language of theory because they are not directly verifiable. As Sampson (1980:74) observes, structuralists thought of general linguistics as technique rather than theory. By contrast, generative linguistics reflects the hypo-deductive interpretation of science.

As noted above, in the hypo-deductive interpretation, the starting point of scientific investigation is not data, but theory. As Pit Corder (1973:84) explains, "in the case of linguistics, this would mean that we start out with some notions about what the language is and what to select as data and what to look for in those data". Notions (or assumptions) which inform the practices of generativist linguists include the ontological assumption that language universals exist (i.e. that the relational structure of each language is not unique) and the epistemological assumption that the way to establish what the phenomenon of language is, is to construct

a universal grammar whose principles will define what any language is. Accordingly, what Chomsky develops is a theory of syntactic universals. Adopting a mathematical model, he proposes that a language should be treated as a sub-set of the infinite number of possible sequences or "strings" of the items in the dictionary of the language. The task of the linguist he sees as that of constructing a grammar (a set of rules for joining the vocabulary items) which will generate (predict/specify precisely) the grammatical strings. In such a way he will be able to make explicit the syntactic properties of the language in question. More important, if he is able to show that the types of rules in the grammar are also necessary for the grammar of any language, he can claim that he has discovered some of the universal properties of language.

Chomsky's assumption about the existence of universals is related to a further assumption, namely, that the reason that there are such universals is that human beings are genetically endowed with a specific language faculty which determines such universal features, and makes possible the acquisition of one's native language in a remarkably short time. As Downes explains (1984:16), Chomsky's answer to the question "What is language?", is a theory which describes people's tacit (unconscious) knowledge of the linguistic system of their native language (their competence) in terms of this innate, species-specific language faculty.

Reference to a language faculty, makes it clear that Chomsky does not share Bloomfield's behaviouristic orientation, including the rejection of explanations in terms of such non-observables as the mind. This is evident also in the generativist's assumption that the introspection of native speakers is a legitimate source of data. He attempts to deduce the language system from his own internalized knowledge. As Bell (1981:101) explains, the generativist "needs data in the physical sense of texts, only as a check against his description. He begins by building a hypothesis of how language works and checks it initially by introspection, since, he would argue, as a native speaker, he already has complete mastery of the system he is seeking to describe".

Another characteristic of the hypo-deductive version of positivism, is the use of highly abstract, formal models. Formal, here, refers to the goal of generative analysis to specify the rules of grammar in a precise and rigorous way, preferably in logical or mathematical terms. Although it is probably true that all linguistic descriptions are based on some sort of model, in many cases the models are implicit ones which even the linguists who produced the descriptions might not have been consciously aware of. Such is the case with the Bloomfieldian structuralists, who tended to claim that their descriptions were data- rather than theory- (or model) driven. The generativist, however, makes explicit use of formal models, as a means not only of ensuring necessary

scientific rigour, but also of advancing knowledge. Brown (1984:52) explains that formal models encourage objectivity "because they require the investigator to be particularly explicit about the nature of the initial assumptions in terms of which the model is built, and they force him to be precise in formulating the operations the model performs and the factors that affect performance. Explicitness of this kind", he adds, "is particularly important when dealing with one of our own abilities". Moreover, in this paradigm, theoretical advances are made by showing the superiority of one linguistic model over another in accounting for the facts of a particular language or of language in general. This procedure allows for the rejection of less satisfactory models in favour of more satisfactory ones, and for the improvement of models so that the inadequacies revealed by the comparison are eliminated.

Finally, and most significantly, generativist linguistics, like Bloomfieldian and Saussurean linguistics before it, is characterized by a high degree of idealization. This Chomsky (1965:3) makes explicit when he states that "linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance". The distinction he makes between

competence and performance echoes the distinction made by Saussure between langue and parole. It is worth noting, however, that whereas for Saussure the language system, which is the first and central concern of the linguist, is the common possession of the language community, for Chomsky it is the perfect knowledge of an ideal speaker-listener in a homogeneous speech community. This suggests that competence is even more of an abstraction than langue. One of the consequences of this limitation of the scope of linguistics to the ideal speaker/hearer's knowledge of the abstract language system is that, as was the case with Saussurean and Bloomfiendian linguistics, any consideration of the role of context in the interpretation of meaning is excluded.

Before summing up this brief, schematic survey of the positivist tradition in linguistics, it is important to note that in selecting from the full range of linguistic schools, generalizing about such schools and focusing on evidence of positivistic thinking, I have obscured often significant details between scholars within schools, and presented an exaggerated picture of commonality in thinking between schools. A significant omission, which I shall remedy by mentioning it now, is that some schools, such as the London school, have always accepted lower levels of idealization. As Coulthard (1977:3) notes, Firth, the founder of this school urged linguists to study the total verbal process in its context of situation, while Halliday (1978:52), probably the most notable scholar working in this field, argues that it is



necessary "to impose as low a degree of idealization on the facts as is compatible with systematic inquiry". Then too, there have always been groups of scholars who have not been swept up by the various epistemological and ontological revolutions in the discipline. Thus, for example, historically speaking, there has always been a group of scholars who have not accepted Saussure's argument that language change (historical language variation) and contemporaneous language variation lack the essential systematic character which make scientific study possible, and have sustained the tradition of diachronic linguistics, started by the Neo-grammarians, to the present date. It was these scholars who realized that historical and contemporaneous variation are two sides of the same coin in the sense that some contemporary varieties, or forms within them, are "older" and some "younger". Historical linguistics spawned dialectology, which meant that when some linguists in 1960s and 1970s became dissatisfied with the constraints of the Chomskyan definition of the domain of linguistics and began investigating aspects of language which require reference to social factors, they were able to build on the findings and methods of what was an early form of sociolinguistics.

Despite these limitations, this survey does, I trust, show how strong the influence of positivistic thinking has been in the discipline. As I have noted, the most significant consequence of this influence from the point of view of the

research reported on in this thesis, has been the exclusion of any consideration of the role of contextual information in the production and interpretation of utterances, a "complication" which is avoided by idealizing the object of study to exclude everything except isolated and decontextualized sentences. (I distinguish here, as elsewhere, between sentences, which are abstract theoretical entities defined within a theory of grammar, and utterances, which are activities performed by speakers in actual contexts of use.)

The limitations of linguistics which confines itself to decontextualized sentences can be demonstrated by examining the following exchange (adapted from one supplied by Widdowson 1984:203 ):

A: What are they doing?

B: Working at their tables.

In accordance with the procedure of decontextualization, the sentence fragment underlying B's utterance could be made less dependent on context by being converted to a full sentence as follows:

They are working at their tables.

However, it is apparent that, even with this change, a knowledge of the linguistic signs and their rules for permissible combination ( i.e. linguistic competence in the Chomskyan sense) would not be sufficient for interpretation, and that an appeal would have to be made to various kinds of contextual information (about which more information is given

in chapter 2 ). For one thing, without contextual information a hearer would not have access to the referent of "they", or be able to establish what kind of table is being referred to. As Widdowson (1984:204) tellingly observes, there is nothing in the semantics (the sentence meaning), "in the symbolic signification of these expressions that prevents us from calling up images of children setting out place-mats and cutlery, or of waiters calculating their tips or their tax returns, or of either group taking part in a carpentry competition, or working part-time as croupiers in a gambling casino".

It was considerations such as these, and a restlessness amongst linguists about the narrow definition of scope of linguistics given by Chomsky, which some felt reduced linguistics to "an abstract methodological exercise in formalization which has no ultimate validation by reference to actual behaviour" (Widdowson 1979:114), that contributed to the development of sociolinguistics. This Downes (1984:15) defines as "that branch of linguistics which studies just those properties of language and languages which require reference to social, including contextual, factors in their explanation".

While all sociolinguists argue for a wider definition of the scope of linguistics, some see themselves less as challenging the practices of what, to distinguish it from sociolinguistics, I shall call core linguistics, than as

building on progress made in core linguistics in accounting for the linguistic system, something they see as a necessary prelude to examining how this system engages with social contexts. Others reject the practices of core linguistics on the grounds that they distort the true nature of language by excluding, as they do, most socially relevant properties of language. As Hudson (1980:3) expresses this, they argue that since language "is ( obviously) social behaviour, to study it without reference to society would be like studying courtship behaviour without relating the behaviour of one partner to another". For such scholars sociolinguistics is linguistics in the sense that it represents an alternative way of doing linguistics. However, in the section which follows, I shall argue that, in so far as it is no less positivist in orientation, the sociolinguistics of even the latter group does not represent as fundamental a departure from approaches traditionally employed in linguistics as is often supposed. I shall also argue that, because early sociolinguistics was positivistic in orientation, it is only with the advent of interactional sociolinguistics that linguists have begun to account adequately for the role of context in the production and interpretation of utterances.

#### 1:4 POSITIVISM IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND THE HUMANISTIC ALTERNATIVE

A number of scholars have used the macro/micro distinction to distinguish sub-fields within the field of sociolinguistics. For Fishman (1971) the distinction relates to whether the concern is principally linguistic or sociological. For him, the greater the linguistic orientation the more likely it is to involve micro-level analysis, and the greater the sociological orientation the more likely it is to involve macro-level analysis. For Bell (1976) the distinction hinges on the philosophic question of the nature of individuality. Whereas the micro-sociolinguist emphasizes differences between individuals, and focuses on interaction rather than group membership, the macro-sociolinguist sees the individual as a point of intersection between a number of quantifiable variables. He tries to account for linguistic diversity in society in terms of such contextual categories as age, sex, culture, occupation, levels of education, ethnic group, income and so on.

The distinction I draw between sub-fields within sociolinguistics, while overlapping with those of Fishman and Bell, relates less to disciplinary allegiance and notions of individuality, and more to differences in the philosophies of science which inform the sub-fields. The first sub-field is informed by positivistic thinking and includes all studies which, in terms of the Fishman and Bell definitions, belong

to macro-sociolinguistics and also certain micro-sociolinguistic studies (see for example studies of pragmatic failure discussed in chapter 3 in which strategies to realize individual speech acts are correlated with cultural/language identity). The second sub-field, which, to distinguish it from micro sociolinguistic studies informed by positivistic thinking, I term interactional sociolinguistics, is informed by a humanistic philosophy of science.

Early modern sociolinguistics, which dates from Labov's famous study of Martha's Vineyard (carried out in 1961), represents, as I have noted above, a challenge to traditional ways of doing linguistics and, in particular a widening of the scope of what linguists see as legitimate data. It does not, however, represent a challenge to the fundamental positivistic assumptions that human and social phenomena are just as real and "law-governed" as the material phenomena which are the concern of the natural sciences, and that the facts of human and social phenomena have to be objectively discovered by methods developed within the natural sciences or mathematics. What these early sociolinguists did was merely to substitute for one positivistic interpretation of science, namely the hypo-deductive approach to scientific explanation (referred to on pages 7-10 and 19-23), the equally positivistic explanation favoured in sociology at the time, namely, the probabilistic explanation (referred to on pages 8-9).

Early sociolinguistic studies, and most subsequent studies which, according to the Fishman and Bell definitions, fall within the realm of macro-sociolinguistics, involve the combination of traditional structural analysis of language with methods developed within sociology, with the objective of showing how linguistic variables relate to measurable social variables in the macro context of the wider society. This is evident, for example, in Bright's (1975:11) definition of the task of the sociolinguist, namely, "to show the systematic covariance of linguistic structure and social structure - and perhaps even to show a causal relationship in one direction or the other". Macro-sociolinguists do relax traditional idealization procedures to the extent that they admit as acceptable, non-standardized data. They also attempt to show relationships between variables at different levels of linguistic organization (phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic) and factors in the social context (for example class, gender, occupation) which constrain their use. However, it is clear that the quantitative methods employed involve a high level of abstraction. The variable rules proposed by macro-sociolinguists (see for example Labov 1972) are statistical abstractions which attempt to show how one set of facts (the rules of the grammar) relate to another set of facts (the social characteristics of groups). The particular linguistic features which sociolinguists count are abstracted from their verbal and situational contexts, while the factors in the wider social context are analyst's categories rather than the information speakers and hearers

draw on in making sense of one another's utterances.

Consistent with positivistic thinking, macro-sociolinguistics attempts to provide causal explanations; that is, answers to WHY questions. Causes and effects tend to be conceptualized in terms of an input-output model. The causes or independent variables are input factors, and the effects are the output or dependent variables. The task of explanation is fulfilled by providing measures of the strength of the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Macro-sociolinguistic studies thus provide useful information about general trends in behaviour.

More recently, in research which reflects a further widening of what linguists consider legitimate data for linguistic study, some macro-sociolinguists have tried to carry explanation further by going beyond showing relationships between variables in the macro social context and the characteristic linguistic features of lects, to showing, again by statistical means, the relationships between the use of these features and the social consequences for the user. Thus, for example, O'Barr and Aitkins (1980) show that the use of features of what they call "powerless language" (features identified previously by R.Lakoff (1975) as characteristic of women's speech) correlate strongly with negative evaluations of the users as witnesses in courtrooms. Such studies suggest that the variety of language used affects an individual's ability to be heard, and that the use



of "powerless language" not only reflects the powerlessness of the user but actually reinforces it. However, as Gumperz 1982:28 observes, what they do not explain is why and how these varieties became stigmatized in the first place, and why stigmatized practices persist despite such changes in the macro context (structural changes) as universal education and mass communication. Another way of expressing these limitations is that macro studies do not provide insight into what goes on in the "black box" between input and output factors. Without an understanding of the processes at work within this box, it is possible to measure the strength of the correlation between input and output factors, but not explain it. Not unrelated is the limitation of probabilistic explanations highlighted by Hudson (1980:147). He observes that while statistical techniques can suggest a causal connection between two factors, they can never provide proof of such. He substantiates this argument by pointing out that it would be easy to find a statistical connection between the ability to do mathematical operations and height, but that this does not mean that the latter is the cause of the former. Instead both are a part of the general process of growing up. This, again, suggests that the task of explanation can only be complete when the findings of macro studies are verified (or not) by micro studies which identify the interactional mechanisms in terms of which the variables in the macro studies can be said to work.

It is, then, to deal with questions not answered by macro

studies and to understand more fully the relationship between language and context, that sociolinguists have turned increasingly to the study of the micro contexts of conversational interactions. As I explain in chapter 2, many scholars have assumed that the relationship between language and micro contexts could be investigated using much the same methods as are employed by sociolinguists who investigated the relationship between language and the macro context of the wider society, thus continuing the positivist tradition in linguistics. Others again, whom I refer to as interactional sociolinguists, came to the conclusion that to adequately investigate such uniquely human accomplishments as conversation, quite different methods are needed. Interactional sociolinguistics, therefore, represents a much stronger challenge to methods traditionally employed in linguistics in that it rejects the positivistic assumption that linguistic inquiry should be modelled on methods developed within the natural sciences and mathematics. In common with other approaches informed by humanistic interpretations of science, interactional sociolinguistics is informed by the basic ontological assumption that human beings are fundamentally different from the phenomena which are the object of study of the natural sciences. Following the lead of Weber, they see social action rather than social facts as their subject matter. They see human beings, not as being acted upon by social facts, but as actively creating through negotiation with other social actors, the social reality in which they live. Applied to

conversation, which is the object of their study, they see the social context of discourse as something which is created by the participants as the interactions unfold, and, therefore, as dynamic rather than pre-existing, fixed and perceived by the participants in the same way. Moreover, they see interactional meaning as not so much inhering in specifiable features of the verbal and non-verbal behaviours of the participants, as interpretable in terms of the developing context. Since, according to interactional sociolinguists, the context is not necessarily perceived by the participants in the same way, and since the meaning of signs is potentially ambiguous, the participants are obliged to engage in considerable negotiative work in making themselves understood and achieving their communicative goals.

Accordingly, interactional sociolinguists have little use for methods modelled on the natural sciences which abstract "facts" in the form of rules or statistical measures. Such methods, they claim, analyse out those features which make conversation a distinctly human accomplishment (that is features which reflect its dynamic, open-ended, context-dependent nature) and impose an analyst's or observer's perspective. Since, in their view, social reality is constantly in the process of being created, rather than merely historically given, they focus not on the facts, or on causes and effects, but on the process of reality construction. In other words, their focus is not on input and

output factors, but on the "black box" in between, with the object of contributing not answers to WHY questions, but to HOW questions. Thus, for example, interactional sociolinguists are not content to demonstrate that the features of "powerless language" correlate with negative ratings of the users as witnesses. Instead they attempt to show how such a situation came about, and why it often persists after the social, economic or political status of the users has improved. To develop this point further, whereas macro-sociolinguists attempt to establish that such contextual factors as the social value placed on various language codes, accents and styles determine both what is said and how it is interpreted and evaluated, interactional sociolinguists try to identify the interactional mechanisms by means of which such socio-cultural knowledge enters into the interpretation of intent and evaluation of motive and ability as the interaction unfolds.

They argue that this is to be accomplished by means of analyses which differ considerably from those sociolinguistic studies informed by positivistic thinking. As the methods of interactional sociolinguistics are outlined in detail in chapter 3, I shall refer here only to a few of the the most distinctive features of these analyses. One such is that an attempt is made to analyse the interactions from the perspectives of the participants, rather than impose an observer's or analyst's point of view. Then too, instead of abstracting quantifiable "facts" from a large number of

studies, interactional sociolinguists attempt detailed, fine-grained qualitative analyses of a few interactions. Perhaps most significant of all, in analysing, interactional sociolinguists tend to emphasize the contribution of context to the interpretation of meaning, which is why interactional sociolinguistics has, potentially, so much to offer to the understanding of the relationship between language and context.

#### 1.5 SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW OF REMAINING CHAPTERS

In this chapter, then, I have explored the theoretical significance of interactional sociolinguistics by identifying the distinctive nature of the methodology of interactional sociolinguistics and showing that it is based on a philosophy of science which differs fundamentally from the various versions of positivism which, over the years, have informed linguistics, including most sociolinguistics. I have explained why this positivist tradition has inhibited the investigation of the relationship between language and social context, and why interactional sociolinguistics has more to offer in this respect.

In chapter 2 I pursue the theme of the contribution of interactional sociolinguistics to the understanding of the relationship between language and context by comparing interactional sociolinguistic studies of that relationship with studies which, to various degrees, are influenced by

positivistic thinking. In the process I attempt to show why the former is able to contribute more fruitfully to our understanding of how socio-cultural information enters into the interpretation of intent, and evaluation of motives and abilities than the latter. This chapter also serves as a survey of relevant literature, and reveals the source of many of the notions which figure prominently in interactional sociolinguistics.

In chapter 3 I outline the methods used by interactional sociolinguists generally, and in the research reported on in this thesis: methods which are consistent with the methodology outlined in chapter 1. I also discuss the limitations of these methods. To further illustrate the contribution of interactional sociolinguistics to the understanding of the relationship between language and context, I compare interactional studies of the relationship between language and power, with studies informed by positivistic principles. I present evidence which suggests that the latter mislead in suggesting that the interpretation of such discourse phenomena as interruption and topic control are forced by the presence in the talk of certain structural features (e.g. syntactic or prosodic features), and that those who have power in the wider society also dominate in the micro contexts of conversations by interrupting and controlling the topic. I argue that interactional sociolinguistics suggests an alternative explanation of the relationship between what takes place at micro and macro

levels of social life. According to this explanation, inequalities in the distribution of power are created and reinforced because, in the context of unsuccessful intercultural communication, members of subordinate groups interacting with members of superordinate groups find it difficult to negotiate access to power.

In chapter 4, the first of two chapters in which intercultural miscommunication in South Africa is examined, I report on the analyses of three post-examination interviews involving a South African English (S.A. English) speaking academic and one Zulu-English speaking and two S.A. English speaking post-graduate students. These analyses contribute further to the overall theme of the contribution of interactional sociolinguistics to the understanding of the relationship between language and context by suggesting that differences in socio-cultural, contextual knowledge in the form of interactional styles contribute to misinterpretation of intent and misjudgement of motives and abilities, and suggest, further, what these differences are. They also suggest how negative stereotypes of cultural groups are generated in intercultural encounters.

In chapter 5 I report on the analyses of interviews between S.A. English speaking clients and Afrikaans-English bankers which, again, suggest what sorts of differences in culturally-preferred interactional styles contribute to miscommunication.

Chapter 6 examines explanations offered for prejudice, discrimination, and inequality in South Africa and the limitations of these, focusing particularly on the limitations of interactional explanations as perceived by those who emphasize the role of large-scale, historically-given structural forces, and who tend to look for evidence to support their arguments to positivistically-orientated research. I argue that all these explanations have their limitations, that not any on its own is likely to give an adequate explanation, and that it is more productive to make use of the findings of all three approaches, and to attempt to integrate them. To illustrate this, I sketch an explanation which shows how, in South Africa, the negative consequences of intercultural communication (as revealed by interactional studies) combine with larger structural forces (which are the concern of macro-studies) and with individual sources of prejudice (which are the concern of studies of the psychology of individuals) to achieve a negative self-reinforcing cycle of discrimination. I also argue that such an explanation suggests that the most effective solution to the problem of discrimination will be one which takes into account the structural, individual and interactional sources of discrimination rather than one.

Finally, in chapter 7, proposals are made for courses based on interactional sociolinguistics which have as their goal



the reducing of discrimination by improving the quality of intercultural communication. Such courses, I suggest, will be effective where structural reform has occurred, and where the individuals involved are less, or have been assisted to be less prejudice-prone.

## 2.0 THE INTERACTIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTS' TREATMENT OF CONTEXT

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

As a first step in exploring the potential of interactional sociolinguistics to make a major contribution to a better understanding of the relationship between language and social context, I argue in chapter 1 that interactional sociolinguistics is able to make this contribution principally because it is informed by a methodology which represents a major break with positivistic thinking. While acknowledging that a number of sociolinguistic studies which are informed by positivistic thinking do address the issue of the relationship between language and context, I argue that, because of the inherent limitations of positivistic methodology, the account given in them needs to be supplemented by interactional sociolinguistic studies.

In this chapter I explore further the unique contribution of interactional sociolinguistics to the understanding of the relationship between language and context, by comparing interactional sociolinguistic studies of the relationship with studies which are informed by positivistic thinking.

The group of studies which are most obviously influenced by positivistic thinking, are those belonging to what has come to be referred to as macro-sociolinguistics, and which, as I explained in chapter 1 (see pages 29-31), use quantitative methods to correlate variation in language with such features (variables) of large scale (macro-cosmic) social settings as class, gender, ethnicity, and so on. Interactional sociolinguistic studies differ from these studies not only in respect of methodology and methods (see page 108 for the distinction between these terms), but also in respect of the scale of the context that they are concerned with. Whereas macro-sociolinguists are concerned with the relationship between language and large-scale social structure, interactional sociolinguists are concerned with the relationship between language and context in the sense of small-scale (micro-cosmic) conversational settings; with how participants' interpretations of intent, and evaluation of ability and motive, at any stage of a conversation, depend on the speech setting, the meanings of the other parts of the conversation, and the backgrounds of the participants.

However, not all studies of micro-contexts can be accurately labelled as interactional sociolinguistic studies, since, although directly or indirectly most have influenced interactional sociolinguistics, many are clearly informed by positivistic thinking. Moreover, a neat categorization of studies into those that are informed by a positivistic interpretation of science and those informed by the

humanistic interpretation of science outlined in chapter 1, would be a gross oversimplification, since even within what have become fairly clearly defined approaches to the study of micro-settings, such as ethnomethodology or speech act theory, one finds studies of both kinds. It is, incidentally a typical analytic strategy of positivists to categorize reality into two (idealized) opposing categories e.g. synchrony/diachrony; competence/performance; deep structure/surface structure and so on. The humanistic alternative view is that reality is a continuum and that our categorization of it is relatively arbitrary, and may, therefore, constitute a distortion of that reality. (I am indebted to August Cluver -personal communication- for this insight.)

In the review which follows, I order these various approaches so as to reflect what I see as a continuum between, at the one pole, approaches that are strongly influenced by positivistic thinking, and, at the other pole, those that are little, or not at all influenced by positivistic thinking. No attempt is made to give an exhaustive account all approaches to the study of micro contexts, the ones selected being those that have contributed directly or indirectly to interactional sociolinguistics. A significant omission in this respect is the ethnomethodological approach. As noted on page 121, in arguing for an alternative to positivistic approaches, the ethnomethodologists made an early and significant contribution to interactional sociolinguistics. This approach

is not reviewed only because the contribution of ethnomethodologists is dealt with at some length in chapter 3. In the review I sketch some of the distinctive features of these different approaches, and highlight those features which are of particular relevance to the analyses of intercultural encounters reported on in chapters 4 and 5. I then attempt to sum up what this survey reveals of why interactional sociolinguistics is able to contribute more fruitfully to the understanding of the relationship between language and context than positivistically informed studies of micro-settings, and what unique insights are offered by interactional sociolinguistics.

## 2.2 DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF MICRO-CONTEXTS

### 2.2.1 ANALYSIS OF SPEECH EVENTS

An approach to the study of micro-settings which, I argue, is strongly influenced by positivist thinking, is that concerned with the analysis of speech events. It has its home in anthropology, or, more specifically, the "new ethnography" (ethnoscience, ethnosemantics) in which cultures are viewed as systems of knowledge. An adequate ethnography in these terms is a cultural "grammar" which will "properly specify what it is that a stranger to a society will have to know in order appropriately to perform any role in any scene staged by the society" (Frake 1972:87).

Scholars such as Hymes have recognized that an important part of this knowledge is how to communicate appropriately, and that knowledge of how to communicate extends beyond the grammatical (linguistic) competence that linguists following the lead of Chomsky have focussed on, namely the knowledge that underlies the ability to produce and understand any and all the sentences of a language. As a first step towards the goal of characterizing this knowledge, Hymes (1974:34) calls for taxonomies of speaking and descriptions of ways of speaking in a wide range of speech communities. The latter he sees as serving the dual purpose of supporting and testing the adequacy of the taxonomies and of supplementing the data of traditional grammatical description by specifying the socio-cultural, contextual knowledge that members of a culture require in order to be able to contribute appropriately to particular communication events.

To understand what Hymes means by communication or speech events, it is necessary to examine the relationship which he sees as existing between the notions of speech situation, speech events and speech acts. Speech situations, according to Hymes, are contexts of situation such as ceremonies, fights, hunts, meals, and so on, which may comprise both verbal and non-verbal events. As Downes (1984:256) helpfully observes, such a situation is more abstract than the actual physical setting; it "is a recurring institution in a society, a 'form of life', in which actions are intelligible

and meaningful". A speech event, such as an interview, a lecture or an argument is also a social institution, but one which constrains the interpretation of the verbal actions of the participants only. As Hymes (1972a:52) expresses this, the term is "restricted to activities, or aspects of activities, that are directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech". To complete the account of the hierarchical relationship between situation, event and act, he explains that speech events consist of one or more speech acts. Thus at a party (speech situation) a conversation (speech event) may take place in which a joke (speech act) is told.

As a means of formulating rules of speaking which will characterize the contextual knowledge a speaker requires in order to choose appropriate language for specific speech events in a culture, Hymes proposes a taxonomy of general (what may eventually be shown to be universal) contextual features or variables. For mnemonic convenience, he groups these variables under the headings that begin with the letters of the term SPEAKING. To briefly summarize, these are:

Setting and Scene. Setting refers to the concrete physical circumstances in which a speech act takes place (i.e. the time and place) while scene refers to the abstract psychological situation; to the recurring social institutions such as "a date" or "a seminar" referred to above.

Participants. Other information relevant to the appropriate performance and interpretation of a speech act, is to whom the act is addressed, and who utters it, and what communication roles are assigned to each within the particular culture.

Ends refer to two aspects of purpose, namely, the conventionally recognised and expected outcomes of an exchange of speech acts, as well as the personal goals that the participants seek to accomplish in it. Thus, for example, the expected outcome of a medical consultation is a diagnosis, but within it doctor, patient and any other participant will have different personal goals.

Act sequence refers to the form and content of the message: to the topics and "ways of speaking" (e.g. marked rhythm, use of specialist vocabulary and so on) which are conventional in certain speech events (e.g. a cocktail party, a lecture, an interview and so on).

Key refers to the tone, manner or spirit in which the act is done i.e. whether mocking, serious, precise, pedantic and so on.

Instrumentalities refers to the channels (whether spoken, written, read aloud, chanted, sung and so on) and to forms or varieties (language, dialect, register) chosen.

Norms of interaction and interpretation. Norms of interaction refer to conventional ways of interacting in specific events, such as norms for turn taking, loudness and so on. Norms of interpretation refer to the interpretation that would normally be expected for the speech event taking



place.

Genres refer to utterances which can be clearly distinguished from "unmarked" casual speech by the high frequency of characteristic formal markers, such as one finds in a poem, advertisement, sermon, proverb and so on.

As is evident from this brief summary, Hymes, in attempting to find a solution to the problem of accounting for the relationship between language and context in a descriptively adequate way (i.e. by means of methods which are empirical and objective), adopts what, despite the lower level of idealization of data, is still a typically positivistic solution. From the infinitely large range of contextual features which may be relevant, he abstracts out those features which are putatively general (universal?); features which enter into the specification of communicative competence. Contextual features not captured by the grid of his taxonomy, such as those which are negotiated by the participants as they interact (see 2.2.5) are presumably matters of communicative performance and, thereby, excluded from his description. Moreover, no attempt is made to include the participants' perspectives (see page 35). The features he identifies are analyst's categories and represent information participants might draw on in making sense of one another's utterances rather than what they do draw on in actual situations of use. This is acknowledged by Hymes (1974:65) who argues as follows:

Ultimately the functions served in speech must be

derived directly from the purposes and needs of human persons engaged in social action, and are what they are : talking to seduce, to stay awake, to avoid a war. The formal analysis of speaking is a means to the understanding of human purposes and needs, and their satisfaction: it is an indispensable means, but only a means, and not that understanding itself.

The positivistic orientation is evident also in the resemblance between the accounts of the relationship between language and micro contexts provided by ethnographers of speaking and the probabilistic explanations of the relationship between language and macro contexts offered by macrosociolinguists (see pages 29-31), a resemblance commented on by Gumperz (1982a:155):

They tend to see speech events as bounded units, functioning somewhat like miniature social systems where norms and values constitute independent variables, separate from language proper. The task of sociolinguistic analysis in this view, is to specify the interrelationship of such variables in events characteristic of particular social groups...The principal goal is to show how social norms affect the use and distribution of communicative resources, not deal with interpretation.

Another way of putting this is that the analysis of speech events, like other positivistically orientated research is concerned with facts rather than action (see page 34).

Ethnographers of speaking attempt to specify WHAT contextual information is relevant to the formulation of rules of speaking. These rules explain WHY utterances take on the value of (are interpreted as) certain speech acts which together constitute the speech event in question. They do not, however, attempt to answer HOW questions i.e. they do not attempt to identify the interactional mechanisms by means of which contextual information enters into interpretation as the interaction unfolds in real time. They do not deal with the question of how participants are able to recognize what speech event is involved and when a boundary between one speech event and another has been reached. Context is presented as historically-given rather than as interactionally-constituted, and as static rather than dynamic.

### 2.2.2 ANALYSIS OF SPEECH ACTS

An approach to the study of micro-settings which does deal directly with interpretation, but which, nevertheless, tends to be almost equally positivistic in orientation, is the analysis of speech acts carried out by philosophers, linguists and others working within the area of pragmatics.

Speech act theory had its origins in the philosophic writings of Wittgenstein and Austin who questioned the assumption widely held by linguists and natural language philosophers

that the basic function of language is to convey propositional meaning i.e. "the context-independent, invariant meaning expressed in a sentence" (Brown and Yule 1983:107) which corresponds to what one has to know about the world to know whether what is expressed by the proposition is true or false. They argue that the meaning of an utterance often derives from its use; from what it does. From this kernel idea has developed the notion of speech act.

Austin (1962) suggests that in producing an utterance a speaker is simultaneously performing three acts:

(a) a locutionary act which is the act of saying something; of producing a meaningful utterance;

(b) an illocutionary act which has to do with the intent of the speaker e.g. a directive where the intention or illocutionary point is to get the hearer to do something;

(c) a perlocutionary act which is the act performed when the utterance affects the behaviour, beliefs, feelings, attitudes of the hearer. The effects may be intentional or unintentional. Thus a hearer may supply the perlocutionary uptake (the intended effect) of a directive (the illocutionary act) by doing what the speaker wants him to do, but he may instead ignore the directive or do or say something quite different.

As Downes (1984:309-310) explains, the "concepts of illocutionary and perlocutionary force jointly describe two

related parts of the overall intentionality of verbal action". However, in accounting for how speech acts are interpreted, speech act theorists have tended to focus on illocutionary acts.

Searle (1969,1976) proposes a taxonomy of speech act types and specifies rules for the performance of these acts, which take the form of a set of conditions which are necessary and sufficient for particular acts to be performed by an utterance. These correspond to the rules of speaking Hymes (see page 46) refers to. The conditions which have to be satisfied in the context if an utterance is to count, for example, as a request, are that the speaker sincerely wants the hearer to perform the intended perlocutionary act (sincerity condition); that the hearer is able to perform that act and that s/he would not do it in the normal course of events (preparatory conditions); that the act must be a future act of the hearer (propositional content condition); and that the utterance counts as an attempt to get the hearer to perform that act (essential condition). Take, for example, the utterance:

Please close the door.

A hearer who, guided by such explicit linguistic cues to illocutionary force as the politeness form and the imperative mood, suspects that the speaker intends a request, would be able to accomplish the task of interpretation by checking the context to see whether, in it, the conditions for the act

are met. Thus, for example, if the hearer is unable to carry out the perlocutory act because the door is already closed (preparatory condition), all the necessary conditions cannot be said to have been met for the utterance to count as a request.

What this account does not explain is how the hearer would be able to interpret the utterance "Please close the door" if the linguistic form (politeness form and mood) was not a reliable guide to its illocutionary force. Scholars working in this field have recognized that there is frequently not a one-to-one relationship between linguistic form and illocutionary force of utterances. To take the example of grammatical mood, while one of the most explicit ways for speakers to signal that their utterances are directives, is to use the imperative mood (e.g. "Close your desks"), it is possible for them, also, to use interrogative and declarative moods (e.g. "Could you close your desks?"; "Your desks are still open."). By the same token, a particular mood can be used in the performance of a wide range of speech act types. For example, the declarative mood can be used in the performance of:

declaratives (speech acts which bring about changes in the world through their successful execution) e.g. "I resign.";

representatives (speech acts which express how things are) e.g. "It's raining outside.";

directives (speech acts whose illocutionary point is to get people to do something) e.g. "Your desks are still closed.";

commissives (speech acts whose illocutionary point is to commit the speaker to some future act) e.g. "I will do my homework."; and so on.

In attempting to answer the question of how a hearer is able to interpret what was intended by the speaker when the linguistic form of the utterance does not signal unambiguously its illocutionary force, Searle (1975) argues that many utterances have two kinds of illocutionary force. He gives as an example the utterance:

I have to study for an exam.

This utterance contains the illocutionary force indicator (declarative mood) of a statement, but which, as a response to the utterance: "Let's go to the movies tonight." may mean not just a statement, but also a refusal. Such cases where one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another, he refers to as indirect speech acts. Searle argues, further, that the starting point for the interpretation of indirect speech acts is the literal meaning of the utterance as signalled by explicit, formal illocutionary indicators such as mood. In the manner outlined above, the hearer can check the context to see whether in it the conditions for the act to count as a question are met. Finally, to explain how the hearer moves from the interpretation of the direct speech act to the interpretation of the indirect speech act, Searle makes use of the notion of

the co-operative principle and its maxims expounded by Grice (1975).

Grice explains that conversation is possible because participants are able to assume of one another that they are obeying the co-operative principle which he expresses as follows: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (1975:45). He also lists four maxims which according to Brown and Yule (1983:101) underlie the efficient and effective use of language and jointly express the co-operative principle. These are:

QUANTITY: don't provide more or less information than is required for the current purposes of the exchange.

QUALITY: make your contribution on that is true.

RELATION: make your contributions relevant.

MANNER: be clear (brief, orderly and unambiguous).

As Downes (1984:318) paraphrases the explanation provided by Grice: "when we engage in a conversation with someone, we can assume that they are co-operating to sustain our joint activity: more specifically, that they are trying to follow these maxims".

To pursue this explanation further, we can examine the following example provided by Grice (1975:51):

A: I am out of petrol.

B: There is a garage around the corner.



On the assumption that B is behaving consistently with the maxim of relation, A is able to interpret B's utterance as inferring that the garage is open and has petrol to sell. Such an inference he terms a conversational implicature, which can be defined as "an inference generated in the conversation in order to preserve the assumption that participants are obeying the maxims".

Grice notes, also, (and this is where his explanation ties up with that of Searle) that speakers sometimes deliberately violate or "exploit" maxims in order to signal what Searle refers to as indirect speech acts. Grice (1975:52) supplies, as an example of exploiting the maxim of quantity, the following referee report on an applicant, who is the writer's pupil, for a philosophy job: "Dear Sir, Mr X's command of English is excellent and his attendance at tutorials has been regular". He explains that the relevant conversational implicature is arrived at by moving through a number of steps in a reasoning process. The reader reasons as follows:

The writer cannot be opting out, since if he wished to be uncooperative, why write at all? He cannot be unable, through ignorance, to say more, since the man is his pupil; moreover, he knows more information than this is wanted. He must, therefore, be wishing to impart information that he is reluctant to write down. This supposition is tenable only on the assumption that he thinks Mr X is no good at philosophy. This, then, is what he is implicating.

As with Searle, the starting point for the interpretation is the literal meaning of the utterance.

In similar vein, Searle (1975:63) explains that a hearer would assume in relation to the "I have to study for an exam." utterance (see page 54), that the speaker is exploiting the maxim of relevance. A relevant response to an invitation is an acceptance, a rejection, a counterproposal or further discussion, and since the speaker's literal meaning is not one of those, the hearer would infer that the speaker's primary illocutionary point is different from his literal one. Further inferential work would allow him to go from this step to the conclusion that the illocutionary point of the utterance is a rejection of the proposal.

Of particular relevance to the research reported on in this thesis, is research which focuses on the issue of universality in the realization of speech acts; which attempts to determine the degree to which rules that govern the use of language in context vary from culture to culture and language to language. Because differences in such pragmatic rules are seen as a source of miscommunication in intercultural communication, this research is sometimes referred to as studies of pragmatic failure (see for example Thomas 1984).

Probably the most ambitious of these studies (one that is still in progress) is the Cross-Cultural Speech Act

Realization Project (CCSARP). Blum-Kulke & Olshtain (1984:196) sum up the goals of this project as follows:

The goals of the project are to compare across languages the realization patterns of two speech acts -requests and apologies- and to establish the similarities and differences between native and non-native speakers' realization patterns in these two acts in each of the languages studied within the project.

For each of eight languages and varieties data have been collected from 200 native and 200 non-native speakers (comprizing equal numbers of male and female second and third year university students) by means of what they term a discourse completion test. This consists of a number of incomplete discourse sequences. Each consists of a description of the particular context including the setting, the specification of the relative social distance between the participants and their status relative to one another, and an incomplete dialogue. In each case, the informants are required to complete the dialogue, thus supplying the speech act aimed at in the given context.

Thereafter the responses are coded according to a coding scheme, the dimensions of which are, putatively, universal. In the case of requests, for example, each reponse sequence is first analysed into three segments: a) address term(s); b) head act; adjunct(s) to the head act e.g. Pardon me (address term), but could you give me a lift (head act), if you're

going my way, as I just missed the bus and there isn't another one for an hour (adjuncts to the head act). Then each segment is coded in terms of the choice(s) made from the options available for the realization of that segment of the speech act. For example, it is hypothesized that, universally, language users intending to request are able to choose from a finite set of nine conventional strategies which are realized in linguistically fixed ways. These range along a continuum between the poles of most direct and most indirect strategies. Since all requests are face threatening, interfering as they do with the freedom of the hearer (see 2.2.3. on the analysis of politeness behaviours), the speaker is able to minimize the imposition involved in the act by choosing an indirect rather than direct strategy, as does the speaker in the example above in choosing a strategy which refers to preparatory conditions (ability or willingness, the possibility of the act being performed: "could you"). Amongst the options open to speakers in the adjuncts to the head act segment, is the use, again in the example above, of the category of "cost minimizer" (if you're going my way) in which the speaker attempts to minimize the sense of imposition by indicating consideration of the "cost" to the hearer involved in compliance with the request, and the category of "grounder" (as I've just missed) in which the speaker indicates the reason for the request.

The researchers are hopeful that their analysis, when complete, will be very revealing about the degree and nature

of intercultural variance in speech act realization. For example, in the case of requests, the distribution of request strategy types for the situations described in the test should enable the researchers to determine general cultural preferences for directness/indirectness. Then too, by comparing choice of strategies cross-linguistically within identically defined contexts, it should be possible to see how such social factors as power and distance differentially constrain the choice of strategies by native speakers of each language group. It is such differences which they see as sources of second language user's pragmatic failures.

This brief overview of the contribution of certain scholars to speech act analysis is sufficiently representative to permit some generalizations about the extent to which speech act analysis reflects a positivist orientation. Significantly, Downes (1984:340) distinguishes speech act analysis from macro-sociolinguistics by explaining that whereas the latter provides a causal explanation, the former provides a teleological explanation of the relationship between language and context. Such explanations differ from causal ones in that, whereas in the former we say "This happened, because that had occurred", in the latter we say "This happened in order that that should occur" (von Wright cited by Downes 1984:341). In other words, the explanation of actions are in terms of the agent's intention or goal in acting. Downes explains, further, that the connection between the mental state (intention, goal) of the actor and the act

is not causal but inferential. The analyst constructs an explanation by reconstructing the agent's reasoning.

Insofar as teleological explanations readily accommodate the subjective and intentional in human social behaviour, they have been presented as alternatives to explanations modelled on those developed in the natural sciences. However, an examination of the methods employed by speech act theorists reveals that they are considerably influenced by positivistic thinking. Of particular significance is the high degree of idealization evident in their work. Searle not only acknowledges this by arguing "that an adequate study of speech acts is a study of langue" (1969:17) but defends this way of proceeding by using the classic positivist argument that precedent is to be found for this in the natural sciences:

This method, one of constructing idealized models, is analogous to the sort of theory construction that goes on in most sciences, e.g., the construction of economic models, or accounts of the solar system which treat planets as points. Without abstraction and idealization there is no systemization. (Searle 1969:56)

Such idealization is evident, also, in the emphasis in speech act theory on illocutionary rather than perlocutionary acts. By largely ignoring perlocutionary acts, speech act theorists greatly decrease the complexity of the task of explanation, because, whereas "the act the speaker intended to perform

ought to be decidable on the assumption that speakers usually want their hearers to understand the 'point' of what they say" (Downes 1984:310), the perlocutionary effects of the act are unpredictable. In the process, however, they give a distorted idea of how interpretation is accomplished. They give the fallacious impression that speakers compose messages independantly of hearers, and that these messages are decoded in such a way that speaker's intended meaning is recovered without transformation or modification of the hearer. What is ignored is that, because speakers and hearers are not always mutually aware of the relevant contextual factors, or perceive them in the same way, actual perlocutionary effect is often quite different from intended effect. As Franck (1981:227) explains, "the analysis of 'real life' communication shows - even if cases of misunderstanding or partial misunderstanding are excluded - that the interactional meaning of the contributions to conversation is to some extent subject to mutual negotiation".

Further evidence of idealization is the preference for decontextualized, often self-constructed data, rather than extended real-life discourse. This, too, has the effect of reducing the complexity of the task of explanation. As Michaels and Reier (1981:179) point out, it means that speech act theorists are not obliged to explain such complexities as how it is possible for participants (in terms of the cooperative principle) to be mutually aware of the goals and directions of the conversation despite the fact that these

vary not merely from conversation to conversation, but from moment to moment within a single conversation. Mutual awareness and consensus about goals and direction of the conversation are presented as somehow pre-existing rather than in the process of being negotiated.

This is evident, for example, in the method of data collection employed in the Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) outlined above. The discourse-completion test employed, by its very nature, cannot capture the effects of the participants' often differing and usually constantly changing perceptions of the context. Nor can it capture the decisive effect that prosody and non-verbal behaviour can have on how acts are realized. Not least, it cannot capture the cumulative effect of mismatches in culture-specific discourse conventions over time on the quality of communication. Thus a difference that, at the beginning of an intercultural encounter, may occasion merely slight puzzlement and be a spur to further negotiation of meaning, may be, after a prolonged period of mutually stressful interactional "stumbling", the source of major pragmatic failure. Indeed the CCSARP study is more concerned with competence than performance data. It attempts to establish what informants feel to be the norm rather than what they actually say in real contexts of use. While it may reasonably be assumed that there is a relationship between perceived norms and actual behaviour, perceived norms may or may not coincide with actual behaviour in particular



situations.

Idealization is also evident in the way speech act theorists, while acknowledging the role of contextual information in interpretation, present it as something of marginal importance which is appealed to retrospectively, and then only when something has "gone wrong", as in the case of indirectness or vagueness. Utterances with vague, implicit or indexical (dependant on context for full explication) meanings are seen as exceptions rather than the rule, and use is made of such devices as maxims to show that their interpretation derives from their literal, explicit meanings.

The hypothesis that the interpretation of indirect acts derives from the literal meanings of utterances has been challenged by a number of scholars. Levinson (1981:481), for example, offers the following sentence as a counter-example to the claim that indirect sentences retain their literal illocutionary force:

May I remind you that your account is overdue.

As he explains, this sentence "cannot possibly function as a request for permission to remind, since reminding is done in uttering the sentence without such permission being granted. Dore and McDermott (1982), using an interactional sociolinguistic approach to utterance interpretation, are able to show how a particular utterance in a classroom

exchange comes to take on the meaning for the participants of a hedged denial of its literal meaning. Relevant contextual information is that the utterance is made by Rosa, a pupil who is far behind her peers in learning to read; that she frequently uses various ploys to hide her performance, such as looking away at turn-relevant moments, calling out for a turn at wrong times or using wrong words to secure a turn; and that the teacher and other pupils frequently cooperate with these ploys by, for example, offering help, asking easier questions and arranging conditions under which Rosa's contributions are useful. The utterance in question, "I could read it", was made by Rosa at a time when another pupil had started to read, and when the group as a whole was faced with confusion about what they were doing together. By attending to Rosa's utterance, but not responding to it, and moving on to listening to the reader, the rest of the group complete the negotiation of the context, in terms of which Rosa's utterance is interpreted by the participants as having the value of a confirmation that someone has started to read. Clearly what facilitates interpretation here, is not the literal meaning of the utterance, but such contextual factors as the attention of the participants to the on-going action, and their shared knowledge of the usual sequence of events and social roles in these events.

The notion that utterances with vague, implicit, indirect or indexical meanings are exceptions has also been challenged. Gumperz (1980:119) argues that "we must assume that all

interpretations of communicative intent are ultimately indirect", and that the interpretation of even the most simple, apparently transparent utterance has to be sensitive to context. Franck (1981:232), too, argues that the analysis of natural interactive language use reveals that vagueness is "an essential quality of linguistic expression, and indexicality is the rule, not the exception".

Further evidence of positivistic thinking is that, as with the analysis of speech events (see 2.2.1), the analysis of speech acts offers an analyst's rather than a participant's perspective. Speech act theory is concerned with the potential meaning of utterances and does not specify the actual interpretations to which the participant's are orientated.

### 2.2.3 ANALYSIS OF POLITENESS BEHAVIOURS IN MICRO SETTINGS

Research which draws heavily on speech act theory, but which is, nevertheless, less positivistic in orientation, is that concerned with the potential face threat of acts of communication and the politeness strategies which allow speakers to produce these acts with lesser or greater risk of face loss. By face, here, is meant the image of him/herself a person projects and seeks to maintain in public. Thus, for example, the act of rejecting an invitation may threaten the face of the person who did the inviting, but the extent of the threat will depend on whether a high risk strategy, such

as where the refusal is stated baldly ( No, I don't want to go.) or a lower risk strategy is used (Gosh, that would be great, but I really have to...).

Scholars such as R. Lakoff (1973; 1979), Brown and Levinson (1978), and Scollon and Scollon (1982; 1983) specify the range of politeness strategies (styles, modes) available to speakers, and how these are realized linguistically. They also identify the contextual factors which constrain the choice of one strategy rather than another in any exchange i.e. which determine which of the strategies is appropriate in any particular context. Of particular significance to the analyses reported on in chapters 4 and 5, they attempt to identify what is universal and what culture-specific about face and politeness behaviours.

Whereas speech act theorists tend to see utterances with implicit, indexical meanings as exceptions, these scholars see them as the rule. They recognize that participants in interactions are usually as concerned with producing utterances which are in keeping with the relationships with their interlocutors, as with communicating information clearly and unambiguously. In other words, in addition to ideational content, their messages signal their definition of that aspect of the context concerned with social roles, including respective rights and obligations. This corresponds to the contextual variable in Hymes's taxonomy termed "participants" (see page 46).

They explain that speakers are constantly concerned with reconciling the basic need, on the one hand, to express their own individuality (get the floor, get their own agenda attended to, protect themselves from being imposed upon by other people's ideas or actions) and, on the other hand, the equally basic need to be an accepted, appreciated member of a social group. The need to show that one is an individual distinguishable from the group, they term need for negative face, while the need to belong to the social world, need for positive face. The reconciling of individual and social needs is difficult to achieve. For example, a person who is overly concerned with his negative face needs may impose his own will or point of view, but at the expense of his acceptance and appreciation by the group (at the expense of his positive face) e.g. he may find that his jokes are not laughed at, or that the topic he raises is not built upon by the other participants. By the same token, a person overly concerned with his positive face needs may gain acceptance but find himself being imposed upon (losing negative face) e.g. constantly getting interrupted, having people meddle in his private affairs, challenging his way of thinking or doing things, and so on). As this example shows, what makes the task of reconciling negative and positive face needs especially difficult for a participant, is that s/he has to achieve this, by playing off his/her own needs against those of the other participants. In other words, freedom of action and acceptance cannot be unilaterally accomplished, and

depend on the cooperation of others who also have face needs. That face loss does not occur more often, can be ascribed to the politeness systems, the rules and strategies of which these scholars seek to describe.

Building on insights provided by speech event and speech act analysis, Lakoff (1973) postulates that there are two sets of pragmatic rules (or rules for appropriate use) which interlocutors adhere to when communicating, in addition to the syntactic or semantic rules which linguists have principally concerned themselves with, namely:

A. Clarity (or conversational) rules

B. Politeness rules

Set A, she says correspond to Grice's conversational maxims, and argues that the reason these maxims are more often honoured in the breach than the observance (the reason speakers appear to hide their intentions) is that in most conversational situations it is considered preferable to avoid offence (to strengthen social relationships) than achieve clarity: that when there is a clash between A rules and B rules, B take preference. The second set of rules she describes as follows:

1. Don't impose. This rule is seen in operation in requests for permission before asking personal questions (May I ask how much you paid for..?), use of passives (Dinner is served) or impersonal expressions (the authorial 'we'), and the use of technical terms for taboo subjects like sex, elimination or economic difficulties (copulation, defecation and

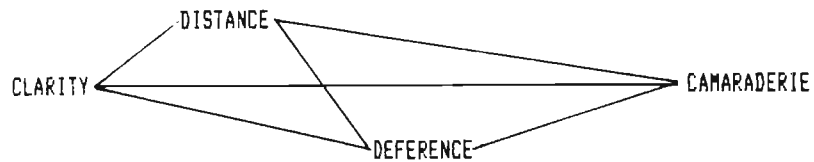
disadvantage).

2. Give options. This rule is seen in operation in the use of "hedges" (sort of, kind of, roughly) in which the hearer is left with the option of not interpreting what is said as a taboo topic, and expressions such as: "It's time to leave isn't it?" where the speaker is not uncertain but chooses not to assert him/herself for fear of offending the hearer.

3. Make your addressee feel good/ wanted/ like a friend. This rule is seen in operation in the use of expressions which make the addressee feel a more active participant, such as "like", "y'know", "I mean", the giving of compliments and the use of simple forms of unmentionable words.

Lackoff explains, further, that clarity or conversational rules (set A) can be seen as a sub-case of the first of the politeness rules since, in communicating as clearly as possible, one is avoiding imposing on one's addressee. This suggests that all utterances, and not just some, have a politeness dimension i.e. are more or less face threatening.

Continuing her investigation of politeness phenomena, Lakoff (1979) distinguishes four modes of presentation of self (faces) or interactional styles. These modes and their inter-relationships she presents schematically as follows:



Each mode of presenting self names the kind of relationship between the participants which is signalled by the speaker in choosing the forms (lexical, syntactic) associated with the mode or style. The ordering of the modes in the diagram is to be interpreted as a continuum which "represents, from left to right, an increasing awareness of the addressee's presence as explicitly manifested by the speaker" (Lakoff 1979:63). The connecting lines indicate that, in addition to being used in isolation, these strategies can be used in combination.

In adopting the clarity mode, speakers focus on the message rather than the relationships with their interlocutors. It is the style of classroom lectures and news broadcasts, and is consistent with Gricean maxims. She observes, interestingly, that clarity is often seen as an ideal style by many in North American culture, as is evident from the many letters to the press deploring the inability of people to write or speak clearly.

In adopting the distance mode speakers focus on the relationship with their interlocutors and signal that this is a remote one. The forms associated with this mode are



technical terminology, formal polite language and pedantically correct grammar and diction. It is the style of politicians, bureaucrats or academics delivering papers.

In adopting the deference mode speakers again focus on relationships, in this case by adhering to the first two of the politeness rules of Lakoff's earlier paper: don't impose - give options. The speaker implies that the interpretation and outcome of the interaction is in the hands of the hearer. Forms associated with this style include hedges: "He's pretty ruthless I guess", where the speaker defers to a possible different opinion by hedging his emphatic assertion with the tentative "I guess". Lakoff (1979:65) explains why the use of this mode often leads to friction between the participants. While deference seems to offer choice, it in fact retains power, as is evident from the speaker's ability to offer freedom. Thus the hearer often feels trapped since the alternatives of overt offer and covert injunction appear equally risky.

Whereas deference is related to the first two of the politeness rules of the earlier paper, camaraderie is related to the third, namely: make your addressee feel good/wanted/ like a friend. A difference in this paper, however, is that she includes, as a means of conveying this style, all direct expressions and not just those which convey goodwill. As Lakoff (1979:65) expresses this, "camaraderie, necessitating as it does direct confrontation, is the

modality least in accord with what we usually think of as 'politeness'. For camaraderie explicitly acknowledges that a relationship exists and is important, whether one of friendliness or of hostility."

Of particular significance to the research reported on in chapters 4 and 5, Lakoff uses this model to investigate differences between what she terms women and men's ideal styles in American culture and, in the process, shows how differences in the "targetted" styles of different cultural or sub-cultural groups can lead to the misinterpretation of intentions and attitudes, the misevaluation of abilities, and to the emergence and maintenance of negative stereotypes of these groups. She explains (1979:69) that each "culture has implicitly in its collective mind a concept of how a good human being should behave: a target for its members to aim at and judge themselves and others by". Thus, for example, traditionally, deference is viewed by Japanese and by American women as a target strategy, while distance/clarity is viewed as the ideal by American males. When a person knows that a particular strategy is the target for a cultural group he can interpret it as conveying conventional deference, camaraderie or distance, but if he is not aware of this he can only infer real deference, camaraderie or distance. Conventional interpretation is not available to people who do not belong to the group and, thus, misinterpretation from this source often occurs in intercultural communication i.e. outsiders tend to assume that the deference, camaraderie and

so on, is what is actually felt. An example (not provided by Lakoff) is the irritation experienced by foreign visitors to the W. U.S.A. when Americans, after treating them (as they perceive it) almost like intimate friends at first meeting, make little attempt to follow up the "friendship". Lakoff explains that American men often mistake conventional deference in women for real deference i.e. really being principally concerned with what other people want, and having their own choice of what to think and do heavily dependent on the opinion of others. She suggests that stereotypes of women as illogical, fickle or deceitful are a consequence of women failing to behave in a manner consistent with the misperception.

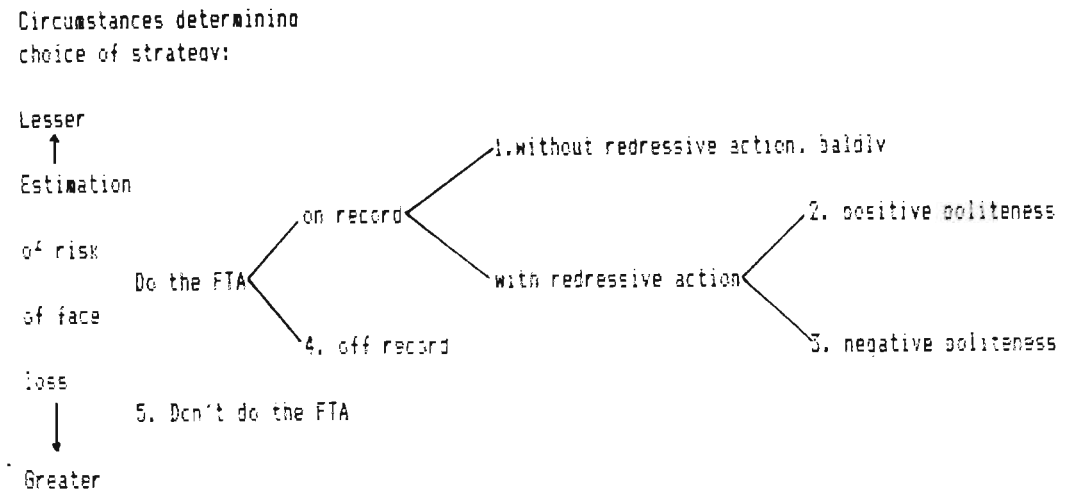
Lakoff outlines three further sources of misinterpretation and friction. She points out that, within a group, participants behave in a way consistent with the idealized target up to a certain point in a relationship, and then drop conventionalized behaviour and start behaving as they really feel. This is signalled in many cultures by the choice of address terms. What leads to misinterpretation is that different cultures differ in how long they take to drop convention. For example, Americans tend to start first naming on very short acquaintance, whereas many other cultures take much longer. Such differences contribute to stereotypes of Americans as brash and of members of the other cultures as cold and aloof.

Misinterpretation occurs, also, where the range of situations for which two or more styles seen as ideal in one culture, are covered by one in another culture. She gives as an example, the differences between American and Germanic culture where the range of situations covered partly by distance and partly by camaraderie styles in American culture are covered conventionally only by distance in Germanic culture. She hypothesizes that this difference occurs because there is greater movement in American culture than in German, and provides evidence which suggests that the targetted style for American men has been shifting in recent years from distance/clarity to camaraderie. The idea that the grammar of culturally-specific interaction styles, like linguistic grammar, must shift and that they are always in motion is an important one, and one that I return to in subsequent chapters.

A third source of misinterpretation is differences between cultures as to how particular acts are classified. She gives as an example the refusing of second helpings at meals. In one culture this may be classified as appropriate conventional deference, allowing the host to do the urging, while in another it may be considered distancing behaviour i.e. as signalling an unwillingness to be involved with the host.

Brown and Levinson's (1978) account of the role of politeness behaviours is similar. They explain that it is the balancing

of the desire to maintain face oneself, against the need to preserve the face of others, which provides motivation for a range of strategies for the presentation of self. These they represent diagrammatically as follows:



Brown and Levinson explain that speakers estimate the seriousness or weightiness (the degree of potential face loss) of each act in their culture. The more an act threatens either the speaker or the hearer's face, the higher-numbered the strategy a speaker is likely to choose. Thus if the risk were very great, he would probably choose not to encode it at all (strategy 5). If the desire to communicate a very risky act is great, he would probably choose, instead, to go off-record (strategy 4), that is, communicate indirectly e.g. "It would be great if I could afford to give the wife a Christmas present this year", which could be an indirect request for a loan. Since intention in indirect acts is ambiguous, the speaker avoids responsibility for the potentially threatening action and gains credit for being tactful and non-coercive. Where risk is a little less severe,

he would probably go on record and attempt to counteract the potential face damage by means of negative politeness (strategy 3) e.g. "I JUST want to ask you if I can borrow a LITTLE sugar" where the emphasized words convey that the speaker respects the negative face wants of the hearer and seeks to impose on him minimally. With still less risk the speaker would probably choose, instead, to redress (or counteract) potential face damage by means of positive politeness (strategy 2) e.g. "Come here HONEY" where the use of the in-group address form softens the imperative by signalling that the speaker's actions cannot be interpreted as threatening the hearer's face because, by virtue of co-membership, the speaker shares the hearer's wants values and goals. Finally, where risk of face loss is small or non-existent, the speaker would probably choose to do the act baldly, without any redressive action (strategy 1). An example is the warning: "Watch out!" which is appropriate in circumstances in which, because of the urgent need to communicate with maximum efficiency, speaker and hearer recognize that face redress is unnecessary.

These lowest numbered strategies (baldly without redressive action and positive politeness) correspond to Lakoff's clarity and camaraderie styles, and are grouped under the heading of solidarity politeness by Scollon and Scollon (1982 & 1983). They also claim (1983:170), interestingly, that volubility is a further solidarity strategy since the willingness to test and negotiate their view of the world,

which speakers display in being voluble, is an expression of the desire for positive face.

The other strategies listed by Brown and Levinson (negative politeness: off-record/indirectness: and not performing the act), which correspond to Lakoff's distance and deference styles are grouped by Scollon and Scollon under the heading of deference politeness. This grouping includes strategy 5, not performing the face threatening act, which, by contrast with volubility, reveals an unwillingness on the part of speakers to test and negotiate their view of the world.

Brown and Levinson argue that which of these strategies is chosen depends on the speaker's moment to moment calculation of the degree of risk (weightiness) involved in performing the act in question ( $W_x$ ). This the speaker does by taking into account three contextual factors, and the relationship between them, namely: social distance between the speaker and the hearer ( $D$ ); relative power of the speaker and the hearer ( $P$ ); and the ranking ( $R_x$ ) of the degree of imposition of the particular act in that culture. These factors, they claim, subsume all other relevant contextual factors e.g. occupation, status, age and so on. They express the relationship between the factors as follows:

$$W_x = P + D + R_x$$

This formula helps explain why speakers choose higher numbered strategies (deference politeness) as the seriousness of potential face loss increases. The speaker is likely to

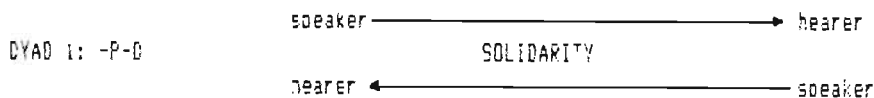
take fewer risks with people in authority (high P rating), with strangers (high D rating), and where the imposition is thought to be great in that culture (high R rating). He would not adopt a higher numbered strategy than necessary, however, because redressive action reduces the clarity of the message, and because that would signal to the hearer that the act is more of a threat than it is: that the distance, power and/or imposition are greater than they are.

Brown and Levinson also provide insight into the possible sources of miscommunication in intercultural communication. They argue that the distinctive ethos or interactional style of a cultural or sub-cultural group, whether friendly and back-slapping, formal and deferential, showy or distant and suspicious, is a reflection of the kinds of relationships that predominate in that group. The particular power (P) and distance (D) ratings consistent with these relationships determine the general level of risk (Wx) and, therefore, the kind of politeness which is preferred.

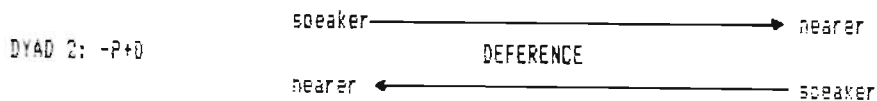
They identify three distinctive patterns of politeness strategies associated with the social dyads that predominate in different cultural groups (what Scollon and Scollon (1983) term global politeness systems). These politeness systems, Brown and Levinson (1978:256) claim, contribute to the "predominant interactional styles, which constitute a crucial part of cultural ethos". In cultures in which status differences are not emphasized (i.e. where the predominant



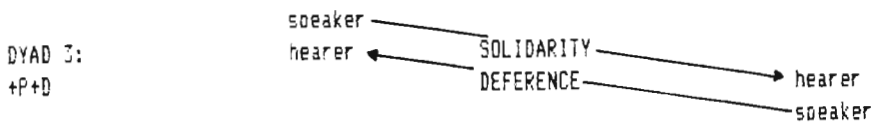
dyad is not characterized by high power (P) relations / where relations are symmetrical) speakers and hearers tend to use similar politeness strategies irrespective of who is the superior in status. the particular strategies preferred depending upon whether value is placed on distance or not. Thus, for example, in the western U.S.A., where people tend to emphasize the closeness of relationships (-D), speakers and hearers conventionally tend to prefer solidarity politeness. This sort of politeness system is represented graphically in the following diagram adapted from Brown and Levinson:



In the U.K. where maintenance of distance is more highly valued (+D), speakers and hearers tend to prefer deference politeness:



In cultures where status differences tend to be emphasised (+P) i.e. where relations are asymmetrical, the more powerful of the conversationalists tends to use solidarity politeness speaking "downwards", and the less powerful, deferential politeness "upwards":



Where participants share assumptions about P and D values (where they operate within the same global politeness system / have the same interactional styles) communication tends to be unproblematic. However, where they employ different interactional styles, confusion often ensues. Scollon and Scollon (1981:185) illustrate this by examining three cases of miscommunication. One such is where the one participant (speaker 1) assumes that symmetrical, close (-P -D) relations exist and that, therefore, reciprocal solidarity politeness is appropriate, and the other (speaker 2) assumes that asymmetrical, either close or distant relations exist, and that deference politeness up and solidarity politeness down are appropriate. In those circumstances speaker 1's solidarity politeness would be heard by speaker 2 as exerting power over him, and he would tend to respond with deference politeness. This, speaker 1 would tend to perceive as an insult to the closeness he has assumed.

Brown and Levinson stress that their account of global politeness systems is only a crude characterization of the interactional styles of different cultures, and point out that a number of variables (and not just predominant dyadic

relations) contribute to the distinctive affective quality of different styles. For example, they point to differences in the kinds of acts that are thought to be particularly face threatening in different cultures: criticisms in a shame culture; compliments in a society where envy is strong; apologies in a pride culture and offers in a debt-sensitive culture. Such differences can also be a source of miscommunication e.g. an apology which is acceptable as deference politeness in one culture may be more risky in a pride culture than imposing without redress (i.e. baldly). Another variable concerns the size of the set of persons for whom a speaker feels the need to receive positive face. Differences between groups in South Africa in this respect and the consequences of such differences for intercultural communication are referred to in chapters 4 & 5. A further variable mentioned by Scollon and Scollon (1983:176) in their discussion of the Brown and Levinson model, is degree of flexibility in social relationships. They see Americans as tending to express symmetrical solidarity relations (-P -D) in a wide range of contexts: family, lectures, public face-to-face encounters, while the British as tending to express asymmetrical relationships in family contexts, but symmetrical deference relations in public face-to-face encounters and symmetrical solidarity in public performances such as a lecture. Such differences are, for example, the source of negative stereotypes that Americans and British have of one another's family relations: the British tend to see American children as precocious and parents weak, while

American perceptions of the British are of dominating parents and submissive but potentially rebellious children.

To sum up this approach it is evident that, in some ways, the account of the relationship between language and context given by these researchers resembles the positivistically orientated accounts of speech event and speech act analysts surveyed above. Context is presented as a set of extra-linguistic variables (power, distance and so on) separate from language, fixed and pre-existing.

However, where their account does differ from those given by speech event and speech act analysts is, firstly, that context is not presented as something of marginal importance appealed to only retrospectively. They suggest that all speech acts, and not just some, have a politeness dimension, and that context constrains the speakers' choice of politeness strategies. Then, too, they present context as something which is dynamic rather than static. Not only do they see cultural groups and even individuals as differing in their assumptions about the power and distance values, but contexts defined in these terms are presented as changing over time. It follows that in many, if not most interactions, participants will not perceive the contexts in exactly the same way, and that a mutually acceptable definition of the aspect of context concerned with social roles and respective rights and obligations will need to be negotiated as the interaction unfolds i.e. context rather than merely

pre-existing as a backdrop to conversational interaction, is created through the process of communication.

However the notion of contexts being cooperatively created by the participants is not made explicit in their accounts. Also, although contexts and the targeted interactional styles associated with them are said to change with time, no attempt is made to explain how this change comes about. The notion that participants create contexts through the process of communication provides a possible answer. As participants interact they not only re-create contexts that reflect the social dvads that historicaaly predominate in their culture, but also create contexts which reflect the contexts which are becoming increasingly valued in that culture. In the process they reinforce the familiarity of these new contexts and the interactional styles associated with them. This further assures the participants of their propriety. As the ethnomethodologists would put it, the participants reflexively create the new contexts and establish what the appropriate styles are.

The limitations of their view of the relationship between language and context have as their source, once again, the idealization employed in their research. The creative, negotiative work of the participants is not evident in their data because they tend to limit their attention to individual speech acts. An exception is the research of Scollon and Scollon who examine extended discourse rather than merely

single speech acts. Brown and Levinson (1978:238) do acknowledge that "conversational understanding is achieved by reconstruction of levels of intent beyond and above and integrative of those that lie behind particular utterances or sentences". and that "consequently some strategies for face threatening act handling are describable only in terms of sequences of acts or utterances, strung together as outputs of hierarchical plans" but, other than provide a few illustrative examples, they do not attempt to build this insight into their theory.

#### 2.2.4 ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF SCHEMATA

Another area of research concerned with the relationship between language and context which is less positivistically orientated than, for example, speech event and act analyses, is that to do with the role of structures of expectation or schemata in interpretation.

The notion was first introduced by the psychologist Bartlett (1932) to explain his finding that adult's memory for narratives was characterized by inventions of new details, temporal transformations, selective omissions and so on, instead of the verbatim recall which would have been consistent with the then current notion of memory as the storage of previously perceived stimuli. Bartlett hypothesized that memory plays a constructive, dynamic role. He argued that a hearer's or reader's memory provides

structures of expectation or schemata, and that incoming information is interpreted in terms of what is already known and therefore expected. New information is integrated with existing knowledge, thus changing and adding to schemata.

Currently there is considerable interest in this notion, or in notions very similar to this one (e.g. plans, frames, scenes, scripts) in a wide range of disciplines including linguistics (Fillmore 1975, 1976, 1977; Chafe 1977a & b); Tannen 1979; Van Dijk 1977; Widdowson 1983), anthropology (Bateson 1972; Frake 1977), artificial intelligence (Shanks and Ableson 1977; Bobrow and Norman 1975; Minsky 1975). Although the accounts given by these researchers differ in many ways, as also do their research methods, as Tannen (1979:138) observes, "all these complex terms and approaches amount to the simple concept of what Ross (1975) calls 'structures of expectation', that is, that, based on one's experience of the world in a given culture (or combination of cultures), one organizes knowledge about the world and uses this knowledge to predict interpretations and relationships regarding new information, events, and experiences."

As it is beyond the scope of this survey to examine how this concept is treated in all these disciplines, I shall focus on how it is handled in linguistics, dealing, in particular, with the contributions of Fillmore and Widdowson.

Scenes and frames are key notions in preliminary

proposals Fillmore (1975, 1976, 1977) makes for an alternative theory to interpretative or truth-conditional semantics, the semantic theory associated with generativist linguistics. Fillmore's thesis is that as people learn a language they come to associate certain scenes with certain linguistic frames. He uses the term scene to refer to "not only visual scenes but also familiar kinds of interpersonal transactions, standard scenarios defined by the culture, institutional structures, enactive experiences, body image" (i.e. what bodies can do: gallop, crawl, frown and so on): and, in general, any kind of coherent segment of human beliefs, actions experiences or imaginings" (1975:124). He uses frame to refer "to any system of linguistic choices - the easiest cases being collections of words, but also including choices of grammatical rules or grammatical categories- that can get associated with prototypical instances of scenes" (1975:124). In his 1976 paper he explains that any language has both cognitive or conceptual frames and interactional frames. He supplies as an example of a cognitive frame a semantic domain connected with a commercial event. Such a frame has the form of a scenario which embraces certain conventional roles (buyer, seller, goods), certain conventional sub-events and so on. As an example of an interactional frame he refers to a greeting frame which specifies, for example, whether, in the particular language, the socially superior or inferior initiates the greeting, and what contextual conditions constrain choice of topics and expressions from the



restricted permissible set. He explains, further, that once associations between scenes and frames have been established, scenes and frames activate one another. Also frames are associated in memory with other frames because they share linguistic material, and scenes are associated with other scenes because of similarities in the entities that constitute them or because they tend to co-occur in certain contexts. Such associations facilitate interpretation as follows:

The first part of the text creates or 'activates' a kind of schematic or outline scene, with many positions left blank, so to speak; later parts of the text fill in the blanks (or some of them, anyway), introduce new scenes, combine scenes through links of history or causation or reasoning, and so on. In other words, a person, in interpreting a text, mentally creates a partially specified world; as he continues with the text, the details of this world get filled in; and in the process, expectations get set up which later on are fulfilled or thwarted, and so on. (Fillmore 1975:125).

In his 1977 paper he illustrates the role of scenes and frames in the interpretative process by examining what is involved in attempting to determine the thematic coherence of the following two texts:

I had trouble with the car yesterday. The carburetor was dirty.

I had trouble with the car yesterday. The ash-tray was dirty.

He explains that the first text is easy to interpret because

it is possible to create a larger scene by linking the car and carburetor scenes, and to access an interactional scene in terms of which the second sentence is understood as an explanation of the message given in the second. The difficulty of establishing the thematic coherence of the second text can be explained in terms of the difficulty of accessing or creating a larger scene in which the car and ashtray scenes are linked purposefully to one another.

It is evident that this account of the relationship between language and context is, in many ways, different from positivistically orientated accounts given earlier in this chapter. For example, unlike the features captured in Hymes's grid (see pages 45-47), which are analyst's categories and represent knowledge potentially available to participants, scenes and frames are participants' categories and represent knowledge that they actually make use of while interacting. Then too, whereas speech act theorists present contextual information as something of marginal importance which is appealed to only retrospectively, and then only when something has "gone wrong", Fillmore (1976:24) argues that "the process of interpreting an utterance may depend, more than we are used to thinking, on our perception of the context in which the utterance is produced and our memories of the contexts for earlier experiences with the utterance or its constituent parts". Moreover, he suggests that during the process of interpretation of all utterances (and not just those that are indirect or vague), contextual information is

appealed to prospectively as well as retrospectively.

However, Fillmore does not explicitly emphasize the dynamic nature of schemata. Also, possibly because he tends to concern himself more with the interpretation of written texts than spoken interaction, his account of their role in communication is an intrapersonal rather than an interactional one (concerned with how an individual, unilaterally, interprets rather than how participants, together, negotiate meaning in interactions). Then too, he does not consider the consequences for communication when the experiential backgrounds of the participants are very different. As a consequence, he invites confusion with positivistic accounts of context as something pre-existing, perceived by the participants in much the same way, and static i.e. not subject to negotiation in the course of interactions and not modified as a consequence of the availability of new information or experience.

The dynamic, interactive nature of schemata which is implicit in Fillmore's account is made explicit in Widdowson's account, as also are the consequences for communication in circumstances where schematic knowledge is not shared.

There is a fairly close correspondence between the explanations of schemata provided by Widdowson and Fillmore. Widdowson defines schemata as "stereotypic images which we map on to actuality in order to make sense of it, and provide

it with a coherent pattern" (1983:34). He explains that these images (which he elsewhere refers to as cognitive patterns/structures/constructs) are derived from instances of past experience, and that, in communication, they are used by participants not only to process incoming information retrospectively by relating it to familiar patterns, but also prospectively to predict what is still to come. Like Fillmore, he distinguishes between two categories of schemata:

a. the category of frames of reference which correspond to Fillmore's cognitive frames, which are derived from the participant's experience with objects, events and actions, and are, therefore, relevant to the propositional content of discourse i.e. to what is being said:

b. the category of rhetorical routines which correspond to Fillmore's interactional frames, which are derived from the participant's experience of sequences of speech acts in various speech events, and are, therefore, relevant to the illocutionary activity of discourse i.e. to what is being done.

However Widdowson avoids the misconception that schemata are static mental sets by pointing out that the use of schemata in interpretation usually involves some negotiation that often results in modification of the schemata themselves. He acknowledges that, when the schematic worlds of the participants overlap to a considerable degree, it is possible

to, as he puts it, "switch over to automatic pilot and allow oneself to be controlled by the the commonplace and routine" (1983:40). However he adds that, more often, participants have to engage in considerable negotiative work to modify and align the schemata so that they match up to one another sufficiently for participants to feel that they have reached an understanding.

To characterize this negotiative work, he refers to the role of two kinds of interpretative procedures which correspond to the two kinds of schemata referred to above, and which, together, serve to modify and adjust these schemata and create new ones during interactions. Frame procedures are those which serve to bring cognitive frames of reference sufficiently into correspondence for the participants to be able to discover the connections between the propositions and generally make sense of the propositional information expressed in the discourse. By examining texts such as the one that follows, he shows that this involves more than merely tracing the explicit cohesive links:

with this as new perspective the our here proved... (text is extremely faint and largely illegible)

He points out that, even if one were familiar with the symbolic meaning of every term used, and were able to trace the cohesive links (e.g. that the "he" in the first sentence

is the proform copy of "our hero" in the first sentence) one would be unable to make sense of it without being able to access a frame of reference which corresponds sufficiently to that triggered by the title: "Columbus discovers America". Only then can interpretative procedures be engaged to establish that the three sisters are Columbus's three ships, that the peaks and valleys are the waves of the sea and so on.

The second kind of interpretative procedures he refers to are routine procedures. These serve to project participants' rhetorical routines by bringing them into focus, and to bring differing routines sufficiently into correspondence for the participants to be able to interpret the illocutionary intents of single speech acts and of the larger routine or macro-act that these acts in combination realize. He illustrates the working of these procedures by referring to the following exchange

- A: I have two tickets for the theatre tonight.  
 B: We should go tomorrow.  
 A: Pity.

Here B's first utterance apparently activates a conventional invitation routine. Working on the assumption that A has access to this routine, she is able to interpret his utterance as an invitation rather than as the provision of gratuitous information. Because their mutual knowledge about such routines includes the information that it is conventional to respond to an invitation with an acceptance

or a refusal, and that if the latter is opted for a justification is customary, it is possible for her response to be interpreted as both a refusal and an excuse.

In this example, as with the example given of the working of frame procedures, the procedures operate covertly i.e. they are mental operations. However Widdowson points out that they may also be realized overtly through interaction between the participants. Thus, for example, the exchange between A and B might, instead, have unfolded as follows:

A: I have two tickets for the theatre tonight.  
 B: Good for you. What are you going to see?  
 A: Measure for Measure.  
 B: Interesting play. Hope you enjoy it.

Since B, in this exchange, has apparently not accessed the rhetorical routine which would allow her to interpret A's purpose as to accomplish an invitation sequence, A might attempt to negotiate a return to that purpose as follows:

A: Look are you free tonight?  
 B: I am not sure. Why?  
 A: Well, I would like to invite you to come to the theatre with me.  
 B: Well, actually, my examination is tomorrow,  
 and so on.

Of particular significance to the research reported on in chapters 4 and 5, Widdowson (1983:45) points out that procedural negotiation "can be quite protracted on occasions, as intentions miss their mark, directions go astray, and the necessary schemata are not engaged", and that this occurs very frequently in intercultural communication because the schemata of the participants are often very different. What

frequently happens is that one or other participant will decide that the interpretative effort is too great and break off the conversation, usually drawing negative conclusions about the other's intelligence or integrity.

Of significance, also, is the relationship which he sees between schemata and the politeness behaviours outlined in the previous section. Widdowson, like Fillmore (1976:26), sees participants' sets of interrelated schemata as their on-going models of the world. The implications of this are that interpretative procedures are potentially face-threatening because they attempt to achieve a convergence of schematic worlds i.e. because participants are likely to perceive attempts to change their models of the world as impositions. It is for this reason, according to Widdowson, that many of the interpretative procedures participants use "are directed at ensuring that what is said is not only accessible but also acceptable to others" (1983:47) i.e. the procedures attempt not only to affect the convergence of schemata but, also, simultaneously, offset the sense of imposition. For reasons noted above, this second function of interpretative procedures is especially problematic in intercultural communication, which helps explain why, in such communication, there is a high risk of miscommunication.

To conclude this survey I turn to an approach to the study of micro-settings which is least influenced by positivistic



thinking, which I shall refer to as analysis of interactionally constituted contexts.

### 2.2.5 ANALYSIS OF INTERACTIONALLY CONSTITUTED CONTEXTS

Scholars whose work is reviewed under this heading, see context, rather than as something already given, constant and appealed to only retrospectively in instances of "trouble", as something which is created through the process of interaction itself. Such a view of context has important implications for the overall purpose of this thesis. It suggests not only that the role of context in interpretation is of central rather than marginal importance, but, also, as Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz (1978:11) point out, that "in order to study how context enters into speakers' and listeners' judgements and performances in social situations, we have to focus upon how context is realized as part of the interaction".

Important contributions to the notion of interactionally constituted contexts have been made by McDermott and associates. A central strand in their argument is that the competence people require in order to function as competent members of a culture (including communicative competence) is more usefully conceived of as what people do together, rather than what is in people's heads. Referring to the ontological assumption of "new ethnography", namely, that cultures are

systems of knowledge (see page 44 above), McDermott and Roth (1978:333) argue as follows:

Goodenough's famous definition of ethnography as the description of what native speakers have to know in order to act in culturally appropriate ways was never meant to call for an analysis of the internal workings of native minds. The rhetoric was mentalistic, but the methods and problems tackled consistently pointed to a concern for knowledge as public displays for which natives hold each other accountable.

They observe, further, that knowledge in the head is not directly available for analysis, and argue that an adequate description of knowledge is to be accomplished by establishing not what goes on in heads but between heads.

Significantly, with this focus, the analytic task becomes one of examining the details of interaction to discover how participants set up environments or contexts for the displaying of knowledge, in terms of which they are perceived of as competent or incompetent. As Dore and McDermott observe elsewhere, by context they do not have in mind "a stable surround or environment that exists before, after and independent of an utterance, much like a soup bowl in relation to its contents. An interactional stand expresses a quite different perspective according to which behaviour is its own context, the bowl and the soup constituting each other" (1982:377).

The view of interactionally constituted contexts for the display of competence (in classrooms, tests and examinations, job or credit facility interviews and so on) has led McDermott and associates to challenge explanations of failure in individualistic, mentalistic terms. Through close examination of verbal and non-verbal behaviours in classrooms they demonstrate that success or failure of certain children making slow progress in reading, depends not on the complexity of the task, but on how all members of the particular reading group arrange conditions under which the behaviour of poor achievers is either noticed or ignored, interpreted as useful or as evidence of incompetence. They show, also, that how these conditions are arranged is a consequence of pressures put on the group. Thus they found, in the case of one of the poor readers, Adam, that whether he would hide his performances with the co-operation of the others (who would offer help, easier questions and so on) or have his reading difficulties exposed to public scrutiny, depended on how competitive the adults encouraged the children to be. McDermott and Hood argue on the basis of these studies that it is essential that "we move beyond the bias that the phenomenon of interest lies behind the eyes of the individual and that we should instead begin with the proposition that successful and unsuccessful moments in the classroom, and their patterning over time into individual biographies of gifted and disabled children, are the organized accomplishment of many persons, any one of whom is spotlighted at a time for particular kinds of intelligence

display" (1981:24).

The notions that contexts and the evaluation of participant's motives and abilities are interactionally accomplished is enlarged upon, also, by Erickson and associates. Erickson and Shultz (1981), for example, point out that the competence for creating contexts includes the ability to assess not only what the context is, but also, when it is. They explain that the contexts are embedded in time and are not only continually being adjusted from moment to moment as the participants negotiate what activity they are engaged in, and what the social relationship between them is, but continually changing. It is, therefore, usually not possible for a participant to determine the exact moment when a context has changed. A participant is able to establish when a context is by perceiving that something new is happening and inferring expectations about what will occur then. He then monitors subsequent events which either confirm or disconfirm these expectations. In other words, the competence involved in determining when a context is, includes the prospective and retrospective interpretative procedures referred to above in the discussion of the role of schemata.

Also, building upon the work of a group of kinesicists who refer to themselves as context analysts, Erickson and associates have highlighted the important role of timing in the creation of contexts. They show that participants organize their verbal and non-verbal behaviours (proxemic

configurations, postures, patterns of looking, gestures) in co-operative, reciprocal, rhythmically co-ordinated ways to inform one another what the context is in terms of which they can understand what they are doing together. This conversational synchrony is somewhat like the behaviour of ballroom dancing partners of long-standing who, confident in the mutual knowledge of the basic sequence of dance steps, and of the signals by which they inform one another of changes in direction or tempo, move in smooth harmony. As Erickson explains, this rhythmic patterning in the synchronous verbal and non-verbal behaviour of the participants enables them to judge the occurrence in real time of significant "next moments", information which they must have if they are to accomplish the process of conversational inferencing. For example, in English, tonal nuclei and other accented syllables tend to occur at evenly spaced intervals across time and at points when the speaker is introducing new informational content (i.e. what is not part of the participant's shared, or already negotiated and, therefore "old" informational content). This enables speakers to signal and listeners to anticipate when significant next moments will probably occur, such as when new information is likely to occur, when turn change is appropriate, or where an answer to a previously asked question is likely to be given.

Erickson (1978) shows how crucial this timing is to the process of conversational inferencing and, therefore, to the interpretation of intent and evaluation of ability, by

analysing interaction in a screening test involving an adult tester, the testee, a kindergarden child, Angie, and Rita, another child who has just completed the test. Rita breaks into the interaction between tester and testee and throws their mutual timing off. As a consequence, when Angie supplies the correct answer twice, but at interactionally "wrong" times (i.e. not in exactly the correct rhythmic slots), this is not heard by the tester. When Angie infers from the apparent non-acceptance of the answer, and the tester's recycling of the prompt for an answer, that her answer was incorrect, and supplies the wrong answer at the "right" time (conversational synchrony having, in the meantime been re-established), this is heard by the tester.

Of particular significance to the research reported on in chapters 4 & 5, the notion of conversational synchrony, or, more accurately, its antithesis, asynchrony, has been particularly useful in explaining why miscommunication is frequent in intercultural communication. As a great number of studies have shown (Erickson 1975, 1976, 1978; Gumperz 1982a, 1982b; Pride 1985), intercultural communication is frequently characterized by a series of asynchronous, uncomfortable, stressful moments in which the participants look, sound and feel clumsy, and often miss one another's signals because they occur at unexpected moments. Erickson, for example, found that because of differences in the ways of listening of white counsellors and black students in two junior colleges in the U.S.A., the counsellors frequently incorrectly

inferred that the students were not listening or did not understand. The subsequent reiterating of explanations, usually at a lower level of abstraction, was perceived by the students as insulting "talking down". Thus in the context of these mutually stressful, asynchronous encounters, students and counsellors ended up misevaluating one another's abilities and attitudes.

Important contributions to the analysis of interactionally constituted contexts have also been made by Gumperz and associates. As Michaels and Peir explain, according to Gumperz's theory of conversational inferencing, "participants monitor and interpret conversational exchanges from two perspectives simultaneously, relying both on general expectations about speech activities or routines as well as on the moment by moment reading of conversational cues" (1981:179). The "general expectations about speech activities" correspond to Widdowson's rhetorical routines referred to above (see page 91) namely "a culturally-specific repertory of discourse schemata for such things as narrating, debating, lecturing, discussing, chatting, or more specific routines such as getting information from someone" (Michaels and Peir 1981:179). Significantly, Gumperz (1982a:131) explains that he uses this term to emphasize that such a schema "is not a static structure, but rather reflects a dynamic process which develops and changes as the participants interact" (1982a:131). Furthermore, while these expectations channel inferences by bringing into focus

certain interpretative options and interactional moves, the participants cannot rely on them fully to interpret what they are doing together and what the meaning of their discourse is. (This recalls Widdowson's observation about not usually being able to "switch on to automatic pilot".) To move from expectations to moment to moment inferences and moves, the participants have to read conversational or, as Gumperz frequently refers to them, contextualization cues.

Contextualization cues include a range of linguistic, paralinguistic and non-verbal phenomena (code-switches, prosody, formulaic expressions, lexical and syntactic choices, routines for opening, sustaining and closing conversations, address terms, nodding, eye-gaze and so on) which are associated, as a consequence of previous co-occurrence in the participants' experience, with propositional content and particular speech activities. These cues contribute to the contextualization process (to the process of interactionally constituting, ratifying, modifying and changing the context) by enabling the participants to signal to one another what the relevant schema is, and, therefore, what activity they see themselves as engaging in together, and how what is being uttered relates to the developing theme (by signalling such things as what is given information, and what is new information, what is the main part of the message and what is subsidiary, contrasting emphasis and so on). Gumperz, Kaltman and O'Connor (1981:6) illustrate the role of contextualization cues by using



the following example:

Bill Mary Mary Bill

The contextualization cue provided by the intonation contour (together with other cues such as appropriate gestures and directions of gaze) signals that the activity the participants are engaged in is an introduction, on the basis of which hearers are able to interpret the message as a coherent whole (to trace its thematic development) by filling in information not explicitly expressed i.e. :

Bill, introduce Mary, Mary, introduce Bill.

Gumperz (1982a:131) explains that the signalling value of contextual cues depends on the participants' tacit awareness of their meaningfulness, and that, unlike the meaning of words, are seldom discussed out of context. This has important implications for the consequences of miscommunication from this source. It means that when a participant does not perceive a contextualization cue, or interprets it in an unexpected way, the difference in interpretation tends to be perceived in attitudinal rather than communication terms i.e. instead of diagnosing the problem as a mismatch in their discourse conventions, they tend to see the other person as rude, unco-operative, difficult, unfriendly and so on.

Of particular relevance to the research reported on in chapters 4 and 5, Gumperz and associates have produced evidence of culturally-specific, systematic differences in interpretative schemata and contextualization cues, and have shown these to be important sources of miscommunication in intercultural communication. They have also addressed the question of why such differences should exist, particularly in cases where participants are competent speakers of the same language and share similar grammatical intuitions. The answer they supply is that such discourse conventions "are acquired as a function of a speaker's long term interactive history as a member of a particular linguistic community and particular network of associations. Where these networks differ, as among different ethnic or social groups, conversational cueing conventions and discourse schemata differ as well" (Michaels and Reir 1981:181). Where such discourse conventions are not shared, participants find it difficult to establish what it is that they are doing together, and to co-ordinate their behaviour in reciprocal, co-operative ways e.g. they tend to interrupt one another and to fail to produce utterances which the other participant(s) consider coherent contributions to the topic or theme. Because, as noted above, this asynchrony tends to be interpreted in attitudinal terms, the participants, tend to perceive one another's intentions, attitudes, motives and abilities in very negative terms.

### 2.3 SUMMARY

As a means of further exploring the unique contribution of interactional sociolinguistics to the understanding of the relationship between language and context, this chapter, then, provides a survey of approaches to the study of the relationship between language and small-scale conversational contexts, ordered such that it represents a continuum ranging from approaches greatly influenced by positivism to those little influenced by it. It focuses on differences between approaches informed by positivistic thinking and interactional approaches informed by humanistic interpretations of science, and highlights aspects of particular relevance to the analyses of intercultural encounters reported on in chapters 4 and 5. It also contributes, further, to an understanding of why interactional sociolinguistics is able to contribute more fruitfully to the understanding of the relationship between language and context than positivistically-orientated approaches, and provides evidence of unique insights into this relationship.

Perhaps the most valuable unique insight provided by interactional sociolinguistics is that contexts for interaction, rather than independent of discourse, are interactionally constituted. Insofar as this insight suggests that, in order to get an understanding of how context enters into the interpretation of intent and evaluation of motive,

attitude and ability, one has to study the processes of contextualization (i.e. the discourse itself). It provides a very powerful argument for the study of context being considered a central rather than fringe concern of linguistics. It suggests that the boundary between linguistic and extralinguistic (contextual) phenomena is fuzzy rather than clear-cut (which is the picture given by positivistic accounts of contexts in terms of sets of social norms and values). It, moreover, provides as empirical data for the investigation of the relationship between language and context, discourse itself, data that linguists by virtue of their training are well equipped to analyse.

Allied to the notion of interactionally-constituted contexts is the insight that the role of context in interpretation is a more substantive one than is suggested by positivistically-orientated studies. The latter suggest that meaning inheres chiefly in specifiable lexical, syntactic and even discursal features of interactions, and that context is consulted only in cases of indirectness or ambiguity. By contrast, interactional sociolinguists suggest that these features merely cue contextual presuppositions, and that, in terms of the context which is realized as part of the contextualization process, all utterances and not just those that are "troublesome" are interpreted. This contribution is examined more fully in chapter 3.

Another important related insight is that contexts do not

merely pre-exist as backdrops to conversational interactions, but have to be negotiated through interaction. This does not mean that all contexts are unique. By incorporating notions of interpretative schemata in their theory, interactional sociolinguists provide an explanation of the role of memories of previous contexts. They, however, emphasize that the expectations generated by such memories merely provide guidelines or channels for the prospective and retrospective inferencing processes through which, in real time, contexts are constituted.

Further important insights are that contexts are continually being adjusted from moment to moment, and continually changing as the interactions unfold, and that timing (synchrony) is of crucial importance in the accomplishment of this task.

However, most important, from the point of view of the research reported on in this thesis, are the insights provided about the role of contextual (social and cultural) knowledge in the interpretation of intercultural communication. One such, is that the process of contextualization is difficult to accomplish in intercultural encounters because mismatches in the schematic knowledge and contextualization conventions participants rely on in interpreting, make it difficult for them to establish what speech activity they are engaged in, and to build coherently upon on one another's contributions. Other important insights

are that asynchrony tends to be perceived of in attitudinal terms, and that it tends to be interpreted in this way because the meanings of discourse conventions are, for the most part, implicit i.e. because the participants are only tacitly aware of their meaningfulness. It is on such insights, in particular, that the analyses reported on in chapters 4 and 5 build.

### 3.0 METHODS USED BY INTERACTIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTS AND WHAT THEY REVEAL ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND POWER

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I make a distinction between methods which are techniques for gathering and processing data, and methodology the task of which is to "describe and analyse these methods, throwing light on the limitations and resources, clarifying the presuppositions and consequences, relating their potentialities to the twilight zone at the frontiers of knowledge" (Kaplan 1964:23). The methodology of interactional sociolinguistics is the subject matter of chapter 1, while in chapter 2 I show what studies informed by this methodology contribute uniquely to the understanding of how socio-cultural, contextual information enters into the interpretative process.

In this chapter, I outline the methods employed by interactional sociolinguists generally, and in the research reported on in chapters 4 and 5, and discuss their limitations. Also, to further illustrate the unique contribution of interactional sociolinguistics to an adequate understanding of the relationship between language and

context. I compare interactional studies of the relationship between language and the contextual feature of power, in which interactional sociolinguistic methods have been used, with studies in which positivistic methods have been used. I focus on two linguistic phenomena which, putatively, have much to do with the exercise of power in conversation, namely, interruptions and topic control.

I also present evidence which suggests that positivistically orientated sociolinguistic studies tend to mislead in suggesting too direct a relationship, on the one hand, between cues in the form of structural regularities in the participants' utterances and the interpretations of the discourse phenomena of interruption and control of topic, and, on the other, between these discourse phenomena and the exercise of power. I use interactional sociolinguistic studies to show that participants rely more heavily on contextual information than on structural cues in determining whether they have been interrupted or not, and who controls the topic. I present evidence from these studies to show that who controls the topic and who interrupts is not always a measure of who wields power in an interaction, and that those who have power in the wider society (macro level of social life) do not necessarily display this domination at the micro level of conversational interaction through interruption and topic control.

Finally, to anticipate a topic I develop more fully in



chapter 6. I present an alternative account of the relationship between what takes place at micro and macro levels of social life to that suggested by studies in which positivist methods have been used. This alternative account builds on the findings of interactional studies. It suggests that what takes place in interactions does affect the distribution of power in the wider society, but not in the ways suggested by studies in which positivistic methods have been used.

### 3.2 METHODS EMPLOYED IN INTERACTIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTIC RESEARCH AND THEIR LIMITATIONS

Interactional sociolinguists attempt to collect authentic interactional data in natural situations. This task is fraught with difficulties. For example, people often have negative feelings about what they consider a kind of eavesdropping. This is particularly true in the case of interactions that are usually of most interest to the researchers, namely, those where one or more of the participants has something important to lose or gain depending on how the interaction unfolds. Researchers, therefore, often experience great difficulty in getting permission to collect data in situations in which, for example, one participant, by virtue of his/her institutional role, has much more power than the others e.g. doctor - patient, supervisor - worker, law enforcement officer -

accused, interviewer - job applicant and so on. Such encounters, because they involve a more powerful person determining whether or not a less powerful person is to get access to power in the form of a greater share of resources, rights and responsibilities, freedom of action and so on, are sometimes referred to as gate-keeping encounters (see Erickson and Shultz 1981). Researchers usually have more success in gaining permission when they are one of the participants, though this raises doubts about the objectivity of their interpretations. This is something I discuss below.

An alternative procedure for securing suitable data is to set up simulated encounters (see, for example, the research reported on in chapter 5). The advantage of this arrangement is that researchers can, to some extent, control the variables and therefore ensure that they secure examples of the features which interest them e.g. they can prescribe to the participants the nature of their previous interactional history, the topic and perhaps even their communicative goals. Of course, in the process, they partly eliminate the unpredictable, open-ended nature of the interaction, which is an essential characteristic of natural conversation. This distortion can be reduced, to some extent, by ensuring that the prescribed roles are ones that the participants actually take on in real life, and that the communicative goals are ones they do frequently set themselves. What helps, also, is if it is only goals and roles that are prescribed, and not the outcome or the manner in which this outcome is to be

accomplished. Then, too, use can be made of the opinions of the participants and of informed non-participants, about how authentic the interaction is. This provides a mechanism for excluding data not felt to be authentic.

Another difficulty associated with the collection of authentic data is that many people do not behave naturally when they know that someone is eavesdropping, using recording equipment. Fortunately, after the conversation has gone on for a few minutes, most people tend to forget about such eavesdropping (especially when it takes the form of relatively unobtrusive sound recording, such as took place in the project reported on in chapter 4). Tannen (1984:34) finds internal evidence in her data to support this generalization in the form of surprised comments such as "Are you still taping?" However, this raises the ethical problem of whether one really has the informed consent of the participants if they have forgotten that they are being observed. As a solution, she suggests obtaining consent after, rather than before an interaction.

In gathering this data, interactional sociolinguists also attempt to provide for "retrievability of data" (Mehan 1978). They use film, video or sound tape to preserve the interactions in as close to their original form as possible, partly to provide an external memory which will allow for repeated close examinations of the multi-levelled behaviours of the participants, and partly to allow for other

interpretations of the same data by the researcher himself or by those who find the interpretation given unconvincing.

Tannen (1984:34) acknowledges that such recording leads to distortion of the sort we become aware of when we examine snapshots of ourselves, hear a tape of our voice or see a videotape of ourselves for the first time. For this reason she suggests that the analyst should acknowledge that such recordings are each but one possible view of the reality of the interaction. She explains, by analogy, that "had the photograph been snapped a second later, the nose might have looked shorter and the cheeks less hollow, though they would be, nonetheless, the same nose and cheeks composing the same face".

Further distortion stems from the fact that any recorded interaction, however long, is plucked from the context of its time sequence. What occurred before, and how it has influenced the interpretations of the participants, is to some extent obscured. Moreover, the conversation is made permanent whereas, as Tannen (1984:35) points out, "the very essence of talk is that it disappears as soon as it is uttered and can be imperfectly reconstructed but not retrieved".

Distortion stemming from decontextualization is of course greater in the case of sound recording than video or film because of the loss of the other channels. However Tannen (1984:36) claims that this is not too serious, because

information conveyed in the other channels frequently reinforces the messages communicated verbally rather than conveys different information.

The interactional sociolinguists' analyses of the data, once collected, take the form of what they term "exhaustive data treatment" (Mehan 1978:37). As far as possible they attempt to be data-driven rather than hypothesis-driven in the sense that, at least initially, they view all aspects of the interaction as potentially significant. They do this rather than select out those aspects which support their hypotheses, so making it impossible to search for evidence to support alternative interpretations. They tend, therefore, to playback the entire recording a number of times to become more familiar with it, and to get a sense of what sections they wish to analyze closely. Tannen (1984:38) states that for her purposes what she refers to as an "episode", bounded by change of topic or activity, is the most useful unit. This allows her to observe how the participants set about pursuing their communicative goals, and what the effects of their interactive work are.

Thereafter, the chosen episodes are transcribed. Such transcription is essential if a close-grained analysis of the recordings is to be made. However, both the isolation of certain episodes and the transcription process are further steps away from the original interaction. Tannen (ms:4) points out that when we look at a transcript we see more and

less than actually took place. We see more, because the "inherent indeterminacy" of speech, the hedging, slurring and ambiguity, is lost. We see less because much of the source of meaning is not the actual words spoken. Although interactional sociolinguists make use of transcription conventions to indicate various prosodic and paralinguistic features, other features such as accent, pitch and amplitude are filtered out. To ensure that the interaction the analyst (or any other informant) re-creates in his head as he reads the transcript, matches the original, it is essential that he refreshes his memory by playing-back the recording from time to time.

Finally, interactional sociolinguists attempt to "obtain convergence between the researchers' and participants' perspectives" (Mehan 1979:37). Gumperz and associates (see Gumperz 1982 a & b), for example, attempt to elicit the participants' interpretations of what is going on in a transcribed episode, to deduce what socio-cultural expectations and assumptions (schemata) the participants relied on in determining what was meant at any point in the interview, and to establish empirically what linguistic, prosodic or paralinguistic signs were perceived of as salient by the participants. They first try to elicit from independent listeners, some of whom share and some who do not share the socio-cultural backgrounds of the participants, an interpretation of what is going on generally, for example, what was ultimately intended, what went right or wrong and so

on. Thereafter they test their hypotheses about the participants' overall purposes, the illocutionary value of particular utterances, and the interpretation of the participants by asking questions which oblige the listeners to relate their judgments to the details of what they have heard. Listeners' answers are followed up with elicitation techniques to yield hypotheses about what features of the message form (or as Gumperz expresses it, what "contextualization cues") are actually processed by the participants and what, in each case, the paradigmatic range of alternatives is, in terms of which the participants' interpretations are made. These elicitation techniques include questions such as, "What is there about the way that participant speaks that makes you think...?" "Can you repeat it in the way he said it?" "Is it possible that he merely wanted to ask a question?" "How would he have said it if he..." "How did the answerer interpret what A said?" "How can you tell that he interpreted it in that way?"

McDermott, Gospodinoff and Aron (1978) suggest that researchers can ensure that their interpretations of what is going on converge with participants' interpretations, by noting the different ways in which the participants attempt to make clear to one another what they are doing. These ways include explicit statements of what is required, such as complaints by a participant that he has not been given a turn, and postures taken up jointly to indicate the task in hand. What is particularly significant is the behaviour of

the participants in the absence of expected behaviour. In these circumstances participants usually struggle to get the interaction "back on track", often calling on non-conforming participants to conform, and formulating explicitly what has to be done.

Tannen (1984) has great faith in what she calls "the aha factor". If the analyst's interpretation is correct (i.e. corresponds to that of the participant) the listeners on hearing it will exclaim in their heads "Aha!", recognizing that it has made explicit something that they intuitively sensed, and thereby verify the analyst's interpretation.

The objective of convergence between analyst and participants' perceptions is, in some ways, easier to achieve when the analyst is one of the participants, and in some ways more difficult. While such analysts have special insight into at least one participant's view of what they were doing together, what his/her assumptions and communicative goals were, what signs he/she processed, and what his/her feelings were about the outcome, it is difficult for such a person to be completely objective about his/her own and other participants' behaviours. However, provided the analysts honestly acknowledge the possibility of bias, so that critics can be alert to it, and provided they check their interpretations against those of the other participants and outside observers in the usual way, this danger of subjectivity can be minimized. In addition, Tannen (1984:33)



warns against the deception involved in referring to oneself in data in the third person, and advocates drawing the reader's attention to the dangers and benefits of the researcher's involvement in the interaction by using first person forms of reference. My own view is that, since first person forms are still used sparingly in academic discourse, they may be seen by many readers as marked forms used by the writer to signal that the subjective element in the research is too great for the findings to be taken seriously. As a consequence, although I have been scrupulous about informing readers where in the data I am one of the participants, in the analyses of these data I have referred to myself in the third person.

Before leaving this account of the methods of interactional sociolinguistics, I need to add that interactional sociolinguists are aware that their methods, as also the methods of other research perspectives, has inherent limitations. Because of these limitations some (e.g. Erickson 1975) use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, while most, if not actually employing methods associated with other research perspectives, including those informed by positivist principles, make use of findings of researchers using them. Thus, for example, Chick and Claude (ms) report on the use of participant observation methods and questionnaires to obtain ethnographic information which will adequately contextualize the classroom interactional data

that they analyze for evidence of culturally-specific interactional styles. They point out that, even where informants are available for consultation, researchers need access to ethnographic information. For example, South African English speaking analysts, if they do not know how Zulu adults and children conventionally interact, may interpret the behaviours of Zulu teachers and pupils in terms of their own expectations and assumptions, fail to understand what teachers and pupils are doing together, and misperceive the strategies by means of which they accomplish this. Interactional sociolinguists also make use of the findings of positivistically-informed, large-scale quantitative studies to help resolve the problem that, because they study few subjects in a limited number of settings, they are uncertain as to how generalizable their findings are. They are able to make claims for generalizability where their findings are consistent with those of large-scale quantitative studies.

### 3.3 LANGUAGE AND POWER

Thus far I have identified some of the limitations of the methods employed in interactional sociolinguistic research and suggested that, because of these limitations they need to be supplemented by those of other (including positivist) research perspectives. I return, now, to my original theme which is, essentially, to show the other side of the coin, namely, why the interactional sociolinguistic research methods are required to supplement positivistic methods. To

give the argument some flesh. I focus on the exercise of power through language and, more specifically, on the linguistic phenomena of interruption and topic control, comparing the results of interactional sociolinguistic research with those of research in the positivist mould.

Most of the early sociolinguistic studies relevant to interruption and topic control have been done by ethnomethodologists, who have been very much in the vanguard of critics of positivistic approaches to the social sciences. Because they believe that "social reality is not a 'fact' but an ongoing accomplishment, the often precarious result of routine activities and tacit understandings of social actors" (Giglioli 1972:12) they argue that the principal task of the sociologist is to identify and describe the mechanisms by which this is done. Indeed ethnomethodology refers to the study of the mechanisms (methodology used by men (ethnics)) to accomplish human social practices.

In keeping with their scepticism about facts, a key notion in their studies of conversation is indexicality. This refers to the context or situational-dependent nature of conversational meaning. As Morris (1977:40) explains, "rules or norms, or terms or explanations are seen by ethnomethodologists as having indexicality: they have meaning in a particular situation but this meaning may not be the same in another." Accordingly, although the ordered set of rules postulated by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1978)

to account for the orderliness of conversation (one speaker at a time with a minimum of gap and overlap between any two turns) are reminiscent of such positivistic approaches to the study of language as transformational generative grammar, the authors claim that these rules are "context-sensitive" and that "turn size and turn order are locally managed (i.e. turn-by-turn), party administered (i.e. by the participants) and interactionally controlled (i.e. any feature being multilaterally shaped)" (1978:42).

In the circumstances, it is ironical that many ethnomethodologists and other sociolinguists who have studied the phenomena of interruptions and topic control with a view to showing how they reflect and assert power differences between participants, tend to leave indexicality behind. Instead of examining the participant's reliance on contextual information in determining whether an interruption has occurred or who controls the topic, they have tended to assume that there are direct relationships between certain observed linguistic (or paralinguistic, prosodic or non-verbal) features, and the interpretation of such micro- or interactional phenomena as interrupting and controlling the topic, and between the latter and such indices of the wider (macro) social context as power. Furthermore, consistent with the positivistic paradigm, they assume that the existence of these relationships can be established through quantitative measures. They also tend, as Tannen (ms) points out, to be hypothesis- rather than data-driven in the

sense that they begin with assumptions about who does and does not have power, and interpret the use of certain linguistic features in support of these assumptions. In these ways they impose an analyst's perspective rather than seek a convergence between analysts' and participants' perspectives.

A case in point is Zimmerman and West's (1975) study which, adapting relevant aspects of the Sacks et al. turn-taking model, focuses on instances of simultaneous speech and silences in conversation. Following Schegloff (1973), they distinguish between overlaps, which are not violations of the rules of the turn-taking model, in that the second speaker begins to speak at or near a possible "transition-relevant place" in the first speaker's utterance, and interruptions, which are violations, in that they occur at a point which cannot be construed as a "possible completion point" for the first speaker's turn. "Possible completion points" or "transition-relevant places" are, according to the model, identified by the participants by means of syntactic (and or intonational) analysis, and correspond to the end of single words, phrases, clauses and sentences. Aggregating data from 31 diverse conversations, Zimmerman and West find that whereas in same-sex conversations both overlaps and interruptions seem to be equally divided between speakers, in cross-sex conversations nearly all interruptions and overlaps are by men (98% and 100% respectively). They also find that whereas silence is distributed more or less equally in same-sex conversations,

women are more silent than men in cross-sex conversations. Investigating the patterns of silence further, they find that 62% of women's aggregated silence in cross-sex conversations followed one of 3 types of events:

- a) a delayed "minimal response" e.g. "um hm", "uh huh", "yeh" by a man (minimum responses, when correctly timed, are instances of simultaneous transmission but are not considered interruptions because they function as indicators that the listener is carefully attending to what the speaker is saying);
- b) an overlap by a man;
- c) an interruption by a man.

On the basis of these findings, Zimmerman and West conclude that, at least in their data, men deny women equal status in conversation by interrupting them and so preventing them from fully utilizing the turns, and by not providing support to them in the development of their topics through appropriately timed "minimal responses".

In this way they suggest that the relationship between observable structural regularities (simultaneous speech at or not at a syntactic or prosodic boundary; absence or presence of a minimal response, back-channel cues) and the discourse phenomena of interruption and topic control is direct. In other words, the participants are required to merely recognize rather than interpret. Similarly, they suggest that the relationships between these micro-phenomena and power, a

macro-phenomenon, are direct and unproblematic. They see "interruptions and topic control as male displays of power - a power based in the larger social order but reinforced and expressed in face-to-face interaction with women" (Maltz and Borker 1982:192).

Bennett (1981:173), who adopts an interactional sociolinguistics perspective, challenges the assumption made by ethnographers that the interpretations "of such discourse entities as 'interruptions', 'turn construction units' and 'transition-relevant places' are determined by structures which can be observed to actually occur as physical manifestations in the talk itself, particularly prosodic and syntactic structures." Using qualitative methods involving the elicitation of participants' and other observers' reactions, and the close examination of specific interactions, she is able to demonstrate that specific constructions are understood in contradictory ways in different interactions:

B: and y'know, it's surprising to see how much of it is more interrelated than people around here are willing to admit. I mean there's a big denial from D... y'know where they're separated and they do different things, and we're doing this and there's a y'know we operate in a vacuum

C: Tha, yeah you choose the part you want.

B: And you choose what you want.

She points out that whereas an analyst using Schegloff's definition might consider that B had been interrupted, since C comes in at what is not a possible completion point, B

not only felt that C had not interrupted him, but also that C had contributed co-operatively to the development of his topic. By contrast, in the following exchange, the instances of simultaneous speech which resemble that in the first exchange both syntactically and prosodically, were interpreted by informants as interruptions. They saw C as attempting to get the floor but without success, because A manages to keep going without pause or change in rhythm and does not respond to what C has to say.

A: Well they've got complaints, is that whatcha mean?

C: Complaints th-

A: they have complaints. The white community has complaints the North Beach

C: They're not complaints, they're not complaints

A: community has complaints. The straight colony out in the Haight Ashbury has complaints. The fact that there are complaints from different communities doesn't mean that we have some kind of irreconcilable conflict that must erupt in violence.

Bennett does not deny that observed structural regularities are part of the information required for determining, for example, that one has an instance of interruption, but argues that this interpretation is not conveyed or 'forced' by these observed phenomena but arises out of the assumptions and expectations (i.e. schemata) which the participants bring to the interaction and which evolve in the course of it. Some of these assumptions and expectations, she suggests, are very general and possibly universal. Such a general assumption might be that participants ought to be polite and therefore



not threaten one another's faces by denying them the option of a fair share in the control of the topic. Other assumptions, she suggests, are culturally-specific. For example, Bennett suggests that in the following exchange, the perception that B was less fluent and well educated than M, and the cultural assumption about the appropriate treatment of underdogs, contributed to the interpretation that M's "Sent by whom" is rude:

M: Now Mr B what is your view??

B: Well/I ca- here.../I have here/a list of five hundred jobs/that were/sent to the area/in Hunters Point//

M: Sent by whom//

A third factor affecting interpretations, according to Bennett, is familiarity with particular rhetorical patterns, including the prosodic and syntactic signs (what Gumperz terms contextualization cues) referred to by the ethnomethodologists in outlining their turn-taking model.

Participants' heavy reliance on contextual information (in the form of schemata) which they bring to the interaction to determine, for example, whether an overlap constitutes an interruption or not, often shows up dramatically in interactional sociolinguistic studies of intercultural miscommunication. For example, in the study reported on in chapter 4, I present evidence which suggests that the extent to which the interpretative schemata participants bring to an

interaction match up to one another, or can be brought into alignment with one another during the course of an interaction. crucially determines whether overlapping speech is interpreted as an interruption or not. In the case of one of the three post-examination interviews examined, namely that involving Jane, a post-graduate student, and the course-co-ordinator, George, (both native South African English speaking-whites) there is internal evidence that Jane shares George's assumptions about what they are doing together, what the goals of the activity are and how they are to be accomplished. This is evident in the way she engages in the expected behaviour without preamble or prompt:

20. GEORGE: [unclear] er  
 21. [unclear] JANE: [unclear] the thing  
 22. GEORGE: [unclear]  
 23. JANE: [unclear] I recall you want to see who has answered  
 24. [unclear] regarding design in own reactions of both papers  
 25. GEORGE: [unclear]  
 26. JANE: [unclear] help  
 27. er second [unclear] the first paper I've performed such center  
 28. the second one [unclear] I had on the first  
 29. GEORGE: [unclear] GEORGE: [unclear]

In this exchange George and Jane co-operatively fit their individual contributions to a developing theme which matches their assumptions about what sort of activity they are engaged in. Consequently neither George nor Jane interprets the instances of simultaneous speech in lines 32, 37 and 40 as interruptions, which is what Schegloff's definition would predict. By contrast, in a second interview involving George and Bongani, a Zulu post-graduate student (a Zulu-English speaker), there is internal evidence, again, which suggests that B does not have access to the relevant schema, but is

guided in the interpretation by a quite different schema. This is evident in the following exchange:

66. GEORGE: alright...now well let me let me give this information  
 67. on your question I was a very bad answer in our terms whereas  
 68. your question 2  
 69. BONGANI: yah  
 70. GEORGE: was a pass you passed question 5  
 71. BONGANI: yah  
 72. GEORGE: you passed question 2 but you failed question 1 rather badly  
 73. BONGANI: oh I see the reason now with question 1 I think I said something  
 74. about performance... although I'd continue to speak - unclear  
 75. GEORGE: do you yah you know you spoke about...sorry  
 76. get I out of there

In lines 73 and 74, Bongani is suddenly more voluble than at any previous point in the interview, possibly because George for the first time, appears to be conforming to his (Bongani's) expectations of the activity, namely, to provide his view of the strengths and weaknesses of particular answers. George, however, instead of building on this contribution, breaks into it, thus preventing Bongani from developing this theme or topic further.

There is further evidence here that George and Bongani interpret the simultaneous speech in lines 74 and 75 quite differently. Bongani will probably have experienced George's behaviour as face-threatening, denying him, as it does, an equal role, or at least a share in negotiating the direction of talk. George shows that he is aware that breaking in may be perceived of as rude by using the politeness strategies of apologizing and then asking permission, thus attempting to alleviate the sense of imposition. Significantly, though, he does this only when Bongani struggles to hold the floor,

which suggests that George did not perceive his first attempt to break in as an interruption. Possibly because Bongani's contribution is irrelevant to the theme that George believes Bongani has implicitly agreed to develop, George apparently does not see breaking in as a denial of Bongani's rights, particularly as the pause which follows "performance" is long enough, in terms of S.A.E. norms, to suggest that Bongani has possibly completed his turn.

This analysis suggests, not only that the question of what constitutes an interruption is less one of recognition than of interpretation in the light of socio-cultural contextual information, but also that such outcomes as interruptions are interactionally accomplished or negotiated by all participants, and not unilaterally accomplished by one. Tannen (ms a)) makes a similar observation about topic control. She points out that while it is commonly assumed that the person who controls the topic is the person who controls the interaction (i.e. wields power), the determining of who controls the topic is no more straightforward than determining whether an interruption has taken place or not. She found in her data (Tannen 1984) that one could not just assume that the person who raised the topic controlled it, because a topic did not become a topic just because it was raised: it had first to be built upon by other participants.

This brings me to my final point, which is that just as interactional sociolinguistics shows that it is misleading to

assume too direct a relationship between structural regularities and interactional phenomena such as interruption and topic control, it shows, also, that it is misleading to assume too direct a relationship between the latter and power. Tannen (ms a), for example, points out that "continuing to focus on someone else's topic may give them power, but it may be seen to reflect the power of the attention-giver" and that while one can point to utterances where the ability to obstruct by interrupting grows out of people being powerful, one can also point to instances where those who interrupt are those who lack power. She substantiates this by referring to Varenne's study (cited in Tannen m.s.) in which, whenever the husband and wife start developing a conversation, the children interrupt them. For the weak participants in this interaction, interruption constitutes a last resort bid for attention.

Clearly, if sociolinguistics is to account adequately for the link between the macro and micro levels of social life and show how differences in the language used by different groups (gender, ethnic, racial) relates to their differential access to power in the wider society, it will need to go beyond making the assumption that whoever has power in the real world will display this domination through such discourse phenomena as interruption and topic control, and seek to substantiate this assumption by means of counts of certain linguistic devices.

Interactional sociolinguistics suggests an alternative

explanation of the relationship between the micro and macro levels of social life in terms of the quality of communication between people who belong to different sociolinguistic sub-cultures or cultures. As I explain in chapter 2, because people who belong to these different groups are guided in their interpretations by different schemata (expectations and assumptions) and tend to perceive different features of the surface message form as salient (as contextualization cues), they often find it difficult to establish and maintain conversational co-operation. Consequently, their interactions are often uncomfortably asynchronous and misinterpretation and misevaluation is frequent. In chapter 6 I attempt to explain the relationship between asynchronous interactions between members of dominant and dominated groups (micro level of social life) and the structural features of the wider South African society (macro level of social life) e.g. social stratification, distribution of power. The essence of this explanation is that intercultural miscommunication in countless asymmetrical encounters (such as the gatekeeping encounters) contributes massively to the maintenance of a negative self-reinforcing cycle of discrimination and inequality. It is in such interactions that members of dominated groups often fail to negotiate access to power with gatekeepers who usually belong to dominant groups i.e. fail to negotiate a greater share of resources, freedom of action, rights and responsibilities and so on.

On a more positive note, I also claim in chapter 6 that, just as miscommunication between individuals from different groups can contribute to a negative self-reinforcing cycle of discrimination and inequality, so successful, synchronous interactions can break into this cycle. In the context of synchronous interactions, interpretation of motives and explanations of ability are usually accurate, and these tend to erode negative stereotypes and discrimination. In saying this, I am in no way suggesting that improvement in communication is a substitute for structural reform. However, I am arguing that, just as historically-given structural factors, in informing the interpretative frames of reference of the participants, strongly influence the outcomes of interactions at the micro level, so the outcomes of millions of such interactions affects, either negatively or positively, what takes place at a macro level. Indeed the survival of discrimination in societies in which statutory discriminatory laws have been removed, suggests that it may be naive to believe that discrimination in South Africa can be eliminated by structural reform alone.

What this account suggests is that, although it is misleading to suggest too direct a relationship between structural regularities and discourse phenomena such as interruption and topic control, and between the latter and the exercise of power in the wider society, what takes place in the micro-settings of conversational interactions, does affect the distribution of power at the macro level of social life.

### 3.4 SUMMARY

This chapter provides an account of the methods employed in interactional sociolinguistics. Furthermore, building on arguments provided in earlier chapters as to why an interactional perspective is essential if the goal of an adequate account of the relationship between language and context is to be achieved, a comparison is made between interactional studies of the relationship between language and the contextual feature of power and studies of this relationship in which positivistic methods have been used. This comparison reveals that the latter impose an analyst's perspective and mislead by suggesting that interpretations of such interactional phenomena as interruption and topic control are "forced" by the presence of certain structural regularities, and that those who have power in the macro context of the wider society display this dominance in the micro-contexts of everyday conversations by means of such interactional mechanisms as topic control and interruption. The methods associated with interactional studies, which attempt a convergence between analysts' and participants' perspectives, suggest that what crucially determines whether these structural regularities are perceived of as salient or not, and what interpretation is given to them, is the schemata which participants bring to the interactions and that are negotiated in the course of them. They also suggest



that while who interrupts and who controls the topic is not always a reliable guide as to who has power or as to how one sets about gaining it, what takes place in conversations does affect the distribution of power in the wider society. Of particular importance to the research reported on in chapters 4 and 5, is the difficulty of accomplishing an accurate interpretation of intent and evaluation of attitude, motive and ability in intercultural encounters, and how this adversely affects the life chances (the access to power) of individuals, and the relationships between members of different cultural groups.

#### 4.0 SOURCES AND CONSEQUENCES OF ASYNCHRONY IN SOUTH AFRICAN ENGLISH - ZULU ENGLISH INTERACTION

##### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The accounts of the methodology (chapter 1) and methods (chapter 3) of interactional sociolinguistics, and of the unique contribution of this emerging field to the understanding of the relationship between language and context (chapter 2) provide a necessary background to the analyses of interactional data reported on in this chapter and chapter 5.

In this chapter, I report on a project involving the sound recording and analyses of comparable intra- and intercultural encounters involving native speakers of English and Zulu. Consistent with the major goal of the research reported on in this thesis, namely to show what interactional sociolinguistics has to contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between context and language, I focus on how contextual information in the form of culturally-specific schemata and contextualization conventions (including politeness conventions) contribute to asynchrony (see chapter 2) and to the misinterpretation of intent and misjudgement of

attitude and ability. To further develop discussion about the relationship between what takes place in the micro contexts of everyday interactions and features of the large scale or macro context, I focus, also, on how negative stereotypes of cultural and racial groups (features of the wider society) are generated in micro contexts, or, when already existing, confirmed or reinforced.

#### 4.2 WHAT IS MEANT BY INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Before providing background information about the project reported on in this chapter, I wish to clarify what I mean by intercultural communication. It is particularly necessary in the South African situation to define what one means by this term as many people are justifiably suspicious of explanations in terms of culture, and therefore also in terms of what takes place in intercultural communication. Amongst other reasons, this is because culture is so often equated with traditional culture only, because cultures are conceived of as static rather than dynamic, because the cultures of indigenous people have often been labelled as primitive, and because cultural differences have been exaggerated in order to provide a rationale for enforced segregation and discrimination. Indeed, because of the advantages to the dominant group of such labelling, there have been attempts on the part of authorities to "re-tribalize" indigenous peoples i.e. refuse to accept

evidence of the evolving and merging of cultures.

Prosser (1978:6) defines culture as the "traditions, customs, norms, beliefs, values, and thought patternings which are passed down from generation to generation". This definition overlaps with what I mean by culture to the extent that it conveys that it is covert rather than overt behaviour (easily visible like dress or artifacts) that is of interest, and emphasizes the historical dimension i.e. that culture is transmitted. However, it does not convey how the culture is transmitted i.e. it does not highlight the close relationship between communication (and particularly language) and culture. As I understand it, not only are spoken and written discourse the primary means of transmitting culture, but knowledge of language (the meanings of words and sentences and discourse conventions such as how to open a conversation or obtain a turn to speak) are important parts of the cultural content transmitted. It also fails to highlight the fact that individuals who share similar cultural backgrounds perceive themselves, and are perceived of by others, as a group. This is why judgements about the behaviours of individuals tend to be generalized to the group as a whole.

A definition which corresponds more closely with the sense in which I use the term in this thesis is that supplied by Tannen (ms):

Culture is everything you have ever learned about how

to communicate and how you think about things - which comes down to the same thing. You learn all this in previous and on-going interaction - by talking to others, observing how they talk to you, and observing how others react to your ways of talking.

What needs to be added, is that such is the diversity of cultures in large urban settings, that many people are bi- or even multi-cultural. Also, in keeping with the interactional sociolinguistic notion that schemata for contexts (cultural expectations and assumptions) are interactionally constituted, culture is constantly in the process of being confirmed and changed by the members of the group as they interact with one another and with members of other groups.

To turn to the notion of intercultural communication, the gist of most definitions is that it is communication between individuals whose communicative backgrounds are significantly different. Such definitions, however, beg the question of just how different these backgrounds have to be for that difference to be significant. Tannen's response (1984:194) is that "to the extent that no two people have exactly the same communicative background, to that extent, all communication is cross-cultural." However, it is possible to distinguish between encounters in which the participants' communicative backgrounds correspond closely, and ones in which they are very different. Thus, when I refer, in this thesis, to intercultural communication, I mean interaction which may be

viewed as taking up a position close to the pole of greatest difference along a continuum ranging from greatest to least difference in communicative background.

#### 4.3 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

There is much anecdotal evidence that intercultural communication in South Africa, particularly between whites and blacks, tends to be relatively unsuccessful. For example, compensatory educational programmes for blacks in tertiary education or in business and industry invariably include a communication component. This, of course, not only suggests that there is widespread recognition that there is a communication problem, but also that the problem has been diagnosed as having, as its source, communicative inadequacies of blacks.

My reading of interactional sociolinguistics suggests an alternative diagnosis in terms of which miscommunication is mutually accomplished by all participants, rather than unilaterally accomplished by one. It also suggests that intercultural encounters tend to be more asynchronous than intracultural ones, and that major sources of such asynchrony are differences in culturally-specific schemata and contextualization cues by means of which the participants identify these schemata.

In order to investigate whether, indeed, culturally-specific schemata and contextualization cues are sources of asynchrony in interactions between Zulus using English (Zulu English speakers) and native English speaking South African whites (S.A. English speakers), and what the consequences of this asynchrony are, I made sound recordings of post-examination interviews involving a S.A. English speaking academic (George) and twelve postgraduate students, including S.A. English, Indian English and Zulu English speakers.

The students who are all mature, experienced English-language teachers (either teaching English as a first or second language) had recently completed two three-hour papers at the end of the first year of a two-year, part-time honours course in applied linguistics for language teaching. A month prior to the examination, they had been informed in general terms what topics would be examined, though they did not see the final wording of the questions until they were in the examination room. After the papers had been marked, the students were informed by post whether they had passed or failed. At the first class meeting of the next year, they were invited to make appointments to discuss their papers with the course co-ordinator, George. They were told that the examiners felt that many students did not do well in the examination, not because they did not have the necessary ability or had not prepared well, but because they were apparently unsure of the examiners' expectations. They were told, further, that, when they met, the discussion would

focus on the extent to which expectations were shared.

Other relevant background information is that most of the teaching in the course was through seminar discussion, and that the people responsible for teaching the course often felt dissatisfied with the quality of discussion. As they expressed it, they felt that they were being constantly pressured by the group to adopt less egalitarian leadership roles than they were comfortable with. The Zulus and Asians apparently found it difficult to use the first names of those responsible for teaching the course, though they were frequently invited to do so, and despite the fact that differences in the use of address terms in different languages and cultures were examined in the sociolinguistics component of the course. Moreover, the Zulu English speaking students seldom offered unsolicited contributions, and invitations by name to contribute were sometimes followed by what the S.A. English speakers perceived as embarrassing pauses. The Zulu English speakers seldom developed an extended line of argument partly because, so it seemed to those responsible for teaching the course, the S.A. English speaking students took over at the first opportunity.

Since a possible alternative explanation for what took place in the intercultural encounters studied below is that the co-ordinator is prejudiced against students of colour, it is important to note that enrolment by blacks in this course is highly valued by the staff responsible for teaching it. Quite



apart from the conviction that universities should have the right to admit whoever has matriculated, irrespective of colour, race or creed, they are motivated by the recognition that such participation gives them access to information necessary for research such as that reported on here.

Initially two of the recorded interviews were chosen for closer analysis: one with a female SA, English speaking student, Jane, that George felt intuitively was the most successful interaction, and the other with a male Zulu English speaker, Bongani, that George felt was probably the least successful. (The names used here, as elsewhere, are fictitious to protect the anonymity of the participants.) The object of this part of the analysis was to establish: i) whether there was greater evidence of asynchrony in the interaction between George and Bongani than in that between George and Jane (which could account for George's feelings about the relative success of each) and, if so, ii) whether the relative asynchrony of the interviews could be accounted for in terms of differences or similarities in schemata and contextualization cues.

However, since an examination of all the interviews suggested that differences in communicative backgrounds was not the only factor affecting the relative success of the interviews, a third interview was chosen for close analysis. This was one in which the cultural backgrounds of the participants were very similar, but which George experienced as very stressful

and judged almost as unsuccessful as the interview with Bongani. The interview in this case was with Peter, a male S.A. English speaker. The object of the analysis of this interview was, again, to account for asynchrony, but, this time, in a situation where differences in socio-cultural background could not be hypothesized as the cause. As will be explained more fully below, what emerged from the analysis is that it was problems relating to strategies employed by the participants in trying to save face that contributed greatly to the asynchrony of the interaction between George and Peter. This prompted further examination of the other two interviews to see whether face considerations also needed to be brought into the explanation of the very different outcomes of these two interviews.

#### 4.4 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The methods of data collection and analysis used are those outlined in chapter 3. To ensure a high level of authenticity, the interviews selected for study were those that would have taken place even if there had been no need to collect suitable data. Then too, although the participants were aware that they were being taped, a small, unobtrusive tape-recorder was used, and the information that the interviews were to be used for research as well as pedagogical purposes was given, and consent obtained, only after the interviews had been completed.

While, on the basis of my reading, I did hypothesize that culturally-specific schemata and contextualization cues were sources of asynchrony in the interviews, in my analysis, I was data- rather than hypothesis-driven (see page 115), in the sense that, initially, I viewed all parts of all the interviews as potentially significant, and played the entire interviews, or large sections of them to myself and independent informants, thus avoiding selecting just those parts which supported my hypotheses. This open-ended approach contributed to the finding that the effect of face considerations needs to be added to any account of the sources of asynchrony in intercultural communication, something that interactional sociolinguists (other than Scollen and Scollen) have not tended to focus on. To ensure that readers can look for evidence of alternative interpretations, substantial portions of the interviews (and not just those extracts selected for closer analysis) have been transcribed and included in appendix A.

Futhermore, in the analysis, I attempted to achieve a convergence between my interpretation and those of the participants themselves, by using methods modelled on those used by Gumperz and associates (see p 116) and by following McDermott in noting what participants do in the absence of expected behavior (see p 117).

#### 4.5 DIFFERENCES IN SCHEMATA AND CONTEXTUALIZATION CUES AS SOURCES OF ASYNCHRONY

In the case of the George - Jane and George - Bongani interviews, then, the methods described above were used to test hypotheses about

1. the relative asynchrony of the interviews;
2. the interpretative schemata the participants relied on in determining what was meant at any point in the interviews (as noted above schemata, because they are based on participants' experience of similar situations in their culture or subculture, constrain their interpretations by causing them to predict the likely manner in which the interaction will unfold, and selectively perceive which permutations of behaviours at particular stages in the interaction constitute contextualization cues);
3. what features of the message form were perceived as salient, and what are possible systematic differences in the contextualization cues S.A. English and Zulu-English speakers rely on in making sense of what is going on in conversations.

All the listeners (who comprised both male and female; staff and students; Zulu-English and S.A. English-speaking) were in agreement that the interview between George and Jane was more successful than that between George and Bongani. They felt that there were no uncomfortable moments (see page 100) in

the George - Jane interview, that George and Jane understood one another and probably ended the interview with an enhanced opinion of one another and with a sense that their goals (agendas) had been achieved. By contrast, the George - Bongani interview was described as very stressful, with the participants frequently misinterpreting one another, with little progress being made with the agenda of either party, and with both parties probably arriving at the end of the interview with a poorer opinion of one another. For example, when asked what Bongani probably thought of George by the end of the interview, one Zulu informant responded, "Son of a bitch!"

There is also evidence that the difference in levels of asynchrony of these two interviews can be accounted for, in part, in terms of culture-specific schemata or frames. George and Jane apparently have access to a schema in which the participants review the preparation of examinations retrospectively, analytically and evaluatively. To refer again to a sequence examined in chapter 3, Jane signals that she shares George's assumptions and expectations about what activity (see Gumperz 1982a:131, 166) they are engaged in, by engaging in the targeted (or expected) behaviour without the preamble or prompts provided by George in the other two interviews selected for closer study.

31. GEORGE: va well I've not yet had the overcater yet ... look er  
 32. JANE: one thing  
 33. GEORGE: va  
 34. JANE: one thing I really did want to ask you was um ... just  
 35. thinking gauging my own reactions to both papers  
 36. GEORGE: aa  
 37. JANE: I felt  
 38. very strongly that I'd done much better I'd performed much better  
 39. on the second pap er than I had on the first  
 40. GEORGE: va GEORGE: right

In a remarkably short time, George and Jane achieve conversational cooperation, fitting their individual contributions into an overall theme which fits the activity that they have implicitly agreed upon. Further evidence of the matching of expectations and the high degree of conversational synchrony is George's observation (lines 58-60):

no well I'm glad you're approaching it from that point of view  
 because that's more or less the situation I wanted to put you in

and the way in lines 66 and 67 George and Jane "duet" (Falk 1979) in completing A's utterance:

55. GEORGE: you did best in and worst in so that you  
 56. can find your expectations are (unclear) are matching ours  
 57. JANE: matching yours

This overlap, rather than interrupting the smooth flow of the conversation, actually contributes to the synchrony because the participants jointly make the same point. This incidentally, is further evidence for the claim made in chapter 3 that participants rely more on contextual information than on structural regularities or irregularities (such as overlapping speech) to determine whether or not they have

been interrupted.

By contrast, Bongani does not appear to have access to this schema. Evidence of his assumptions and expectations about the activity appears only in lines 149-53.

149.           which part of the question worried you in the exam ... sorry to  
 150.           be firing you these questions I don't know if you expected me to  
 151.           BONGANI: ya I see                            yes  
 152.           say this is where you went wrong   I'm trying to yes what I'm trying  
 153.           BONGANI: ya I expected that

More important, since even in intracultural encounters common themes have to be negotiated and expectations adjusted, George and Bongani make little progress in achieving the conversational cooperation which would facilitate this negotiation. They fail to conform to one another's expectations, to build on one another's signals, and to develop a consistent, coherent theme, to such an extent, that George feels constrained to attempt to renegotiate what they are doing together as late as lines 149-64. Continuing from line 153 above, the interaction proceeds as follows:

154.           to find out is really how you set about doing it because I think if  
 155.           we can find out I'm not trying to blame you  
 156.           BONGANI: ya  
 157.           GEORGE: in any way I'm  
 158.           trying to find out where your preparation was not enough so I can  
 159.           tell you  
 160.           BONGANI: ve  
 161.           GEORGE: how you can learn  
 162.           BONGANI: ya  
 163.           GEORGE: er next time to do it  
 164.           properly

This lack of progress can be partly accounted for in terms of systematic differences in contextualization cues the S.A. English speaker and the Zulu-English speaker rely on. As was explained in chapter 2, contextualization cues are

"constellations of surface features of message form" which are "the means by which speakers signal and listeners interpret what the activity is, how semantic content is to be understood and how each sentence relates to what precedes or follows" (Gumperz 1982a:131).

Though Bongani's responses in lines 7-27 (see Appendix A) are not very informative, they are apparently synchronous and appropriate enough to assure George that agreement has been reached as to what they are doing together, for George proceeds to signal (line 44) the first discourse task (see Gumperz 1982a:208) consistent with that activity, namely that of comparing Bongani's assessment of his performance on specific questions with the examiners' assessment.

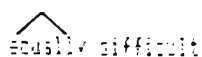
44. GEORGE: alright now perhaps you can tell us which of those er you  
 45. thought ... you did best on ... which you were happiest about  
 46. BONGANI: I'm not sure but  
 47. GEORGE: yes  
 48. BONGANI: I think it number 5  
 49. GEORGE: number 5  
 50. BONGANI: (not clear)  
 51. GEORGE: alright ... that that's right that that was the  
 52. question that we thought was your best question  
 53. BONGANI: a  
 54. GEORGE: alright ... erm  
 55. and then which of the two there  
 56. BONGANI: I ... I think one and two are  
 57. which was equally difficult  
 58. GEORGE: actually difficult  
 59. BONGANI: yah  
 60. GEORGE: and  
 61. BONGANI: and not actually difficult but I think er not prepared

There is considerable evidence in this extract that Bongani is uncertain of what George wants them to do together. For example, there is Bongani's hedged, tentative response in line 46. Then, too, there is the way he interprets



"happiest", which George uses to signal again the culture-specific interpretative schema (see page 147), as "least difficult." Perhaps most interesting is his interpretation of George's utterance in line 58. Possibly because Bongani has responded tentatively (lines 56-57), George asks him to reconsider his judgment of which question was more difficult. Bongani however interprets this as a request to reconsider whether both questions were difficult or not.

An important contributing factor to Bongani's interpretation is his apparent failure to "read" the implicit cue provided by the accentuation of "equally" (line 58). George's utterance here is marked as a single tone group or information unit with the nucleus placement - a rise fall pitch movement - on "equally":

 equally difficult

In terms of the contextualization conventions of S.A. English, by contrastively accentuating "equally," George signals that it is this part of his message that he would like Bongani to build on. After listening carefully to the sequence 54-58 and then being asked whether, in 58, George was querying the information that Bongani found the questions difficult to answer, or that Bongani found the questions equally difficult, S.A. English informants, without exception, opted for the latter interpretation. Significantly Brazil, Coulthard and Johns (1980:56) note that in British English a fall-rise tone (or major pitch movement) marks the

information expressed in the utterance as doubly new, as having the meaning the equivalent of something like "That alters my world view". It apparently has the same signalling value in S.A. English, for George uses it to signal that he is surprized (or fascinated) to learn that Bongani found the questions equally difficult (something he had not anticipated). This meaning Bongani also fails to "read".

As Gumperz (1982a) and Gumperz, Aulakh, and Kaltman (1982) have shown for American English, the ability of participants to effect smooth turn change or build on one another's contributions in developing an argument or theme depends crucially on shared assumptions or expectations about how prosodic cues such as tone grouping, accent placement, and paralinguistic choices (e.g., loudness and rate of speech) interact with lexical and syntactic choices to signal, for example, speaker transition points and relationships among different parts of the interaction. Smooth interactions also depend on participants' assumptions/expectations about the balance of the signalling load carried by choices at the various levels (syntactic, lexical, prosodic). Bongani's response to George's utterance in line 58 is but one of a number of instances that suggest that George and Bongani do not share such expectations. Given that the prosody of Zulu, a tone language, is very different from that of English, and that few adults master the prosody of a second language, it should not be surprising to find that there are systematic differences between S.A. English and Zulu-English in this

respect. Pending further investigation, I hypothesize that

1. the signalling load carried at the prosodic level is less in Zulu-English than in S.A. English;

2. Zulu-English speakers do not rely on prosodic cues to carry out such discourse functions as those outlined above for American English (whereas S.A. English speakers do). Support for such a hypothesis comes, also, from Lanham (1984) who points out that research to date suggests that syntax and the lexicon play the major role in expressing discourse functions in southern Bantu languages, and who suggests that this is the source of a certain category of "errors" which characterize a form of South African Black English (SABE). On the basis of his analysis of data obtained by means of the oral reading of texts by "typical speakers" of this form of SABE, Lanham (1984:223) finds "that prosodic distinctions and their placement in the SABE" of his subjects "do not serve discourse functions".

To continue with the analysis, the failure to build upon one another's signals is evident in the sequence from lines 66-76 which was examined in chapter 3.

66. GEORGE: alright ... now well let me let me give this information  
 67. or your question 1 was a very bad answer in our terms whereas  
 68. your question 2  
 69. BONGANI: vah  
 70. GEORGE: was a pass you passed question 5  
 71. BONGANI: vah  
 72. GEORGE: you passed question 2 but you failed question 1 rather badly  
 73. BONGANI: oh I see the reason now with question 1 I think I said something  
 74. about performance ... although (BONGANI continues to speak - unclear)  
 75. GEORGE: do you see you know you spoke about... sorry  
 76. can I put it there

Bongani apparently interprets the information supplied by George as an indirect, implicit request to explain his poor performance in question one rather than to consider why his assessment of his performance did not match that of the examiner.

Of course, poor progress in achieving conversational cooperation and negotiating a common theme is as much a failure of George to conform to the expectations of Bongani and build on his signals as the reverse. As noted in chapter 3, a plausible explanation for Bongani's greater volubility here than elsewhere in the interview, is that he sees George for the first time as conforming to his (Bongani's) expectations of the activity, namely for George to provide details of the strengths and weaknesses of particular answers. Because George does not share these expectations, he fails to see the relevance of what Bongani says, and breaks into his contribution rather than helps to develop it further. As was argued in chapter 3, the participants' sense of interruption derives not directly from observed structural regularities (see Bennet 1981), such as speech overlapping at what is not a possible completion point, but from their interpretations in terms of assumptions and expectations which they bring to the interaction and which evolve in the course of it. It is likely, therefore, that whereas Bongani will probably have experienced this as a rude interruption, George's perceptions will have been very different. (See pages 129-130 for a fuller discussion.)

This again points to the possibility of systematic differences between Zulu English and S.A. English in the signalling load carried via prosodic cues and in the sort of information signalled prosodically. There is anecdotal evidence that Zulu-English speakers, on average, speak more slowly than S.A. English speakers (or are perceived by both groups to do so), that pauses of relatively short duration do not function as turn exchange signals in Zulu English, and that Zulu English speakers are generally more tolerant of extended monologue than S.A. English speakers are. Such characteristics of Zulu English may be related to the survival of a strong oral tradition, since Zulus have a relatively short history of literacy, and to targeted behaviour within that culture. As one Zulu informant explained, what is highly valued within his culture is behaviour which proceeds at a steady, measured, dignified pace. A person who speaks fast or without greeting is perceived by Zulus as rude. By contrast, targeted discourse behaviour within S.A. English culture is that which is consistent with Gricean maxims (see Grice 1975), that is, brief and to the point.

Such differences could account for the limited contributions of Zulu English speakers in the honours seminar meetings described above, and for the more general perceptions by Zulu English speakers that they are often interrupted by S.A. English speakers, and by S.A. English speakers that Zulu

English speakers are poor contributors. The results on two items of a questionnaire that I conducted with S.A. English and Bantu English undergraduates (most of whom were Zulus) are very revealing (see appendix B for further details). Asked to choose from four different generalizations about turn exchange behaviour when interacting with the other group, 50 percent of S.A. English speakers chose the generalization that Zulu English speakers fail to take the opportunity to speak when given a turn, while 39 percent chose the generalization that Bantu English speakers fail to produce a whole coherent idea. By contrast, 69 percent of Bantu English speakers chose the generalization that S.A. English speakers interrupt them before they have completed their point. Asked to choose from three descriptions of the behaviour of members of their own group when meeting for the first time at a social gathering, 60 percent of the S.A. English speakers chose the description that they would be uncomfortable with even short silences, while only 15 percent of Bantu English speakers chose this option.

Returning to the analysis once more, it is significant to note that Bongani seems unsure as to how to interpret George's request (lines 84-86) and then gives a reply which is consistent with the theme he tried unsuccessfully to develop in lines 72-73, namely the explanation of his poor performance.

31. GEORGE: can I ask you you remember  
 32. we gave you the outline here  
 33. BONGANI: yes  
 34. GEORGE: can I ask you how set about ...  
 35. preparing that question  
 36. BONGANI: I ... I ... (unclear) my problem was  
 37. GEORGE: what did you do BONGANI: er  
 38. reading material to cover the topic

George apparently considers this reply insufficiently related to his own theme/agenda to build on it, which he does by signalling that Bongani should continue by using, in conjunction with other cues, a fall rise tone (major pitch movement):

39. GEORGE: yes

Significantly, Brazil, Coulthard and Johns (1980:51) note that in British English, a fall-rise tone (what they term referring tone), that has as its general function to mark the propositions expressed in the tone unit as part of the shared, already negotiated common background of the participants at a particular moment in the on-going interaction, may also be used to signal solidarity. The cue would appear to have the same function in S.A. English. However, once again, it is evident that George and Bongani's expectations in respect of prosodic cues are not shared, for Bongani apparently interprets George's "yes" not as meaning "continue," but as a sort of pre-closure, meaning "I see."

A similar problem arises when George, in line 91, attempts to

continue with the development of a theme which Bongani has apparently attempted to close.

89. GEORGE: yes  
 90. BONGANI: yes  
 91. GEORGE: you mean you ... you  
 92. didn't have the reading ... or you didn't know what the reading was  
 BONGANI: (starts to speak)  
 93. BONGANI: yes sir

Partly because he is beginning to reply subsequent to "reading," (line 92) and partly because he does not share George's prosodic conventions, Bongani sees George as recycling his interpretation of what Bongani said in lines 86-88, rather than querying which of two alternative interpretations is correct. This demonstrates the unfortunate consequences of asynchrony in intercultural communication. Because the second alternative comes "at the wrong time" (cf. Erickson 1978), namely when he has already started to speak himself, and because Zulu English speakers apparently do not use accent placement to signal contrastiveness, Bongani misses the significance of the accentuation of "know."

George decides (probably incorrectly) that Bongani's reply relates to the second alternative but has so little success in pursuing this sub-theme that he feels obliged once again (line 110) to recycle his task initiation of line 84 (cf. ?

ask you how you get about preparing that question):

110. GEORGE: I'm interested in knowing how you get about your preparation.

Bongani's response:

117. BONGANI: (unclear) yaa (softly)



suggests that he is just as unsure of what George is trying to get them to do together as he was at the beginning, while George (line 149) is still guessing about Bongani's assumptions and expectations

149. (sorry to  
150. be firing you these questions I don't know if you expected me to ...)

Thus far, I have presented evidence which suggests that the relative asynchrony of the George - Bongani encounter in comparison with the George - Jane encounter can be accounted for in terms of differences in culturally-specific interpretative schemata and contextualization conventions. As I explained earlier, I had hypothesized before starting to analyze that no further explanation would be required, but was obliged to reconsider this after analyzing the George - Peter encounter, to which I now turn.

#### 4.6 FACE THREATENING BEHAVIOUR AS SOURCES OF ASYNCHRONY

Since mismatch of culturally-specific schemata or contextualization conventions cannot be posited in the case of the George - Peter encounter, I was initially at a loss as to what was responsible for the asynchrony. A clue was provided by a Zulu informant who commented that Bongani seemed to be devious. Further questioning revealed that what he meant was that Bongani was trying, at any cost, to save face. Looking at all three encounters in terms of potential face loss, I recognized, for the first time, that the George

- Bongani and George - Peter encounters were potentially more face threatening than the George - Jane encounter because, whereas Jane had fared very well in the examination, Bongani and Peter had fared poorly. When persons have just experienced loss of face, acts which in other circumstances are not particularly risky become, for them, face-threatening acts. Thus close examination of the George - Peter encounter reveals that the asynchrony is a function not of different contextualization cues and/or mismatch of culture-specific schemata, but of different "readings" by George and Peter of how face threatening the activity George signals he wants them to engage in together, really is.

The key to understanding this, is the insight provided by studies of politeness behaviours reported on in chapter 3. This is, namely, that participants, in interactionally constituting contexts for their talk, signal to one another, not merely what is happening (the activity), but also who each is at each moment in the unfolding of the interaction: what, for example, their relative status is and hence what are their communicative rights and obligations (including rights to the floor) and how close or distant their relationship is. In the George - Peter encounter, as in the George - Bongani and George - Jane encounters, George consistently uses what are lower numbered strategies in Brown and Levinson's diagram on page 76 ( what correspond to Lakoff's clarity and camaraderie styles or modes of presenting self and what Scollon and Scollon refer to as solidarity

politeness), apparently to signal his view of that part of the context concerned with the relationship between the participants. This is, namely, the relationship associated with the symmetrical solidarity politeness system (-power, -distance) described by Brown and Levinson (see chapter 3, page 80). Such a relationship is consistent with the democratic style of teaching used in the course. However, this view of their relationship and rights and obligations Peter (lines 57-67) appears to challenge, and in the process threatens George's face.

57. the abolition (increasing volume and speed) now I don't think I did  
 58. this in this essay, it answered that question entirely in that frame  
 59. of reference  
 60. GEORGE: rs  
 61. PETER: I think that is what you're going to say  
 62. GEORGE: well  
 63. well it's like wanting to see  
 64. PETER: you're you're going to say I didn't actually un answer  
 65. the essay in relation to a what he can do to his pupils as to develop  
 66. his pupils' awareness of situation that's what the position is look  
 67. context?  
 68. GEORGE: well I  
 69. to it's what I want to know is as you know don't don't make me more  
 70. "irrevellier" than I am (continues)

Internal evidence that George experiences Peter's behaviour here as face-threatening is his metacomment in lines 68-70, which also suggests that George sees the interactional trouble they are experiencing as having to do with Peter's view of their relationship. However, closer examination of not only this extract but of other parts of the transcript suggests an alternative explanation. Putting aside for the moment their definition of the relationship between them, there are other reasons for George experiencing Peter's behaviour in this exchange as face threatening. For one

thing. Peter challenges George's assumption that what they should be doing together is retrospectively reviewing the preparation of the examination in which he fared so poorly, by attempting to short-circuit this activity (lines 64-67). Then too, he denies George the floor by means of the strategies of increasing volume and speed (line 57) and of putting words in George's mouth (lines 64-67). Perhaps most important, if Peter were attempting to redefine that part of the context concerned with their relationship, he would have used politeness strategies which signal such a relationship. However he is consistently voluble and shows a preference for low-numbered, particularly bald-on-record, solidarity strategies i.e. similar strategies to those used by George and consistent with a symmetrical solidarity politeness system. To return to the question of their views of the relationship between them, what Peter appears to be doing in this extract is not so much challenging George's assumptions about power and distance values, as implying that George, in insisting that they painstakingly work through a process which Peter finds very face threatening, is being unsympathetic i.e. behaving in a way not consistent with the relationship they both assume to be ideal. The idea that solidarity behaviour includes direct expressions not only of goodwill but also hostility, is commented on in chapter 3 (see pages 72-73).

In the light of what I had observed in the George - Peter encounter, I re-examined the George - Bongani encounter and

discovered that face considerations played an important role in that interaction as well.

Whereas Peter consistently uses what are low-numbered strategies in Brown and Levinson's diagram on page 73 (solidarity politeness), going on-record usually without any redressive action. Bongani tends to use high-numbered strategies (which correspond to Lakoff's distance and deference styles and which Scollon and Scollon refer to as deference politeness) including not performing the face threatening act i.e. being taciturn. These strategies are consistent with those used by the less powerful participant in the asymmetrical politeness system (+power, +distance) described by Brown and Levinson (see page 80). A clear example is his use of the address term "sir" (line 93), a deferential, high-numbered strategy which contrasts with the absence of any address term earlier in the interaction, and which represents an attempt to deal with what is becoming an ever more stressful encounter by signalling that he does not wish to challenge George in any way. Then too, Bongani's failure to claim the floor, and to resist attempts by George to take it from him, may be seen as going off-record or avoiding performing face-threatening acts i.e. being taciturn (strategies 4 & 5 in Brown and Levinson's diagram on page 76). Ironically, while deference strategies, and particularly taciturnity are intended to avoid imposition of negotiating ones view of the world (see page 78), Bongani's deference challenges George's view of the part of the context

concerned with their relationship, by disputing the values he assigns to distance and power.

We see, then, that an important source of asynchrony in both the George - Bongani and George - Peter encounters is behaviour which participants experience as face-threatening. However an important difference is that whereas George and Peter seem to share assumptions about the nature of that part of the context concerned with relationships, and about appropriate methods of presenting self (politeness strategies) in such a context, George and Bongani's assumptions are very different.

#### 4.7 CULTURALLY-SPECIFIC INTERACTIONAL STYLES AS SOURCES OF ASYNCHRONY

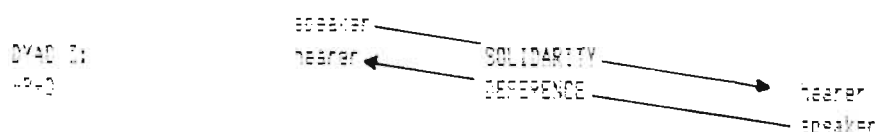
No doubt a number of explanations can be offered for Bongani consistently opting for deference strategies in circumstances where Jane and even Peter (also a male student who had not fared well in the examination) consistently opt for solidarity strategies. Included amongst these might be explanations in terms of the personalities of the participants, including their attitudes to people of different socio-cultural backgrounds from their own, and their past interactive experience and relationships. Without denying the possibility that such factors might have played a role, I want to suggest that Bongani behaves as he does partly because this behaviour is consistent with what is

viewed as a desirable interactional style in his culture and, therefore, a style that he has been socialized into. I want to suggest, further, that this style tends to be preferred because it offers its users certain (especially short-term) benefits, but that its use in intercultural communication contributes to asynchrony and to the generation of negative cultural stereotypes.

Before developing this argument further, I wish to stress that by style, here, I do not mean a distinct code with its own phonological or grammatical rules, or even a variety distinguishable by means of statistical counts of key items. Style in either of those senses is an analyst's category. What I have in mind, is a participants' category i.e. predispositions to behave communicatively in certain ways rather than others, and therefore the tendency to see certain features of the surface form of messages (markers of style) rather than others as having signalling value. Such predispositions are not just a product of previous interactive experience, but renegotiated in the course of each interaction i.e. style in this sense is dynamic rather than static.

As was noted in chapter 2, Brown and Levinson argue (page 79) that patterns of politeness strategies associated with the sorts of social relationships (dyads) which predominate in particular cultural groups contribute to distinctive interactional styles which constitute a crucial part of the

cultural ethos of that group. These styles, as Lakoff explains, become a target for the members of the group to aim at and to judge themselves and others by, since they represent that group's notion of how a good person should behave. I hypothesize that an important characteristic of the targeted interactional style of Zulu English speakers is the pattern of politeness behaviours associated with the third politeness system identified by Brown and Levinson i.e. solidarity politeness and, therefore, volubility used by the more powerful participant speaking "down" and deference politeness used by the less powerful participant speaking "up":



Other distinctive features of this style I hypothesize are the sets of schemata and contextualization cues Zulu English speakers make use of in interacting, some of which are identified above.

Evidence that what is represented in this diagram is the predominant type of social relationship amongst at least one Zulu community comes from ethnographic findings reported on by Chick and Claude (1985). They point out that studies of family relationships in the Valley of a Thousand Hills area, a densely populated peri-urban area of KwaZulu, reveal that asymmetrical relationships between parents and children are



typical, and that the asymmetry is particularly marked in the case of fathers and children. They report, further, that according to Zulu informants, such relationships extend beyond the family as well, and are true certainly of the relationships between male adults and children in general. Thus it is regarded as acceptable for adults to ask any child, including those who are strangers, to run errands for them, and for an adult to chastise a child who is not his own. Significantly, Chick and Claude also find evidence of the "leakage" of the interaction style associated with such relationships into the Zulu English interaction of classrooms in the area. Such interaction is characterized by teachers' volubility and pupils' individual taciturnity (most of the pupil's contributions taking the form of group chorusing).

Since, as the George - Bongani encounter illustrates, the consequences of using deference strategies are not always favourable, it is worth speculating about why deference behaviour should have become, for Zulu English, the targeted behaviour of persons taking on subordinate roles in interactions, and why it apparently continues to be such even in urban areas where there is more opportunity for interaction with members of groups who use different styles.

One reason could be their status as a dominated group in South African society over many years. As Brown and Levinson argue, the different global politeness systems are created as a consequence of the different ways groups typically treat

the factors D, P and W (see page 79). When the lowly status of a group persists over a long period of time, deferential behaviour associated with the less powerful participant in an asymmetrical politeness system can become a conventionalized, targeted communication style.

Related to this reason is another, namely, that deference politeness brings short-term benefits to people in relatively powerless positions in society. The high-numbered, deference strategies appear to be survival strategies adopted consistently by members of dominated groups in their interactions with members of dominant groups. It helps ensure that they do not seem to be challenging the authority of the more powerful persons they are interacting with, nor to be too familiar. Even when interacting within their own group, deference strategies seem to offer benefits. Chick and Claude show that a teacher and pupils in a classroom in the Valley of a Thousand Hills area co-ordinate their verbal and non-verbal behaviours in accomplishing the chorusing sequences so typical of classroom interaction in this area, in a remarkably synchronous way. They hypothesize that this is possible because they are able to draw on their shared implicit knowledge of the conventions associated with their culturally-preferred interactional style. Significantly, they show, further, that this style serves important social functions. They point out that universally the potential for face loss in classrooms is great, but that this is particularly so where relationships are asymmetrical. This is

because, in such circumstances, impositions tend to be treated very seriously. Chick and Claude show that the chorusing behaviour referred to earlier, enables the pupils to participate in ways that are not likely to occasion face loss. At the early stage of the lesson they analyse, pupils' opportunity to talk is reduced to group chorusing, which, for the most part, takes the form of confirmative responses, responses which are merely repeating information on the chalkboard, or information which has been re-cycled a number of times by the teacher. The individual pupil's need to save face is accomplished by the repetition of information which reduces the chances of being wrong in public, and by allowing him to participate (to feel that he belongs) but within the safety of the group.

Deference could have become targeted conventional behaviour for Zulu English speakers in subordinate roles for another reason: anecdotal evidence suggests that for them, despite the erosion of kinship ties, particularly in urban areas, the set of persons they want to be similar to and liked by (as opposed to the set they want merely to admire a special trait or ability they have) is larger than it is for S.A. English speakers (see Brown & Levinson 1978:249). The first set for S.A. English speakers usually includes only immediate family, close friends, and a select group of colleagues, whereas for Zulu English speakers, it usually includes kinship or peer group. This means that competitive, baldly on-record, solidarity strategies are more risky for Zulu English

speakers than for whites, which could account for stereotypes of Zulu English speakers as unwilling to innovate or to take risks and responsibilities. Significantly, 29 percent of S.A. English speaker respondents to the questionnaire (see Appendix B) described Zulu English speakers' behaviour as "modest and respectful" whenever the latter were asked by someone in authority about their (the Zulu English speakers') knowledge, abilities, or achievements; 28 percent described them as "rather unsure of themselves." Only 4 percent chose the response that the Zulu English speakers were "rather boastful or cocky," and only 3 percent that they were "confident and purposeful."

Another reason for deference becoming targeted behaviour could be the heavy weighting in terms of potential face loss given to certain activities by Zulu speakers (see Brown & Levinson 1978:249). For example, Gowlett (1979:7) has pointed out that, rather than risk the potential face loss of a confrontation with an employer, many blacks leave without notice, thus sacrificing their jobs. The querying of superiors' instructions, according to Gowlett, is similarly face threatening, which could account for the tendency for blacks to interpret as best they can instructions they do not fully understand, rather than ask for clarification. Seventy-nine percent of S.A. English speakers who completed the questionnaire referred to above chose the option that Bantu speakers "give the impression that they understand when they don't," in preference to the option that they tend "to

be so concerned with the facts that they often fail to sense what you mean" or the option that they "say so if they don't understand what you mean or want." Misunderstanding of intentions and motives from this source may underlie stereotypes of black employees as irresponsible and as lacking in initiative, self confidence, and openness.

Thus far I have attempted to explain why the deference behaviour associated with what I have identified as the distinctive interactional style of Zulu English speakers in subordinate roles has been preferred, and have pointed to a number of benefits it offers its users. To conclude I want to suggest that a style which serves Zulu English speakers well in some circumstances, often creates problems for them when interacting with S.A. English speakers.

Despite the fact that George and Bongani's communicative backgrounds overlap far less than do those of George and Peter, the encounter between the latter pair is no less synchronous than that between the former. However, significantly, the outcomes of these encounters are very different. The asynchrony in both encounters is stressful for the participants, but the degree of miscommunication is far greater in the George - Bongani encounter than in the George - Peter encounter. Whereas at a late stage in their interview Bongani is still uncertain as to what it is that George wants them to do together, Peter is clear at a very early stage of their interview what George's intentions are. The asynchrony

in the latter stems not from uncertainty about the activity, but from Peter's disputing as to whether this is something that George should put him through. Perhaps most important, is the effect of these encounters on George's evaluation of their attitudes and abilities. While, as a consequence of the interview, George judges Peter as over-sensitive, he does not see him as less able than he is. By contrast, his interview with Bongani leads George to perceive him, probably erroneously, as having few ideas of his own and as being unlikely to be able to take initiative for his own learning.

On its own the interaction between George and Bongani is not very significant except for the participants. However, it is possible to see that a number of such unsatisfactory encounters can, over time, contribute to biographies of students (and in work situations of employees) as less competent than they are. Judgements which can "leak" into more formal evaluation procedures. Still more important, negative evaluations of individuals when they recur over a number of interactions tend to be generalized to the group as a whole, and where such generalizations are already a part of a person's cultural knowledge, they tend to be confirmed. In this way, I suggest, negative cultural stereotypes are generated and confirmed.

My experience suggests that there are a number of situations (many of them gatekeeping situations - see page 111) such as job interviews and university seminars and tutorials in which

the targeted style for S.A. English speakers is symmetrical solidarity behaviour (that which is consistent with the first of the dyads illustrated by Brown and Levinson - see page 80). In such situations S.A. English speakers who hold most of the positions of power tend to expect the less powerful participants (the student or job interviewees) to "exhibit" or "display" (see Scollon and Scollon 1981) i.e. to be voluble and to risk sharing their schematic worlds. Zulu English speakers, however, tend to assume that it is the more powerful participant who should be voluble, and that deference is appropriate behaviour from less powerful participants. What potentially compounds the confusion is that the solidarity behaviour consistent with the symmetrical solidarity politeness system preferred by S.A. English speakers in these situations is often indistinguishable from that associated with the more powerful participant in the asymmetrical system preferred by Zulu English speakers. Thus solidarity behaviour by S.A. English speakers is sometimes perceived of by Zulu English speakers in terms of their own pattern, as power play e.g. banter or teasing is frequently misinterpreted. By the same token, when Zulu English speakers show deference where S.A. English speakers are expecting solidarity, they are often perceived as silent, withdrawn and insufficiently assertive. Since, in trying to repair such situations, S.A. English speakers usually opt for further solidarity and Zulu English speakers for further deference, the asynchronous effect is often cumulative.

This account suggests a partial explanation for the perceptions (stereotypes?) of white supervisors in the Durban area of their black employees (see Griessel and Schlemmer 1985:10) that

- they find it difficult to give instructions to whites:
- they behave towards whites in a deferential way (i.e. like children):
- they do not relate on a person-to-person level to whites:
- they lack a sense of humour:
- they do not mix socially:
- they do not question superiors. It often becomes clear that black employees do not understand instructions, yet they hardly ever query instructions or give feedback in the communication process.

Before closing, I need to add that I recognize that this account of culturally-specific styles is a gross oversimplification. Clearly it will always be possible to point to a particular Zulu English speaker whose interactional style does not correspond to that described as typical for the group. Even if one were to ignore the possibility that there is movement in what a particular group considers an ideal style at any one time (and here one needs to allow for the possibility that the pace of movement is greater in urban than in rural areas) the style of any one



individual is likely to be more or less typical. This is the source of generalizations about individuals as, for example, extroverted or introverted. Such judgements are clearly made in terms of the targeted behaviour of a particular cultural group, so that a person who in terms of conventions of a particular culture is viewed as extroverted may in terms of the very different conventions of another be perceived of as introverted. Another source of inconsistency is that targetted styles are usually not considered appropriate in all contexts or situations. Thus a speaker who behaves in an appropriately deferential manner in a wide range of situations when interacting with members of his own cultural group, may find it "natural" and comfortable to "display" in different situations and be rewarded by his group for doing so. Another source of inconsistency is that, as Lakoff observes (see page 73) communication styles are conventionalized behaviour and that in the context of long-standing relationships participants come to feel that it is safe to drop this conventionalized behaviour and behave as they really feel. Inconsistency from this source, incidently is a further source of miscommunication. S.A. English speakers sometimes do not recognize that the deference displayed by Zulu English speakers is in fact conventional or customary rather than what is really felt. When, then, Zulus refuse to be "treated as doormats," as their deferential behaviour appears to invite, or submit resentfully to it, they are perceived as unreliable, fickle, inconsistent, or even illogical.

#### 4.8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The focus of this chapter is on what the analyses of interactional data following methods developed by interactional sociolinguists reveals about the sources and consequences of miscommunication in Zulu English - S.A. English encounters. This adds to our understanding of the relationship between language and context by revealing how socio-cultural information enters into the interpretation.

The fine-grained analyses of two intracultural encounters and one intercultural encounters reveals that intracultural communication may be as asynchronous as intercultural communication. They also show, however, that the sources of such asynchrony, in each case, are very different, as also are the consequences of the asynchrony. There is evidence in this data that culturally-specific schemata, systematic differences in contextualization cues and different preferred modes for presenting self (politeness behaviours) are major sources of asynchrony in intercultural communication. Such differences, I hypothesize, characterize culturally-preferred interactional styles, so that asynchrony in intercultural encounters may be explained in terms of mis-matches of interactional styles. There is also evidence that in the intracultural encounters the participants, to a marked extent, shared assumptions about preferred interactional styles in the interview situation, so that conflict rather

than a mismatch of styles needs to be posited as the source of asynchrony. Another way of expressing this difference, is that whereas asynchrony in one of the intracultural encounters (that between George and Peter) is not accompanied by significant miscommunication, miscommunication is marked in the intercultural encounter, as a consequence of which the Zulu English student is judged as less competent than he is. It is suggested that where such negative evaluations of individuals recur over a number encounters, they tend to be generalized to the cultural group as a whole. In this way negative cultural stereotypes, features of the wider macro context, are interactionally generated in the micro contexts of everyday conversational exchanges.

Of course, because they are based on the findings of the analysis of a limited data sample, these conclusions need to be seen as tentative only. In order to further test the adequacy of the explanation of the sources and consequences of asynchrony in intercultural communication, it is necessary, I suggest, to analyse not merely further Zulu English - S.A. English encounters, but also, for reasons outlined in chapter 5 (see page 224), encounters between members of these groups and members of other groups. With this in mind, I carried out a further case study, this time involving Afrikaans English - S.A. English encounters. I report on this research in chapter 5.

N.B. I am George in the interviews.

## 5.0 SOURCES AND CONSEQUENCES OF ASYNCHRONY IN AFRIKAANS ENGLISH - S.A. ENGLISH INTERACTION

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

To further examine the contribution of interactional sociolinguistics to the understanding of the relationship between language and context I report, in this chapter, on a project involving the video recording and analyses of a number of intercultural encounters between, in this case, native speakers of Afrikaans (Afrikaans English speakers) and of English (S.A. English speakers).

In chapter 4 an explanation of this relationship is offered in terms of how socio-cultural information in the form of culturally-specific interactional styles contributes to asynchrony in intercultural encounters, in the context of which participants are misinterpreted and misevaluated, and negative cultural stereotypes generated. The main purpose of the research reported on in this chapter is to investigate whether this explanation holds also for Afrikaans English - S.A. English interaction. In other words, the purpose is to test the assumption that in such encounters, also, culturally-specific interactional styles contribute to asynchrony, which results in misinterpretation, misevaluation, and the generation of negative cultural

stereotypes. A secondary purpose is to establish what some of the distinctive features of such putative styles are i.e. what schemata and contextualization cues do the two groups rely on in establishing what activity they are engaged in, and in establishing the coherence of their talk, and what ways of presenting self (politeness strategies) do they prefer in constituting that part of the context concerned with relationships.

## 5.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The opportunity to collect data which would enable me to investigate whether culturally-specific interactional styles were sources of asynchrony in interactions between Afrikaans English and S.A. English speakers, and, if so, what the nature of these styles is, was provided by English language courses which, together with two colleagues, I designed and conducted for an Afrikaans banking organization.

Before designing the course we were informed that the bank was attempting to expand from its base in predominantly Afrikaans-speaking areas of the country, into English-speaking ones. Progress towards a greater share of the English-speaking market was slower than the bank desired, and its training department had identified as one of the inhibiting factors the poor quality of interaction between managers and senior personnel, and English-speaking clients.

This they saw as caused by what they perceived as the bankers' inadequate knowledge of the English language, and expressed the view that a language laboratory programme might be a suitable solution.

From the beginning we were sceptical about both the diagnosis and suggested solution. Though the training department had more information about their personnel than we had access to, we found it difficult to perceive them in deficit terms. For one thing, they are people who have completed at least ten years of study of English at school; who probably have had considerable exposure to English television, and who possibly, for various periods of time, have lived in predominantly English-speaking communities. They are also people who have risen to relatively high positions in their profession and therefore can be assumed to be more than reasonably competent in the communicative aspects of their jobs, at least when interacting with Afrikaans-speaking clients. We therefore guessed that they would have a high level of linguistic competence in both English and Afrikaans, and that they would be pragmatically competent in terms of the socio-cultural norms of the Afrikaans community, if not those of the English community. Evidence from their performance in written and spoken tasks during the course and the post-course evaluations suggested that we had guessed accurately.

Perhaps most important, we were dissuaded from a deficit view

of the needs of these bankers by our reading in interactional sociolinguistics. Interactional sociolinguistics, as was noted in chapter two, presents a view of communicative competence (which embraces both linguistic and pragmatic competence) as less what is in individual heads (i.e. knowledge) or even what an individual displays in interaction, and more what is mutually accomplished by all the participants in an interaction. What this means in the particular circumstances of these bankers, is that culpability for unsuccessful interactions between the bankers and S.A. English-speaking clients would need to be ascribed to both parties, and not to the bankers alone.

### 5.3 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND THE LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA COLLECTED

From our point of view as course designers, and from my point of view as researcher, data collection would, ideally, have taken the form of video recordings of interactions between the bankers and their S.A. English speaking clients in their actual working situations, and completed early enough for the findings of the analyses of the data to have informed the course design. Because we did not have the resources (time and money) for such a procedure, we chose the option of video recording simulated banker-client interviews which were scheduled early in the courses. Each course was a week in duration.

As is noted in the discussion of methods of data collection in chapter 3 (see page 112), what is questionable about simulated interactions as sources of data, is how authentic the data collected in this manner really are. To try to ensure that the interviews were as close to those experienced in their work situation as possible, the bankers were encouraged to bring to the interview anything that would make the situation more like it would be at work. Then too, although the roles were prescribed (those of banker and client) the topics for discussion, the goals of the participants, and the manner in which those goals were to be arrived at were left very open-ended. The bankers were told that prospective clients would be coming with genuine requests for information concerning overdrafts, opening accounts, investment possibilities and so on, and that they were to treat the clients' requests as authentic ones, and give the type of advice/information that they would normally give, and make the judgements they would normally make. The "clients" were asked to choose what was a real life problem for them, in relation to which they would welcome the advice/information/services supplied by a banker.

Evidence that some of the bankers felt that their interview lacked authenticity came from their claim that, in the real situation, they would have performed better. Then, too, it needs to be acknowledged that the simulated interviews differ from what takes place in the work situation in a number of ways. For one thing, the very open-endedness of the



simulated interviews, which was intended to contribute to the goal of authenticity, ironically, introduced an artificial note. It was not possible to match up the clients with bankers who were experienced in dealing with their particular problems, something which would usually take place in the work situation. Some of the bankers, therefore, were placed in the situation of having to deal with a matter they were insufficiently well informed about. Related to this, is the fact that some of the bankers were obliged to grapple with problems without the aid of props such as tables, prescribed forms and so on, which are available in their work situation. Another difference which may have contributed to the participants not behaving entirely naturally, was the recording process itself. The video-recording necessitated the presence of not merely a more obtrusive recording device than was the case with the sound recordings for the project reported on in chapter 4, but the presence, also, of a projectionist. Interestingly, though, although we had anticipated that the bankers would complain that this interfered with their performance, almost unanimously they stated that after a couple of minutes they forgot about the recording.

The most significant difference, in my view, is that the consequences for the participants of the outcome of the interview were different from what they would be in a real situation. Although the clients were asked to bring real problems to the interviews, for the most part, they were not

anticipating that these problems would be solved in the interviews i.e. it did not really matter to them if they did not get the services, facilities, advice they were looking for, and this would probably have made them more tolerant of what they perceived of as incompetence, rudeness, and so on, than they would have been in the real situation. By the same token, the bankers knew that they did not have to suffer the consequences of unwise generosity, or of losing a valuable client.

On the other hand, the similarities are probably greater than the differences. Although the consequences of the outcomes of simulated and real interviews would probably be different, what would probably have made the simulated interviews as potentially stressful as real interviews, at least for the bankers, is the knowledge that their performances would subsequently be observed and judged by their peers. Internal evidence of the authenticity of many of the interactions also came in the form of comments like: "I mean...., is your bank genuinely able to provide that facility?" The fact that some of the "clients" subsequently went on to do business with the bank provided external evidence of authenticity. The opinions of non-participants about how authentic the interviews were, were also elicited, which meant that data which were considered dubiously authentic could be excluded.

In sum, although it is reasonable to have doubts about the authenticity of all the data, and while portions of some

interviews are clearly inauthentic, I believe that there are grounds for arguing that there is sufficient similarity between them and real interviews, for at least tentative generalizations about how the participants behave interactionally in real situations, to be based on the data collected (or at least that part judged authentic by observers).

In all, 32 interviews were recorded. Although the client, in each case, was a fluent English speaker, it was not possible to get sufficient numbers of native born S.A. English speakers. Thus, for the purposes of research, only the 18 interviews that involved native born S.A. English speakers (or, in one case, an English speaker who, although born out of South Africa had lived in the country from a very early age) were considered. Without exception the clients were university personell, either academics or administrative staff.

#### 5.4 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

The presence of the bankers on campus for the purposes of the courses, and the fact that the recordings were used for teaching purposes, provided excellent opportunities for eliciting these participants' interpretations of what took place in the interviews, thus helping to ensure a convergence between analyst's and participants' viewpoints. Inhibiting

factors, in this respect, were the limited time available and the fact that, for this and other reasons, the analysis of the interviews had to be done initially in a group context. As the description of the methods in chapter 3 shows, the close-grained sociolinguistic analysis of interactions is a very time-consuming process in which analyst and informant have to view and review the recordings a great number of times, and in which the analyst has to elicit from the informant interpretations, judgements and other information about progressively finer details of the discourse. Since the learning needs of the bankers had to be given priority over my research needs, it was not possible to schedule sessions with individual informants during the courses. Then too, although it is possible to elicit the interpretations of a group of informants at the same time, my experience is that, where informants are also the participants in the interactions being examined, they often find it difficult to be as frank and open about their interpretations in a group context, particularly when that group includes their peers.

For this reason, the methods of analysis employed while the courses were in progress were limited to eliciting the participants' perceptions of how successful the interviews had been, of whether they had achieved their goals or not, of the general level of synchrony/asynchrony, and of how the interviews affected their views of the other participant's attitudes, motives and abilities. Closer analysis was left until a later date. Thus, immediately after the conclusion of

the interviews, clients and bankers were asked to complete written questionnaires designed to elicit such general perceptions (see appendix C for further details). The following day the bankers were given the opportunity to view the recording of the interview they were involved in, and, in order to see whether or not their perceptions changed or not when they were observers, they were asked to complete the questionnaire again. In the final session of the course, the bankers were given the opportunity to view the interviews involving all the bankers on their course (between 7 and 10 in all), and, at the conclusion of each, asked about their general perceptions of each. Thereafter they were informed about the participants' own perceptions of the interviews, and, to carry the analysis one stage further, were asked to suggest, by referring to the details of the interaction, what could account for such perceptions. However, because of the limited time available (which meant that it was not possible to replay the portions referred to, to check on the accuracy of recall and on the plausibility of the explanations) and the fact that, at that stage, transcripts were not available, what could be achieved by this means was limited.

At a later stage certain of the interviews were selected for transcription and closer analysis using the same methods as those used in the project reported on in chapter 4, and using as informants the clients and independent viewers who share the socio-cultural backgrounds of either the bankers or the clients.

## 5.5 CULTURALLY-SPECIFIC STYLES AS SOURCES OF ASYNCHRONY

Since the main purpose of this study was to test the assumption that a mismatch in interactional styles can account in part for asynchrony in Afrikaans English - S.A. English interactions, it was necessary, as a first stage in the analysis, to identify instances of asynchrony. Since interactional sociolinguistic accounts of interruption (see chapter 3) lead me to believe that measures of asynchrony are to be arrived more accurately by finding out how participants experience interactions, than by counting instances of structural irregularities (such as overlapping speech at what is not a "possible completion point"), I turned to the questionnaires for guidance. The participants' responses to the direct question about how stressful they found the interviews, and more indirect questions relating to their evaluation of the other participants and to the outcome of the interview (e.g. whether they would welcome or avoid future contact) were used to provide a rough and ready measure of the level of asynchrony, on the basis of which the 6 "most asynchronous" interviews were selected for closer analysis.

Before outlining some of the more significant findings which emerged from the analyses, I wish to emphasize that I did not assume that a mis-match of styles would be responsible

for all asynchrony experienced. The analysis of the George - Peter encounter reported in chapter 4 shows very clearly that sources of asynchrony can be other than cultural. I was also aware that a potential source of discomfort for some of the bankers and, therefore, also for their clients might be an inadequate knowledge of English grammar and lexis, which, though not without cultural content, is possibly more accurately classified as linguistic than as cultural. The assumption I attempted to test is that a mismatch of culturally-specific interactional styles is the source of at least some of the asynchrony experienced.

An interview which appears to provide some support for this assumption is one involving an academic, Mark, who in the interview, is introduced to the banker by title, Professor, and surname, and one of the bankers, Kallie, who, again, is introduced by title, Mister, and surname. Only a portion of this interview is examined here, though, to contextualize this, and to allow the reader to search for an alternative interpretation to that offered here, a description is given of the part of the interview which precedes it.

The interview opens with informal discussion initiated by Kallie about the academic's disciplinary affiliation, and the bank's interest in doing business in the Durban area. Kallie then asks Mark how he can help him, and Mark talks at some length about the source of funds he wishes to invest, and the fact that, and reasons why, he wants advice on how best to

invest the sum on a short term and then later on a long term basis. Kallie advises fixed interest investments with the bank. Mark queries the wisdom of this, suggesting that the tax may be punitive. He asks whether the share market would not be a better alternative, and is warned against it on the grounds that a layman would be out of his depth. Mark then suggests unit trusts, and is told that that, too, is inadvisable because of its link with the stock exchange. The interview continues:

121. MARK: is that not safe  
 122. KALLIE: no it is safe but a I think you have  
 123. more flexibility if you stay with the more (unclear)..  
 124. MARK: I mean are you not a a is  
 125. your bank into the share the share market at all I mean are  
 126. you not advising me to to avoid that because (smiling) that's  
 127. no business for your bank  
 128. KALLIE (smiling): no certainly I'd like  
 129. to keep your business with myself  
 130. MARK: va  
 131. KALLIE: so I must bring you  
 132. back into a fixed interest investment with ourselves  
 133. MARK: I see...  
 134. but I (quickening up) mean are you thinking principally  
 135. of your interest or my interest in this (unclear)...  
 136. KALLIE (smiling): no obviously  
 137. the client's interest is paramount so I must give  
 138. you the best package which I believe is a.....

Quite apart from the participants' own reports on the general level of asynchrony of the interview as a whole, namely that they found this interview stressful at times (item 1 in the questionnaire), there is some internal evidence of asynchrony. In this extract there are two instances of overlapping speech (lines 123 & 124 and 135 & 136) which would probably have been experienced as interruptions i.e. competitive, face-threatening behaviour. Further evidence that the participants failed to co-ordinate their behaviour



synchronously, and in a way which matched up with their expectations, is Mark's subsequent observation that Kallie's responses to his queries "came too quickly", which he interpreted as superficial slickness.

An examination of the politeness strategies employed by the participants and the contextualization cues by which these are signalled and interpreted, give some hint as to the source of the asynchrony. In lines 124-127 and 134-135 Mark challenges the soundness of Kallie's advice, which is face-threatening behaviour. That he is aware of the potential for face-loss and attempts to off-set this, is evident from his action of smiling (and here we see the advantage of video over sound recording as a source of data), an expression of solidarity, and his choice of interrogative form, an indirect, deference strategy. Although Kallie seems to interpret the significance of the cue, smiling, accurately, for he responds to it by smiling himself, he apparently fails to see the cue of the interrogative form as salient. Brown and Levinson (1978:253) explain that "the fact that indirect acts are highly conventionalized in English means that in most circumstances using an indirect act implicates that the speaker is trying to respect the hearer's negative face." If Kallie's behaviour here is typical, and the other data suggests that it is, then one of the culturally-distinctive characteristics of Afrikaans English is that, in it, indirectness (Brown and Levinson's off-record strategy) is not a conventionalised means of expressing politeness. To

return to this extract, the interrogative form serves as a face-saving strategy by leaving Kallie the face-saving option of interpreting the utterance as a question rather than an accusation, the speech act which S.A. English-speaking informants felt Mark intended to imply. The options open to someone accused, are to admit guilt or deny it, and at face value Kallie seems to accept guilt (lines 128-129)

128. KALLIE (smiling): no certainly I'd like

129. to keep your business with myself

and then, when pressed further, deny it (lines 136-139).

136. KALLIE (smiling): no obviously

137. the client's interest is paramount so I must give

138. you the best package which I believe is a.....

Significantly though, in both cases, he does so while smiling (solidarity behaviour) which means that either he is showing a callous disregard of the face-threat involved in accusations, denials and inconsistency of responses to repeated accusations, or he feels that less loss of face is involved than most S.A. English-speaking informants, including Mark, feel there is. The latter of these two interpretations is supported by Kallie's written observations about the interview after viewing the recording for the first time. Clearly he did not consider either his or Mark's behaviour as offensive. Asked to reflect on his own behaviour and that of Mark he observed: "I allowed the client to feel comfortable and that he was in charge of the conversation i.e. to freely challenge me" and "The client did not become agitated when I disagreed with his views and ultimately

accepted my views". The second observation is at odds with Mark's observation after the interview that he was completely unconvinced by Kallie's argument, and that he was offended by what he perceived as an attempt to force him into an investment which was in the bank's interest rather than his own, as also is his response in the questionnaire (item 2) that he would not consult Kallie again.

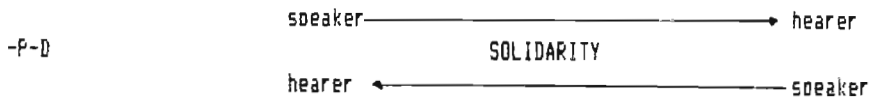
The role of politeness behaviours in the miscommunication here suggests what may be partly responsible for the asynchrony of this extract, the differences in the interpretations of the participants, and Mark's negative evaluation: a mismatch in their perceptions of the relationship between them, and an inability to negotiate that part of the context concerned with a mutually acceptable definition of that relationship, because they do not share preferences for particular kinds of politeness behaviours, and do not always recognize the cues which signal such behaviours.

In chapter 4 (page 173) I hypothesized that the targeted style for S.A. English speakers in a number of key situations is symmetrical solidarity behaviour. What the interviews involving the bankers reveal is that, in those situations at least, S.A. English speakers display a mixture of solidarity and deference politeness, and that the deference strategy of indirectness is particularly favoured. This is something that is brought into sharp focus by its apparently being

dispreferred by Afrikaans English speakers. Such a mis-match could account for the negative cultural stereotypes of S.A. English speakers referred to by one Afrikaans English informant, namely "that they don't say what they mean" and that in conversation "hulle loop met 'n draai" (literally - they walk an indirect route"). What the apparent mixture of styles suggests, is that the interactional ethos of the S.A. English speaking group is in a state of transition, with a movement from a preference for symmetrical deference politeness which, according to Brown and Levinson is targeted behaviour in the U.K. to a preference, in at least some situations, for symmetrical solidarity politeness which, according to the same source, is preferred in the western U.S.A.. To represent this diagrammatically, the movement is from

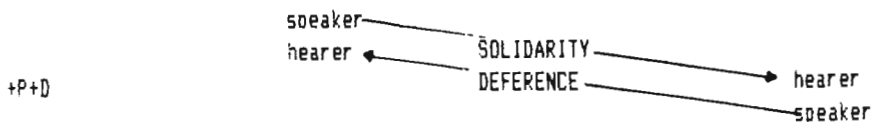


to

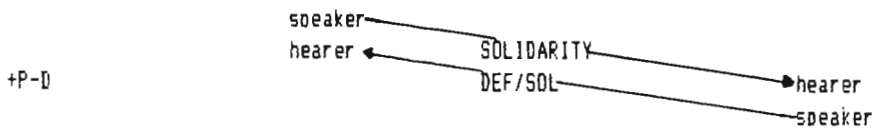


The interviews suggest, further, that, by contrast, the targeted politeness system for Afrikaans English speakers, at least when communicating with strangers, is similar to that preferred by Zulu English speakers, namely solidarity behaviour on the part of the participant who has higher status, and deference on the part of the less powerful

participant. This can be represented as follows:



However, while in most of the interviews the bankers seem to behave in a manner consistent with such a putative interactional style, they do not in all. Prompted by what I observed in these exceptions, and by the findings of certain sociolinguistic studies (about which more below), I hypothesize that the preferred style when communicating within the group, which would usually be in the medium of Afrikaans rather than English, is one in which status differences are emphasized but in which distance is minimized. In this politeness system, higher status participants, as in the other preferred system, express solidarity politeness (though, as I explain below, choosing "softer" forms of solidarity such as "terms of endearment") and the lower status participants a mixture of solidarity and deference politeness. This can be represented diagrammatically as follows:



Support for the notion that S.A. English and Afrikaans English speakers, typically or conventionally treat the factors of power and distance differently, comes from a number of sources. Odendal (1976) provides evidence that the

Afrikaans community emphasizes status differences more than the English speaking community does (And here we need to remind ourselves that, according to Brown and Levinson (1978:255), in communities where power or status differences tend to be emphasized there is the tendency for superiors to use solidarity, and particularly bald-on-record strategies, when speaking to subordinates and for the latter to use deference politeness in response). He notes that, by comparison with American English norms (described by Ervin Tripp 1972), there is within the Afrikaans-speaking community a wider range of status-marked situations where "status is clearly specified, speech style is rigidly prescribed, and the form of address of each person is derived from his social identity" (Ervin Tripp 72:227). Ways in which status differences and specifically deference to persons of high status is signalled, is the honorific "u", an option which is not available in English, except in conservative religious discourse i.e. "thee" and "thou". Another way of showing deference is the use of what Odendal refers to as "sydelingse aanspreekwyse" (lateral address forms), namely, the use of family and formal titles, sometimes repeated in the same utterance, in referring to the speaker, where, in English, the second person "you" would be used e.g.

"Goeie oom, kan ek oom help?" (Good morning uncle, can I help uncle?)

"Kan buurman vir my se.....?" (Can you tell me neighbour...)

"Meneer kan maar vir meneer se seun ook vra. (Sir can also ask sir's son)

By contrast, it would sound very archaic to an English hearer to be addressed;

"Excuse me neighbour....."

It is interesting, though, to note some instances of "sydelingse vorme" in English in such hierarchical organizations as schools and the army:

"Sir, can I ask sir a favour?"

or even

"Mr Headmaster, sir, I would like to ....."

In the banker - client interview I found evidence which suggests that these conventionalized ways of treating the factor of power in Afrikaans influence the ways in which Afrikaans speakers use English. However, it is not only in terms of the way they treat the factor of power that S.A. English and Afrikaans English speakers differ. What apparently contributes as much to the distinctive Afrikaans interactional style, is how distance is treated. It would appear that in many situations Afrikaners emphasize distance much less than English speakers do when speaking. This could account for the extension of kinship terms such as "oom" (uncle) and "tannie" (auntie) well beyond those with whom the speaker has blood ties. It is, incidentally, interesting to note the leakage of Afrikaner norms in this respect into the English-speaking community where, for example, the terms "uncle" and "auntie" are widely used by children addressing adults who are close family friends.

As noted above, what seems crucial in determining whether this demphasizing of distance affects the choice of politeness strategies (whether the first or second of the styles illustrated above is chosen) is the identification of the hearer as either "in-group" or "out-group". Where subordinate hearers are perceived of as not belonging to the group (as being strangers rather than "volk"), bald-on-record strategies seem to be preferred. Where subordinate hearers are perceived of as in-group, solidarity is signalled not baldly, but softened by teasing, joking and what Wolfson and Manes (1980) refer to as "terms of endearment". Such strategies belong to a sub-category of what Brown and Levinson (1978) term "solidarity politeness". What distinguishes this sub-category is that all strategies involve the mechanism of claiming common ground. An example of "terms of endearment" is the wide use of diminutives: "kindjie" (little child); "niggie" (little female cousin); "neefie" (little male cousin); "liefie" (little love). Steenkamp (ms) observes, perceptively, that these diminutives "are ways of re-inforcing the power co-efficient but in such a way that the concomitant element of protectiveness is uppermost e.g. I (Mamma) am big and powerful - you (kindjie) are small and vulnerable - I undertake to look after you." Terms of endearment such as "dear" or "sweetie" are also used by English speakers speaking "downwards", but apparently less frequently, especially by men. Since "softened" forms of solidarity politeness are highly conventionalized in Afrikaans, their use implicates that the speaker is trying to



respect the hearer's need to be accepted and appreciated i.e. to belong. Below I present evidence which suggest that higher-status Afrikaans English speakers sometimes use this form of solidarity behaviour when interacting with strangers i.e. they treat them as if they were members of the in-group even though they are not. This is consistent with the second hypothesized Afrikaans English interactional style described above (see page 186).

Solidarity forms of the in-group variety are apparently also used more often by Afrikaansers in addressing equals (e.g. ou man (old man); ou kerel (old boy); ou bul (old bull); ou kat (old cat)) and even when speaking "upwards" (e.g. prof., dok. (doc.) en doom. (rev.)). This suggests that, in in-group interactions, Afrikaans speakers addressing superiors use a mixture of deference and solidarity politeness, which is also consistent with second hypothesized Afrikaans English style described above. By contrast, "old man" and "old boy" are considered British public school and used, usually, only for parody purposes, while "prof." is rarely used by junior colleagues (c.f. Odendal 76:111) and "rev." seldom if ever used.

Evidence that lower-status individuals behave in accordance with the perception of a +POWER/-DEFERENCE relationship within the Afrikaans community is supplied by Steenkamp (ms). In her mother - children (2 girls aged 7 and 10) interactional data she found that in every instance where a

child addresses her mother, she uses, instead of the appropriate second person form, "jy" (you) or "jou" (your), the third person "Mamma", thus according status (+power) to her i.e. a deference strategy. Significantly, though, she does not find any evidence in her data of the extreme deference strategy of taciturnity which the research reported on in chapter 4 suggested is preferred by lower status Zulu English speakers. Significantly, also, not once is another highly conventionalized means of conferring status used, namely the honorific "u", probably because, according to Steenkamp, the distance implied in its use is too great for the relationship involved. The de-emphasising of distance may also explain the volubility of the children in her data. She also points to an instance in her data where the mother exploits the signalling value of the contextualization cue "Mamma" in her culture. In the relevant extract the mother gives the same instruction three times, the first two times using "ek" (I) but the third time using "Mamma". In this way she reminds the children that the context they are in is one characterized by a +POWER/-DISTANCE relationship (or as Steenkamp puts it, the mother offsets the face loss involved in not having an instruction carried out by "pulling rank" and indirectly demanding deference) but, at the same time, reminds them of the close-knit nature of their relationship and of the obligations associated with such a relationship. However, no instances of in-group solidarity behaviour from lower-status Afrikaans English speakers are evident in the banker-client data. This could possibly be because

lower-status individuals fear that higher-status individuals from another group will be offended if they are treated as if they were members of an in-group when they are not. Further investigation is necessary to see whether this aspect of the second hypothesized Afrikaans English style needs to be revised.

To show what this account of the culturally-specific interactional styles of the two groups can contribute to an understanding of the sources of asynchrony, it is necessary to examine the Mark - Kallie encounter further. According to Afrikaans informants, Kallie would have perceived Mark, who is older and better educated than himself, as the superior, and as "out-group". He would, therefore, probably have expected Mark to use predominantly bald-on-record strategies. Instead we note that even where Mark feels himself imposed upon (his negative face threatened) he adopts such deferential strategies as the use of the interrogative form in accusing, and such neutral feedback as "I see" (line 13). By this response he apparently means "I hear you but am not convinced", but the banker probably interpreted it as acceptance. Kallie's consistent failure to interpret the meanings implicit in the deferential (off-record/indirect) politeness employed by Mark, could account for Kallie's perception that, despite some asynchronous phases, the interview had been a mutually satisfactory one.

Mark's perception of the relationship between them was quite

absence of expected behaviour. I suggest that what Mark is implying in what he says in lines 124-127

124. MARK: I mean are you not a a is  
 125. your bank into the share market at all I mean are  
 126. you not advising me to avoid that because (smiling) that's  
 127. no business for your bank

and 134-135

134. but I (quickenino up) mean are you thinking princioally  
 135. of your interest or my interest in this

is that Kallie is not conforming to his expectation that he would appear (even if only hypocritically) to put Mark's interests before those of the bank. One possible explanation of why Kallie failed to meet Mark's expectations, is that he is incompetent. However, such an explanation is at odds with the unanimous positive evaluation Kallie received from his peers, when, at the end of the course, they viewed the recordings. This points to another possible explanation in terms of culturally-specific schemata. I hypothesize that Mark's expectations described in the previous paragraph, reflect culturally-specific schemata. One such schema includes the expectation that an investment advisor is expected to suggest a number of possible investment options, and together with the client work out the advantages and disadvantages of each in terms of the client's specific circumstances and needs. This is a schema which Kallie apparently does not have access to. Another such schema

includes expectations about how people establish their credibility. In the light of what takes place in a number of the interviews (including the one between Mark and Kallie) and a comparison between business correspondence emanating from Afrikaans orientated and English orientated banking institutions (see Adendorff, Chick and Seneque 1985), I hypothesize that Afrikaans English speakers tend to try to establish their credibility by being emphatic and consistent (and therefore assume that this will be convincing to others), while S.A. English speakers tend to do so by presenting themselves as empathetic. This might also explain why Kallie does not suggest a number of different investment options, why his responses to Mark's suggestions is to briefly point out one or two negative features of them, why he does not compare different options, why he does not attempt to relate the various options to Mark's particular circumstances and needs, and, above all, why he does not shift his position at all in response to Mark's queries and arguments. This analysis suggests a partial explanation for the negative cultural stereotypes of Afrikaans English speakers as conservative, authoritarian, inflexible and dogmatic.

Further evidence of the validity of the assumption that a mis-match of culturally-specific interactional styles is the source of asynchrony, and that the distinguishing features of these styles are as described, comes from an interview between Bob, who is in his early thirties, and Johan, a

banker in his late forties:

1. BOB: va no I've ... just got some questions about a um a portfolio I'm  
 2. member of staff in the university and I never seem to find enough money  
 3. to be able to save and (speeding up) I'm just getting a little  
 4. concerned about it so what I ... what I'd like to get from you is a  
 5. some advice on organizing my investment portfolio at the moment I  
 6. don't have one ... I don't I don't manage to put aside any money at  
 7. all to save so what I am looking at is all the different  
 8. possibilities that are open to me  
 9. JOHAN: so at this stage you've got no  
 10. savings account no nothing at all  
 11. BOB: nothing at all  
 12. JOHAN: so you work  
 13. on a current account on a creditor basis  
 14. BOB: yes ... an I am putting in a  
 15. voluntary contribution into my because that's subsidized by the  
 16. government ... so ... I'm paying an extra R200 into my into my bond  
 17. which will pay off the bond in 7 years so ... in a sense I would regard  
 18. that as an investment ...  
 19. JOHAN: (starts to speak)  
 20. BOB: other than that I'm I'm not saving anything  
 21. JOHAN: are you having a budget every month do you work on a budget  
 22. BOB: no not  
 23. really  
 24. JOHAN: ja  
 25. BOB: jus work on a month to month basis (continues.)  
 26. JOHAN: ja I think that it is  
 27. very much important especially for I I presume if you you are married  
 28. BOB: yes va  
 29. JOHAN: your wife does the budget I believe ... and a ... the best  
 30. thing is to do is to have a budget every month  
 31. BOB: va  
 32. JOHAN: an to see what amount you can save  
 33. BOB: right  
 34. JOHAN: and ... open a  
 35. savings account w w w with a with an amount that is R50 is the new  
 36. amount at the moment and a save ev every month sign a sto order from  
 37. the current account  
 38. BOB: va  
 39. JOHAN: to to the savings account ever month and when  
 40. when when it's accrued to about a agh at least about R100 R200 or  
 41. something  
 42. BOB: a  
 43. JOHAN: just put that into fixed deposit  
 44. BOB: va  
 45. JOHAN: for about a year  
 46. or two years  
 47. BOB: a  
 48. JOHAN: where you your rates are 14 14.5 at the moment  
 49. BOB: va  
 50. JOHAN: and then I would also advise a you can q- you income tax  
 51. your income tax problems  
 52. BOB: a  
 53. JOHAN: any income tax problems

54. BOB: m  
55. JOHAN: there's annuity  
56. BOB: va  
57. JOHAN: (lower volume) dealing kind of you know a substantial amount to annuity  
58. for 10 years (volume rises ) that is also tax free  
59. BOB: right  
60. JOHAN: they deduct it  
61. from your income tax  
62. BOB: yes ... do you think its a good or a bad thing  
63. that I'm putting R200 into my bond do you think it would be wise  
64. JOHAN: I I I think  
65. it's actually it's I won't say it is unwise but actually it is  
66. yes a you can take that R200 and put that in an annuity maximum is  
67. BOB: va  
68. JOHAN: 750 per annum you can deduct that monthly from or yearly from your  
69. income tax ... because because ... your your bond is secure  
70. BOB: m  
71. JOHAN: you got got a insurance on the bond  
72. BOB: right  
73. JOHAN: when you pass  
74. away  
75. BOB: ve  
76. JOHAN: that property is paid for  
77. BOB: yes  
78. JOHAN: so actually its its worth  
79. more to your wife and an your kids to have that house paid with a  
80. bigger bond than a lesser amount still owed to the bond  
81. BOB: ah thinking about the you know tax free subsidy you know because  
82. I'm paying an extra R200 per month into my bond but R160 or no sorry  
83. R140 approximately R140 is subsidized  
84. JOHAN: (nod)  
85. BOB: so I get R140 tax free  
86. as an allowance from the central government  
87. JOHAN: ah yes I see ve va va  
88. BOB: so the only  
89. real deduction I have from my salary is R60  
90. JOHAN: is a actually a sixty rand  
91. yes ..... no I I would also also a good investment if there's income  
92. tax problems if there any problems is this ... a a post office  
93. certificates  
94. BOB: I see  
95. JOHAN: 6 6 month 9.5 percent also also income tax  
96. free thats paid after 6 months you can draw as and so forth you get  
97. interest every 6 months so I I would advise to open a savings account  
98. you must have that  
99.

As with the Mark - Kallie encounter, the questionnaire revealed a mismatch in the perceptions of the participants as to how synchronous and how satisfactory the outcome of this interview was, with the S.A. English speaking client, once

again, being less satisfied than the Afrikaans English banker. Johan reported that he experienced the interview as comfortable, that he felt that there was some chance that Bob would do business with the bank again, and that he believed that Bob was reasonably satisfied with the services he had provided. As he put it, "I told him how he should invest his monthly surplus funds. I believe he received the message" and "The client was reasonable, in need of advice and acceptable" (accepting?). By contrast, Bob reported that he found the interview stressful at times, and that he would not do business with the bank again, and criticized the banker for not initiating enough and for being too reliant on himself for ideas.

Part of the explanation for this mismatch of perceptions, I suggest, relates to culturally-specific schemata. Bob apparently relies on much the same schematic knowledge as Mark in the first interview: knowledge that Johan, like Kallie in his interview with Mark, does not seem to have access to. In lines 1-8 we get some idea of what Bob's overall goals are for the interview, and what his expectations and assumptions are about the activity they are to engage in. I suggest that "advice on organizing my investment portfolio" is intended to serve as a contextualization cue which will activate in the mind of the hearer much the same schema as is signalled by Mark in the first interview analysed i.e. one in which the expectation is that the participants will engage in a problem-solving



exercise in which the advantages and disadvantages of various investment opportunities are examined together with the circumstances, needs and goals of the client, and decisions made about how to invest available funds in an investment package (portfolio) which will best assist the client to satisfy his needs and reach his goals.

Either the cue "advice on organizing my investment portfolio" is not salient for Johan, or he does not have access to the schema described, for, rather than engage in the expected behaviour, he builds on what is apparently merely a subordinate theme for Bob, namely the fact that he has no funds presently available for investment because he is using surplus funds to accelerate his bond repayment. Accordingly Johan proceeds to give Bob advice on how to save (lines 29-48). Bob's comment after viewing this part of the tape, was that, here, Johan fails to answer the central question. What becomes apparent as the interaction unfolds, at least to S.A. English observers, is that Bob would like the accelerated repayments of the bond to be considered as one of a number of options, in arriving at the best investment package, with possibly the amount used for this purpose being reduced, or this option being abandoned altogether in favour of an investment better suited to Bob's needs, goals and circumstances. However, when Bob attempts to make this point (lines 14-20), Johan does not build on this contribution, probably because he does not see it as very relevant to the activity he assumes they have agreed to engage in, namely,

one in which Johan provides advice on how to save and Bob checks to see that he has understood adequately. After listening at some length to such advice Bob (lines 62-63) attempts, as he sees it, to get the discussion "back on track" by asking Johan to evaluate the accelerated bond repayment as an investment. This time Johan does build on Bob's contribution, but not in the manner in which the schema described above would lead Bob to anticipate. Johan does compare accelerated bond repayments as an investment with an annuity investment, and presents reasons for preferring the latter. However, he does so without establishing, for example, how much of the additional R200 repayment is coming out of Bob's own pocket, what size the bond is, what size sum the annuity would be on maturity, how inflation might affect both types of investment, what Bob's immediate and long term needs are and so on. That Bob anticipated such behaviour is evident from his observation that Johan "threw out the suggestions in a vacuum" and his subsequent supplying of some of this information himself without the prompting of Johan (lines 82-90), a sequence in which he also implicitly calls on Johan to reconsider his evaluation in the light of this further information. Johan signals explicitly that he understands what Bob says here:

88. JOHAN: ah ves [ see ve va and

91. JOHAN: is a actually R60 rand ves

However, probably because such an interpretation is inconsistent with the schema he has accessed, and because he starts coming in before Bob has finished speaking (see lines

87-88):

87. as an allowance from the central government

88. JOHAN: ah yes I see ve va va

Johan apparently fails to interpret Bob's utterance as an invitation to reconsider. This is apparent from the fact that rather than do so, he suggests another investment (Post Office savings certificates). Thus, as much as five minutes after the start of the interview, the participants show little evidence of having constituted a mutually acceptable definition of what activity it is that they are engaged in, such that they can make better sense of their individual moves in that activity.

The fact that Johan does not shift his position about what is Bob's best course of action, in response to further information supplied by Bob (which, as I have explained, can be seen as an implicit invitation to reconsider his evaluation of the accelerated repayment of bond arrangement) suggests that we have here further evidence of a mis-match of culturally-specific schemata, again of the sort observed in the Mark - Kallie encounter. These are schemata which include the expectations, on the part of S.A. English speakers, that credibility is established by being empathetic, and on the part of Afrikaans English speakers, that this is established by being emphatic. Evidence that Bob expected Johan to be empathetic comes from his complaints that Johan "was not concerned with saving me money" and that "he was reeling off

suggestions that were in a vacuum without contextualizing them into my situation and my problem."

Significantly, the consequences of the mis-match of schemata were not merely that certain negative cultural stereotypes were confirmed (about which more below) but also, that Bob judged Johan as incompetent as a banker. In Bob's words, Johan is "not a banker who has internalized banking policy to the extent that he could solve my problem." As I understand it, what Bob means here is that Johan does not know sufficient about the workings of the subsidized housing loan scheme to be able to advise Bob adequately. And, indeed, part of the explanation of the unsatisfactory outcome of this interview could be that Johan was not adequately informed. However, much of the information that he required in order to be able to advise Bob could only be obtained in the context of the interview. What the above analysis suggests, is that the reasons for Johan not securing this information before making his recommendations have at least as much to do with predispositions to be emphatic rather than empathetic, and Johan's perception of the activity they were engaged in, as with Johan's competence as a banker.

As with the first interview, there is also evidence that a further source of the asynchrony and of the mis-match of perceptions of how successful the interview was, was a difference in the participants' perceptions of what their relationship was, what politeness behaviours were

appropriate, and a failure to negotiate in the interaction a mutually acceptable definition of that part of the context concerned with the relationship between the participants. According to Afrikaans English informants, Johan, who is significantly older than Bob, would have considered Bob junior to him in status and out-group. In terms of the first of the putative culturally-specific styles described above, he would, therefore, have regarded appropriate politeness from himself as solidarity (and predominantly bald-on-record) strategies and from Bob deference strategies (though not taciturnity). By contrast, Bob reported that he saw himself as senior in status, which means that, in terms of the putative S.A. English interactional style described above, he would have regarded appropriate politeness behaviour as a mixture of solidarity and deference strategies from both participants. At least two reasons for Bob's very different perceptions and expectations suggest themselves. One is that, as noted above, status differences tend to be emphasized less in the S.A. English speaking community than in the Afrikaans English speaking community. Another is that age differences, as one of the factors which enter into judgements about status, seem to weigh less heavily with S.A. English speakers than with Afrikaans English speakers.

An examination of the transcript reveals that Bob and Johan do behave, for the most part, in ways consistent with the perceptions the relationships between them and the putative culturally-specific styles described above. From Bob's

perspective, appropriate deference behaviour from Johan would have involved inviting Bob to explain his circumstances and needs and giving him ample opportunity to do so, while appropriate solidarity behaviour from Johan would have involved him being sufficiently empathetic. Instead Johan displays what he sees as appropriate (bald-on-record) solidarity behaviour: shortly after the start of the interview he starts suggesting a solution (line 29):

29. JOHAN: your wife does the budget I believe ... and a ... the best

30. to do is to .....

before, as Bob sees it, he has established what the problem is, thus threatening Bob's negative and positive faces (see page 67). Of particular significance in this regard is the way, here, rather than inquire how the household finances are handled in Bob's home, Johan states what his assumptions about this are. This he does using a falling tone on the tonic syllable "bud" in the word "budget", rather than a rising tone which, in terms of Afrikaans English norms (as also S.A. English norms) would have signalled that he was requesting confirmation of his assumptions rather than merely stating them. This is an interpretation confirmed by the judgements of Afrikaans English informants that they did not perceive Johan as asking a question here, and the observation that in line 21 he uses a rising tone on the same syllable on two occasions, apparently to invite confirmation of an assumption. Of significance, also, is Johan's response (lines 65-66) to Bob's inquiry (lines 62-63) as to whether he has acted wisely or not in accelerating his bond repayment. In

the S.A. English speaking community (as also, presumably, many other communities) it is very face-threatening to tell someone they have acted foolishly, or to be told that one has acted foolishly even if one has invited such an evaluation. Johan seems to recognize the potential for face-loss, for he hesitates, seems to be opting for the deference strategy of euphemism:

I won't say it's unwise

but finally opts for the bald-on-record strategy:

but actually it is

A possible explanation for this choice is that he could not think of a suitable euphemism, but equally plausible is that, after careful consideration, he decided that bald-on-record was the most appropriate choice of strategy.

To explain why, although Bob's feelings about the interaction were so negative, Johan's were generally positive, we need to examine the politeness strategies used by Bob. Significantly, when Johan threatens Bob's face by imposing his perception of the arrangements for household financial management in Bob's home, Bob responds by using the extreme deference strategy of not doing anything i.e. being taciturn. The offence experienced by Bob is, thus, not signalled overtly, and can only be inferred, something that Johan, given his assumption that bald-on-record behaviour on his part is appropriate, would be unlikely to do. In lines 82-84 Bob feels constrained to perform a face-threatening act himself, namely a challenge to the argument against accelerated bond repayments supplied

by Johan. Significantly, again, he employs here a mixture of solidarity and deference strategies. In addition to the solidarity strategy of appearing to assume that his hearer's knowledge is the same as his own (you know), he employs the off-record, deference strategy in which the face-threatening challenge is left implicit (ah thinking about...). Since Kallie did not feel constrained by what Bob said here to defend his position, he apparently did not interpret this as a challenge. In the short term, therefore, the effects of this misinterpretation were positive. However, in the long term, misinterpretations which lead to erroneous positive evaluations (such as those of Kallie and Johan) are potentially as harmful for future relations between the participants as misinterpretations which lead to negative evaluations (such as those of Mark and Bob). There is the danger that when, subsequent to what Afrikaans English speakers perceive to be relatively successful interactions, S.A. English speakers avoid future contact or behave hostilely in encounters, Afrikaans English speakers will perceive them as cold, inconsistent, unreliable and so on.

To sum up the discussion thus far, there is evidence in the two interviews analysed to suggest that the assumption that the asynchrony in Afrikaans English - S.A. English encounters can be explained in part in terms of a mis-match of culturally-specific interactional styles, is valid. In addition, the analyses are suggestive of how, in such asynchronous encounters, negative cultural stereotypes of



S.A. English speakers as "not saying what they mean", "being cold and aloof", "unreliable and inconsistent", and of Afrikaans English speakers as conservative, authoritarian, dogmatic and inflexible, are generated and reinforced.

Something not examined in the above analyses (and, indeed something which is difficult to establish empirically since negative stereotypes are seldom directly stated in intercultural encounters that are being recorded, and because informants are notoriously reticent about their own prejudices, is that some of the schemata which informed the participants' interpretations included these negative stereotypes and prejudices. Such a possibility is suggested by Bob's refreshingly honest observation about the source of his negative evaluation of Johan:

I think there's this over-riding animosity between English-speaking South Africans and Afrikaners. I mean I can't ignore that as much as my Christian perspective tries to suppress it. So there is an initial suspicion that this person represents the dominant Afrikaner ideology, not necessarily, but this is the kind of mode I would tend to switch into and when the person has proved himself otherwise then I would accommodate him within the body of friends I can relate to on a more personal basis.

Revealing, also, is his observation that in the encounter his negative stereotypes were confirmed:

As he spoke there were minor clues that somehow seemed

S.A. English speakers as "not saying what they mean", "being cold and aloof", "unreliable and inconsistent", and of Afrikaans English speakers as conservative, authoritarian, dogmatic and inflexible, are generated and reinforced.

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Revealing, also, is his observation that in the encounter his negative stereotypes were confirmed:

As he spoke there were minor clues that somehow seemed

to confirm that this man was in fact part of a fairly simplistic, narrow, Afrikaner nationalist ideology, and so my initial S.A. prejudices were now confirmed.

So too, is his claim that in the course of the interaction the stereotypes can be eroded (i.e. that the schemata of which they are a part are dynamic rather than fixed):

Despite this I would accept his advice if he could demonstrate his credibility to me.

To conclude, I wish to examine part of a third interview. This is one which, to judge by their responses to the questionnaire, the participants, Mary, a woman in her middle forties, and Klaas, a man of about the same age, both perceived as synchronous:

1. MARY: afternoon I'm Mary Mountain
2. KLAAS: Klaas van der Berg ... come in Mary
3. MARY: van der Berg (slowly and deliberately)
4. KLAAS: van der Berg Mary Mountain ... va it's amazing the berg in Afrikaans
5. and (sailing) the mountain
6. MARY: (sailing) the mountain van der Berg
7. KLAAS: va Mary you'r local
8. MARY: yes yes
9. KLAAS: I see
10. now long you've been in Durban
11. MARY: oh I've been in Durban ... a ... nearly
12. all my adult life I lived in Toti for about 4 years
13. KLAAS: nearly all your adult life in Toti I see married
14. MARY: divorced
15. KLAAS: oh divorced how recently
16. MARY: no long time ago 14 years ago
17. KLAAS: oh 14 years ago
18. MARY: yes
19. KLAAS: I see you former ex husband what was he doing
20. MARY: ah ... well he was doing a number of things he was a
21. photographer he had his own photography business
22. KLAAS: I see I see kids
23. MARY: no
24. KLAAS: none
25. MARY: no
26. KLAAS: yes and your present occupation
27. MARY: I'm a lecturer at the university

28. KLAAS: oh lecturer at the University of Natal  
 29. MARY: yes  
 30. KLAAS: now whe where do you  
 31. stay now  
 32. MARY: well this is what I've come to see you about.....

Cues to the significance of this interview came from a number of different sources. One was the evidence that the sex of the client seemed to be relevant to the relative synchrony of the encounters. Of the 18 interviews examined, 10 were categorized as clearly synchronous, and 8 of these involved female clients. By contrast, of the 6 interviews categorized as clearly asynchronous, only 1 involved a female client. Another cue was provided by expressions of surprise by S.A. English speakers that Klaas had secured details of Mary's personal life without causing offence. As one of Mary's colleagues observed "he was able to get out of Mary in a couple of minutes what after 12 years I would be hesitant to ask about." To express this differently, S.A. English speakers noted that in a very short period of time Klaas performed a number of potentially face-threatening acts without apparently causing offence. A third cue was provided by Afrikaans English informants who described Klaas's behaviour as paternal. Expressing a somewhat similar perception of this role, one of these informants, when asked if Klaas's behaviour is reminiscent of any typical situation in her community, observed that it reminded her of an encounter between a dominee (minister of religion) and one of his female parishioners.

What these cues suggest, is that the politeness behaviours of the bankers when interacting with the female clients was significantly different from that displayed by them in interacting with the male clients. A detailed examination of these behaviours in the Klaas - Mary encounter show that, at least in this interview, this is the case. According to Afrikaans English informants, Klaas would have perceived himself as senior in status. As age differences, which apparently weighed heavily in the other encounters analysed, were not significant in this interview, sex would appear to be a determining factor. Since according to Brown and Levinson the factors of power and distance subsume all other relevant contextual factors such as age and sex, one might anticipate that Klaas would consider appropriate behaviour on his part to be that displayed by Johan in the second interview examined i.e. solidarity and predominantly bald-on-record strategies as it were "downwards". What one finds is, that, although he does display solidarity behaviour, this is solidarity behaviour of a very different kind. Instead of bald-on-record usage he expresses what Brown and Levinson term positive politeness, and, indeed only one of three sub-categories of such positive politeness identified by them. As noted above, this sub-category includes politeness strategies which involve the mechanism of claiming common ground with the hearer "by indicating that speaker and hearer both belong to some set of persons who share specific wants, including goals and values" (Brown and Levinson 1978:108).

Insofar as the entire extract represents small talk, it can be seen as asserting common ground. It signals Klaas's general interest in Mary and indicates that he is interested in her as a person and not merely as a client. Of course, as is usually the case, this small talk is not irrelevant to the business at hand, for it accomplishes the important task of establishing identities, contextual information which will make the subsequent task of negotiating the business so much easier. Another example of asserting common ground is Klaas's suggestion in lines 4 and 5 that they have the same family name: clearly a claim to common in-group membership. Klaas also claims common ground by stressing his agreement with Mary by repeating all or part of what she says. Then too Klaas frequently employs the strategies of elipsis and contraction e.g. "you'r local" (line 7) instead of something like "do you live in the area"; "how long you've lived in Durban" instead of something like "how long have you lived in Durban"; "married" (line 13) instead of something like "are you married"; "kids" (line 21) instead of something like "do you have children". Such strategies assert common ground by implying the existence of shared background which will make the elipsis comprehensible.

The analysis of this extract, therefore, provides support for the hypothesis outlined above (pages 191-200) that Afrikaans English speakers orientate towards two different interactional styles, distinguished chiefly by how distance

is treated (especially by higher status individuals). It also provides support for the further hypothesis (see page 197) that higher status Afrikaans English speakers sometimes treat outsiders as if they are members of the in-group even if they are not, by making their behaviour consistent with that of a higher status individual in the diagrams on page 195 i.e. displaying the "softer" in-group forms of solidarity behaviour (positive strategies which assert common ground). In the data the bankers display this behaviour only when interacting with women, which suggests that they opt for the second of the putative styles only when interacting with outsiders they perceive of as relatively vulnerable. Further research is required to establish what other groups are judged as similarly vulnerable (children? the aged?). The data suggests that male S.A. English speakers, although relatively powerless, are not judged as "vulnerable" in this sense.

It is worth noting that in suggesting that Afrikaans English speakers sometimes accord in-group status to members of vulnerable groups, I am not implying that they are motivated by generosity, any more than I am implying that in opting for the first of the putative interactional styles they are motivated by a spirit of exclusivity. Indeed a more cynical interpretation of Klaas's behaviour in this interview was provided by an Afrikaans English informant who suggested that he may have been taught to behave in this way in a training course i.e. that it is a ploy to win the confidence

of lower status individuals. The strategies preferred by different groups are conventionalized behaviour and, presumably, serve the purposes of those with altruistic and selfish motives equally well. The danger which I attempt to highlight in this thesis is that, because this conventionalized behaviour is culture-specific, and because people tend to interpret others' behaviour in terms of their own norms, behaviour that may be motivated by altruistic motives may be perceived as selfish and vice versa.

The choice by the bankers of the second rather than first putative interactional style can help explain why the Klaas - Mary encounter and most of the other encounters involving women clients were perceived of as relatively asynchronous by the clients. It is flattering to be treated as if one "is part of the family". A person treated in this way is often more generous than usual in her interpretation of the other participant's subsequent behaviour e.g. she may conclude that when he apparently threatens her negative face by invading her privacy, he does not intend offense.

In suggesting that Klaas's choice of the second rather than the first putative interactional style contributed to the synchrony of the encounter, I am not implying that synchrony can be accomplished by one participant unilaterally. To account for the synchrony in this encounter it would be necessary (as with the synchronous encounters analysed previously) to analyse the behaviours of both participants.



However, since my overall purpose is to account for asynchrony rather than synchrony, and since my immediate purpose in examining the Klaas - Mary encounter is to provide support for the hypothesis that the interactional ethos of Afrikaans English speakers is more accurately characterized as involving an orientation to two rather than one interactional style, it is not necessary to examine Mary's behaviour.

Nor, for that matter, am I implying that the choice of the second style would always contribute to synchrony. Although this was not revealed by the data, I believe that there is almost as much potential for misinterpretation when in Afrikaans English - S.A. English encounters, Afrikaans English speakers opt for the second rather than the first of the styles. This potential was suggested by one of the informants who argued that if Mary had been a feminist, she would have found Klaas's behaviour offensive. In other words, the informant was arguing that the assumption of +power in their relationship, which was implied by Klaas's choice of style, was potentially offensive, since it would probably not match up with Mary's reading of the relationship. Also potentially offensive, I suggest, is the assumption of -distance. While, as I noted above, it can be flattering to be treated as an honorary member of a group, where much more is perceived to be stake, such as where one's rights, viewpoint or freedoms seem to be threatened, or when one's past interactive experience with members of that group has

been negative, such behaviour can be perceived as offensively presumptuous and familiar.

## 5.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter, then, contributes further to an understanding of the relationship between language and context by testing the adequacy of the explanation provided in chapter 4 of how socio-cultural information enters into the interpretation of intent and evaluation of attitude and ability, and showing that it holds true also for Afrikaans English - S.A. English encounters.

The fine-grained analyses of parts of two Afrikaans English - S.A. English encounters which the participants perceived as asynchronous provided evidence in support of the assumption that the asynchrony in these encounters can be explained, in part, in terms of a mis-match of culturally-preferred interactional styles. They also revealed some of the characteristics of these styles. They incidentally, highlighted the value, when attempting to characterize the interactional ethos of a group, of collecting and analysing data that includes interactions between members of that group and more than one other group, because the analyses of the Afrikaans English - S.A. English encounters revealed a characteristic of the S.A. English style (preference for indirectness) not revealed by the analyses of the Zulu

English - S.A. English encounters.

The analysis of a further encounter, judged by the participants as synchronous, suggested the existence of two rather than one preferred Afrikaans English style. It also suggested that an important determining factor in the choice between these two styles is, apparently, the sex of one's interlocutor (though further investigation may reveal that a more reliable predictor is some measure of "vulnerability"). This reveals that it is not possible to adequately characterize the interactional ethos of different groups if one follows the lead of Brown and Levinson in assuming that the factors of power and distance subsume all other relevant contextual factors. The possibility that other factors, such as age and sex, independently constrain the choice of strategies, needs to be examined in future research.

The analyses also provided support for the assumption that many of the negative cultural stereotypes of S.A. English and Afrikaans English speaking groups, features of the wider macro social context, are interactionally generated in the micro contexts of everyday conversational interactions. The implication of this finding is that there is an intimate relationship between what takes place in these two contexts. It is to the nature of this relationship that I turn in chapter 6 where, in addition, I examine the claim that, amongst other inadequacies, the greatest weakness of the explanations offered by interactional sociolinguists of how

inequalities in the distribution of power, negative stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination are accomplished and maintained, is that they ignore the role of historical, structural factors external to micro settings.

N.B. I am Mark in the first encounter analysed.

## 6.0 EXPLANATIONS OF PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

Prejudice and discrimination especially on grounds of race, and the unequal distribution of power amongst the various ethnic groups in South Africa is currently receiving world-wide attention. Instances of such prejudice, discrimination and inequality are not difficult to document. More problematic is the task of specifying the causes. In attempting to do so, researchers in a number of social sciences have offered mostly macro or structural explanations.

As Karabel and Halsey (1977) point out, very different macro explanations have been offered by social scientists representative of as widely diverse schools of thought as structural functionalism and neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian conflict theory. Whereas structural functionalism presents a picture of the wider society as basically stable, and regards inequalities as dysfunctions that such measures as educational programmes can redress, conflict theory presents a picture of society as unstable and marked by conflict between superordinate groups trying to monopolize power and

subordinate groups trying to gain access to it, that only radical structural change can redress. Despite these differences, macro explanations have at least two characteristics in common. Their explanations are given in terms of historically-given, structural features of the wider society or macro context e.g. social class, economic system, occupational structure and so on. Also, they look for evidence in support of their theses to positivistically-orientated research which involves, more often than not, quantitative analyses of data from official statistics and, frequently, large-scale surveys.

An example of such research is a macrosociological project reported on by Schlemmer (1977) which attempts to identify the various factors that have contributed to the formation of race attitudes in Southern Africa, past and present. He presents a historical review of the origins of discrimination and the results of a survey of present-day race attitudes based on acceptance or rejection responses of ninety carefully worded statements in an interview situation. He concludes:

The results mirror the consequences of South Africa's historical development in which ethnicity, nationalism, material interests and status concern have been articulated into a complex and self-reinforcing process, which in turn has produced a general "culture of racism" in which the original parameters of the

constituent factors have become obscured (Schlemmer 1977:80).

By contrast, the explanation I provide in this thesis is a micro one, in terms of which prejudice, discrimination and inequality are interactionally accomplished. In chapter 3, for example, I present evidence which suggests that, although positivistically-orientated micro studies probably mislead in suggesting too direct a relationship between structural regularities (or irregularities) in language use and such discourse phenomena as interruption and topic control, and between the latter and the exercise of power in the wider society, what takes place in micro settings of conversational interactions does affect such features of the macro context as the distribution of power and therefore the creation and maintenance of inequality. The interactional sociolinguistic account of the relationship between features of micro and macro contexts is developed more fully in chapters 4 and 5, in which I present evidence which suggests that the quality of communication in intercultural encounters (how synchronous the interactions are) crucially determines how the participants interpret one another's intentions and evaluate one another's motives and abilities. It suggests, further, that, particularly where such encounters are gatekeeping ones, miscommunication inhibits the chances of members of dominated groups for advancement (limits their access to power) and leads to the generation and confirmation of negative cultural stereotypes.

Macro studies and micro studies (and especially those informed by humanistic interpretations of science) are often presented in social science literature as irreconcilable, and much energy has been expended by the advocates of each in pointing out the limitations of the other. However, increasingly, scholars (e.g. Collins 1975; McDermott and Roth 1978; Akinasso 1981; Simpson and Yinger 1985) have begun to argue that explanations given by each are necessarily partial and that neither, on its own, is likely to give an adequate explanation of prejudice, discrimination and inequality. They have also begun to argue that while it may be heuristic to use one approach or the other, ultimately it would be more productive to achieve a linkage between the two i.e. arrive at an explanation which draws on insights from both approaches and attempts to integrate them.

Thus, for example, advocates of such linkage have argued that helpful as macro studies such as that of Schlemmer are, they can be regarded as partial explanations only, since, to borrow a metaphor from information processing, they deal only with input factors (e.g. ethnicity, nationalism, material interests) and output (e.g. racism). What they do not deal with is the "black box" in between, the mechanisms or processes in terms of which the input factors work to display and perpetuate the "culture of racism" which he refers to. What I attempt to show in this thesis is that such processes are located not in recorded history or responses to



questionnaires, but in everyday interactions. I also argue that to identify such processes, micro approaches are required i.e. approaches which focus on micro contexts, which are informed by humanistic views of science, and which employ qualitative, interpretative methods. The advantage of linkage would be that micro studies would be able to verify (or not) the findings of macro studies by identifying the detailed interactional mechanisms in terms of which the variables identified in the macro studies can be said to work, or, in other words, by showing what is going on in the black box.

In this chapter I provide further arguments in favour of such linkage. Thus far I have argued that such linkage is required so that the limitations of macro studies can be off-set by interactional micro studies. In what follows I focus on the complementary argument, namely, the limitations of the micro approach which a linkage with macro studies can help off-set. Finally, to illustrate that such linkage is productive, I offer an explanation of how in South Africa the larger, structural, historically-given forces (which are the concern of macro studies) combine with individual sources of prejudice and discrimination (the concern of micro studies of the psychology of individuals) and the results of intercultural encounters to achieve a vicious, negative cycle of discrimination. In this way I provide some flesh to the bare bones of the notion of a "complex and internally self-reinforcing process" which Schlemmer writes of.

## 6.2 THE LIMITATIONS OF INTERACTIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTIC ACCOUNTS

Karabel and Halsey (1977) are critical of what they call ultra-relativism which they claim is involved in interactional sociological accounts of competence (see pages 95-98) and particularly attempts to deny the objective reality of measures of cognitive capacity, skills or knowledge based on I Q, reading and other measurement techniques characteristic of positivistically-orientated educational psychology (see for example Cicourel et al 1974). Commenting on what they see as the ideological impetus behind this ultra-relativism, they claim that these scholars, because they cannot eliminate glaring inequalities in the real world, deny the very existence of such inequalities: "what would seem to be racial and class differences in the distribution of knowledge are, instead, figments of positivistic imagination" (1977:56). While Karabel and Halsey trivialize the argument of these scholars by paraphrasing it as "the well-worn idea that the social setting in which a test takes place influences student performance" (1977:55), they do helpfully observe that ultra-relativism can easily degenerate into sentimental equalitarianism which does neither social science nor the dominated groups they wish to defend any good.

A related criticism is that interactional sociolinguistics

presents too benign a picture or, worse still that it is an attempt at a cover-up for either or both unjust societies and prejudiced individuals. Since the focus of attention is on differences in culturally-specific interactional styles, rather than on the personalities of individuals or on the vested interests of the groups to which the participants belong, the picture which tends to emerge is of well-disposed, co-operative people who unwittingly misinterpret and misevaluate one another. To some extent this characterization is a parody rather than a true representation for, as the analyses reported on in chapter 5 show, interactional sociolinguists do allow for the possibility that historically-given group prejudices and the personalities of individuals contribute to interpretations and evaluation (see pages 215-217). However the fact that such matters are not stressed by them means that the explanation they offer is a partial one.

The greatest weakness of interactional sociolinguists, as advocates of macro approaches see it, is their failure to ask structural as well as interactional questions i.e. their ignoring of the role of factors external to the microcosmic setting they are analysing, which, as advocates of macro approaches see it, generate the processes being studied. Karabel and Halsey (1977:58), for example, criticise studies of classroom interaction for their neglect of structural factors:

Teachers and children do not come together in a

historical vacuum; the weight of precedent conditions the outcome of "negotiation" over meaning at every turn. If empirical work is confined to observation of classroom interaction, it may miss the process by which political and economic power sets sharp bounds to what is negotiable.

Again, certainly in relation to more recent interactional sociolinguistic research, this criticism represents an overstatement. The prominence given to the notion of schemata in their explanations shows clearly that interactional sociolinguists see interpretations as constrained by what has occurred in the past and by the participants' perceptions of constraints imposed by factors in the wider social context. However, it is true that greater emphasis is given in their accounts to the creation of meanings anew in every encounter.

Ogburn (1981) is critical of the neglect of structural factors in the explanations given by interactional sociolinguists of the high school failure rate of subordinate groups. In a study of schooling in Stockton, California, he demonstrates that the structural factors of low economic and social position of children from a black neighbourhood generates what he terms an ethnoecology for whites that leads them to offer blacks an inferior education and to treat them in classrooms in such a way that high failure rate is facilitated. It generates an ethnoecology for blacks that produces disillusionment and lack of perseverance towards schoolwork, survival tactics which require knowledge not

compatible with that required for school success, and that results in mistrust of and conflict with schools. While not denying that microcosmic studies have a role in explaining how interaction acts as the immediate cause of a particular child's failure to read, he argues that it is essential also to study how these classroom events are built up by forces emanating from outside microcosmic settings.

Another related criticism advanced particularly by conflict theorists is that the effect if not the intention of the interactional sociolinguists' neglect of structural factors, is avoidance of confrontation with the status quo. The critics claim that interactional sociolinguists criticise not so much the existing socio-political order, as the view of social reality presented by positivistically-orientated research, and the methods employed in it. The consequence, according to the critics, is that data and insights from microcosmic studies can be used as a basis for remedial work only, and "cannot lead to any significant social change that would eliminate the need for such remedial effort in subsequent generations of minority-group children" (Ogbu 1981:11). While I would want to take issue with the implication in Ogbu's statement that structural change on its own would be sufficient to eliminate the need for what he terms "remedial effort", his criticism does, I believe, serve as a useful reminder that interventionist programmes based on insights from interactional sociolinguistic studies are unlikely to succeed in overcoming prejudice and

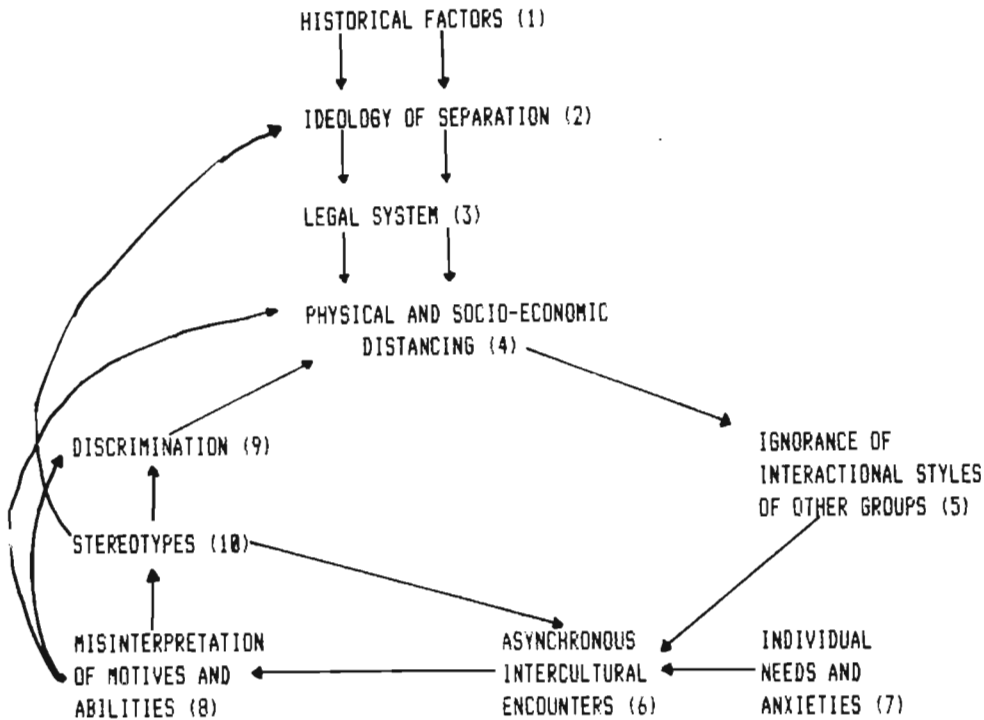
discrimination in circumstances where political, economic and demographic factors are unfavourable.

Finally there is the "so what?" criticism referred to in chapter 3. Interactional sociolinguists use circumscribed settings, few subjects and limited data, and are, therefore, often accused of spending an absurd amount of time documenting what everybody already knows, and what is so context specific as to be not generalizable to other situations. As I have attempted to demonstrate in chapters 4 and 5, interactional sociolinguists are obliged to look to the findings of studies in other research traditions, including positivistically-orientated macro studies, to strengthen their case for generalizability of their findings.

### 6.3 NEGATIVE SYSTEM OF PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

Though counter-arguments can and have been offered to criticisms levelled against interactional sociolinguistic explanations of prejudice, discrimination and inequality, as also to criticisms of macro approaches and approaches that focus on the characteristics of individuals, the overwhelming impression that emerges from an examination of the arguments and counter-arguments is that all these explanations are partial, and that an adequate explanation can only be achieved by drawing on the findings of all three approaches across a number of disciplinary boundaries, and attempting to

integrate them. In what follows I attempt to show how productive such a linkage could be.



Macro studies reveal that historically-given structural forces (1 in the diagram above) such as material interests, nationalism and ethnicity have contributed to an ideology of separation (2) which has been translated into the structures of South African society through the legal system of apartheid (3). This ensures that the various ethnic groups are distanced from one another not only physically (separate schools, residential areas, recreational facilities) but in terms of socio-economic status and power (4).

One consequence of this chain of events, and this is where the explanation provided by interactional sociolinguistics

can make its contribution, is that few people have the opportunity to establish long-lasting personal relationships with members of other racial groups which, according to Gumperz (1982a:209) are necessary if they are to learn enough about one another's communication conventions and backgrounds to communicate effectively interculturally and/or be willing to take time out to negotiate the meaning of what their background knowledge (sociocultural and linguistic) does not permit them to understand initially (5). This means that intercultural encounters between members of different cultural groups are frequently characterized by asynchrony (6).

Of course, not all intercultural encounters are equally asynchronous, and presumably one of the factors contributing to the levels of synchrony or asynchrony is the personalities of the participants. This is where explanations of prejudice and discrimination in terms of individual needs and anxieties (7) can make a contribution. Such explanations provide insights into why some individuals are more prejudice-prone than others, and therefore more likely to contribute to the asynchrony of intercultural encounters by displaying hostility.

As the analyses reported on in chapters 4 and 5 show, asynchrony in intercultural encounters frequently results in misinterpretation of motives and abilities (8). Such communication failure often has serious consequences for



groups who do not enjoy power in South Africa (e.g. Zulus and other black groups) since their ability to improve their lot depends on successful communication with members of dominant groups (e.g. S.A. English and Afrikaans speakers) who control most of the gatekeeping positions (examiners, bureaucrats, employment officers, educational and career counsellors, social workers, magistrates and so on) and who determine who is going to get the greater or lesser share of resources and opportunities available in the society. In this way, asynchrony arising from a mismatch of culture-specific interactional styles contributes directly to discrimination (9) and the reinforcement of the inequity in the socio-economic system (4).

However, this is not the whole picture. Repeated miscommunication of this kind generates, over time, negative cultural stereotypes of groups (10). These further reduce the effectiveness of communication by becoming a part of the schemata which participants access in intercultural encounters, and predisposing them to selectively perceive whatever reinforces the stereotypes and ignore what does not. As Simpson and Yinger (1985:99) observe, the effect of stereotypes on interaction is that it "is, in part, not among individuals as they are but among individuals as they are thought to be."

Once generated, the stereotypes are passed on from generation to generation without the need for the reinforcement of

repeated communication failure, thus becoming, potentially, sources as well as consequences of asynchrony (6). Moreover, by providing a rationalization for discrimination (9), they reinforce the ideology of separation (2) and so contribute to the forces which segregate peoples (4) and keep them ignorant of one another's styles of interacting (5).

This completes the explanation of the vicious cycle of discrimination in which the primary sources are often influenced and reinforced by their consequences. It is this feedback characteristic of the cycle of events which makes the cycle so difficult to arrest (what Simpson and Yinger 1985:105 refer to as "conservative toughness" ) and in which even people who feel goodwill towards other groups often find themselves admitting, reluctantly, that negative stereotypes are apparently confirmed within their experience.

#### 6.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, therefore, I argue that a more adequate explanation of prejudice, discrimination and inequality in South Africa can only be achieved by drawing on and integrating insights from structural, individual and interactional approaches across a wide range of disciplines. Furthermore, to illustrate the potential productiveness of such a linkage, I sketch, in somewhat crude terms, what such an explanation might look like.

Before closing, it is important to note that even if this explanation were considerably refined and elaborated it would still be partial i.e. it is an idealization. For one thing, it inevitably excludes some relevant factors. Then too, for simplicity sake, I have represented the cycle as if it were closed, and operated in a vacuum. If this were a complete explanation then the only change one could expect would be a steady increase in prejudice, discrimination and inequality. Many trends in the current South African situation, including the greater use of violence as a means of retaining power, suggest that is the direction in which that society is moving. However the explanation fails to account for such phenomena as the movement away from discrimination represented by the desegregation of a number of public facilities (hotels, theatres, cinemas, parks, beaches), the scrapping of the Mixed Marriages Act and the phasing out of job reservation.

Such evidence of movement away from discrimination suggests that the vicious cycle is an open one which operates in the context of a larger pattern which includes a positive system opposed to discrimination with which it interacts. Such a positive system, I see as involving, like the negative cycle of discrimination, structural, interactional and individual elements. Simpson and Yinger (1985) explain that on the individual level people are not only dominated by competitive aggressive impulses but also by co-operative, altruistic impulses, and that powerful religious and political

ideologies consolidate the latter into norms and values that stress co-operativeness and helpfulness and which become embodied in institutions. Thus, in contemporary South Africa, we have alongside structural supports for apartheid, structural supports for equality in the form of organizations such as the Black Sash, the Urban Foundation, the South African Institute for Race Relations, Women for Peaceful Change, SACHED (South African Community for Higher Education), Domestic Workers and Employers Project, various trade unions, opposition parliamentary and extra-parliamentary political organizations operating with relatively little interference from the state or underground, and various other organizations (too numerous to mention) concerned with improving group relations and reducing discrimination in such areas as education, housing, job opportunities and justice. Not least important, I suggest is the quality of intercultural communication. Just as in the context of countless asynchronous intercultural encounters participants misinterpret and misevaluate one another and negative cultural stereotypes are generated, so in synchronous encounters participants tend to interpret and evaluate accurately and negative stereotypes are either not generated, or where already present are eroded.

Finally I want to turn attention from the causes of prejudice, discrimination and inequality to solutions, which is the subject matter of the final chapter of this thesis. What the above explanation suggests is that solutions need to

have as their goal the strengthening of the positive cycle of equality such that its influence on the negative cycle of discrimination is greater than the influence in the reverse direction. It would seem that in South Africa the cycle of equality does not have the "conservative toughness" that characterizes the cycle of discrimination, and indeed many argue that prejudice and discrimination are so embedded in the South African situation that only revolutionary change can produce results. Whether or not that on its own, since it addresses only the structural elements in the cycle, would solve the problem is disputable. What I hypothesize on the basis of the explanation above is that programmes with the greatest chance of success will be those which take into account all of the elements in the cycle (structural, individual and interactional) and not just one. If this hypothesis is valid, programmes designed to change prejudiced people, or to improve the quality of intercultural communication are unlikely to succeed where structural circumstances are not conducive. By the same token, structural change, whether brought about by legislative action or revolution, is unlikely to eliminate prejudice and discrimination (as experience in more "open" societies as the U.K. and U.S.A. has shown) unless attention is simultaneously given to eliminating individual and interactional sources of prejudice.

As a means of showing what sort of programme designed to improve the quality of intercultural communication can

accompany structural reform. I outline, in chapter 7 suggestions for the syllabus, methods and materials and evaluation of a course for Zulu English speakers who are seeking white collar jobs in S.A. English dominated business and industry that has recently been released from the restrictions imposed by job reservation legislation.

## 7.0 IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AS A MEANS OF REDUCING DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 7 I argue that an adequate explanation of prejudice, discrimination and inequality in South Africa, or for that matter, of movements away from discrimination, cannot be accomplished by focusing exclusively on what I identify as the three major sources, namely structural factors, needs and emotions of individuals, and the outcomes of countless intercultural encounters. I argue that, instead, insights from approaches which focus on all three major sources need to be incorporated and integrated. In an attempt to show how productive such a manner of proceeding could be, I sketch an explanation that shows structural, individual and interactional elements feeding into and reinforcing one another. I argue, further that such an explanation suggests that the solution to the problem of discrimination (the measures intended to support the positive cycle of equality) which has most chance of success, is one that focuses on more than one of the three sources identified.

To pursue this last argument further, I outline, in this chapter, proposals for the design of courses based on

interactional sociolinguistic research. These courses have as their goal the improvement of the quality of intercultural communication in a situation in which recent structural change has made it possible for members of subordinate groups to gain access to opportunities and resources that hitherto, because of discrimination, were not available to them. An interactional sociolinguistic perspective suggests that this goal cannot be accomplished by raising the level of competency of the members of the subordinate groups alone. However, to be realistic, it is likely to be they, rather than the gatekeepers, who will most readily recognize the need for such improvement and who will be motivated to attempt it. For these reasons I identify them as the primary target group of learners, though the proposals include many suggestions for informal learning by the gatekeepers.

The specific situation I address is that encountered by Zulu matriculants (or those who have passed the examinations at the end of twelve years of schooling but not at a high enough level to gain admission to a university) seeking white collar jobs in business and industry in the Natal - KwaZulu area. Traditionally, for various reasons related to the structural features of the society, including quality of education, discriminatory legislation and demographic factors, such jobs have been monopolized by S.A. English speakers. However, recently, various structural changes including the relaxation of job reservation, pressures from sources in and out of the



country on companies to adopt non-discriminatory employment practices. insufficient numbers of suitable S.A.English job candidates and so on. have opened up opportunities in this area for Zulus (or more accurately Zulu English speakers, since competence in English is a prerequisite for employment) and members of other black groups. Despite this movement, it is a situation in which many of the structural supports for discrimination still exist, and in which much residual prejudice is present, as the negative stereotypes that white supervisors in the Durban area of Natal have of black employees reported on by Griessel and Schlemmer ( see page 174) reveal. Perhaps most significant from the point of view of this thesis, is that it is a situation in which there is considerable potential for this prejudice to be reinforced or re-generated in Zulu-English - S.A. English encounters, many of which will be gatekeeping encounters.

It is customary in applied linguistics (see for example Munby 1978) for the process of language course design to begin with an analysis of the needs of the target group of students and of the organization(s) in which they will be operating, including a detailed specification of the knowledge and abilities (the communicative competence or competencies the students will need to have) in order to communicate effectively in the target situation, and a detailed specification of the knowledge and abilities they have before starting the course. Putting aside for the moment the fact that an interactional sociolinguistic perspective suggests

that a needs analysis and the syllabus based on it is more usefully seen as something which is negotiated with students and gatekeepers before and during courses, about which more later. It is beyond the scope of this part of the thesis to attempt such a detailed needs analysis. However, I suggest that a good starting point for anyone attempting such analysis is the research reported on in this thesis. This is because interactional sociolinguistics can add considerably to a course designer's understanding of what, in general terms, it is to be communicatively competent, and because the analyses reported on in chapter 4 provide some indication of the likely competencies of the Zulu English speaking students and the gatekeepers before the start of the course.

In the section which follows this introduction, I attempt to sum up what the research reported on in this thesis reveals about the nature of communicative competence in general. Thereafter I outline suggestions for syllabus design, methodology and materials construction and procedures for evaluation for the proposed courses. In the process, I refer to the anticipated competencies of the target group as suggested by the analyses reported in chapter 4, and to the competencies which a layman's conception of the demands of white collar jobs in business and industry suggest they will need to acquire. I also refer to the learning which the S.A. English speaking gatekeepers will need to accomplish.

In this last section I draw heavily, though not exclusively,

on suggestions made by some of my graduate students, who, in a project, were required to demonstrate an understanding of what interactional sociolinguistics can contribute to the theory and practice of communicative language teaching by making proposals for a course which would equip Zulu work seekers to compete more effectively for white collar jobs in The Natal KwaZulu area.

Significantly, what the briefing for this project suggests is that, apart from their possible contribution to the goal of overcoming discrimination, the proposals for course design are also of more general applied linguistic interest. As Strevens (1977:12-36) explains, innovation and change in approaches to language teaching/learning are usually a consequence of one or both of two developments. The first is a change in the sociolinguistic circumstances of a community: in how that community in general, or pressure groups within it, view different languages, and how they perceive their language learning needs. This change in the sociolinguistic circumstances is, in turn, usually a consequence of social, economic and political changes within the community. The second development, is advances within various relevant academic disciplines, which not only point to inadequacies within existing practice, but provide a basis for responding rationally to the challenges and problems of meeting these needs. As noted above, there have been some significant structural changes. Amongst other consequences, these have produced a change in the sociolinguistic circumstances of the

community in the form of a rapid growth in the perceived need on the part of the dominated groups in the Natal/KwaZulu area, as also in many other parts of the country, to learn to communicate effectively in English. This learning is seen by them as one means of securing a fairer share of opportunities and resources and, in particular, those that become available as a consequence of change. At the same time, there has been the growing awareness that such learning may benefit dominant groups also, by facilitating better intercultural communication and therefore better inter-group relations, and by equipping members of subordinate groups to cope effectively in positions hitherto monopolized by members of dominant groups. Since, viewed from the perspective of both groups, the need is for English as a social tool, there has been a concomitant demand for an approach to language teaching/learning which will make it possible for learners to reach the goal of communicative competence. Though there is greater understanding today of that goal, and greater clarity about the nature of the syllabuses, methodology and evaluation relevant to that goal than there was in the '70s, there is still much to learn. It is here, as I attempt to show in this chapter, that interactional sociolinguistics has an important contribution to make.

However, the potential interest in such a contribution extends beyond the boundaries of South Africa. As Gumperz and Cook Gumperz (see Gumperz 1982 b) explain, in the urbanized regions of the world the rapid bureaucratization of public

institutions (such as social welfare and health services, educational and industrial institutions, union organizations and so on) and their greater impingement on the lives of ordinary people places a higher premium on the ability to communicate effectively interculturally than was the case previously. To demonstrate the rationality of the decision making involved in such matters as job selection, negotiation about service conditions, welfare and so forth, individuals are increasingly required to perform complex verbal tasks. Thus increasingly "the ability to manage or adapt to diverse communicative situations has become essential and the ability to interact with people with whom one has had no personal acquaintance is crucial to acquiring even a small measure of personal and social control" (Gumperz 1982 b:4). What makes this task so much more demanding is the world-wide trend towards greater ethnic diversity in urban settings, which means that most encounters are intercultural ones. It follows that innovations in language teaching which may facilitate more effective intercultural communication and help erode prejudice and discrimination are of very wide interest.

## 7.2 WHAT INTERACTIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS CONTRIBUTES TO THE NOTION OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

The notion of communicative competence (see for example Hymes 1972) was introduced initially to highlight the limitations of Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence: the nature of

the speaker's tacit knowledge of the rules of the grammar of his language. Scholars who used the term communicative competence were concerned to point out that linguistic competence represents only a part of the knowledge which underlies the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately. They did not, however, challenge the mentalistic and individualistic conception of competence. Thus early descriptions of communicative competence which provided a rationale for innovations in language teaching that came to be termed communicative approaches, also tended to be mentalistic and individualistic.

One of the more important contributions of interactional sociolinguistics to the understanding of communicative competence, therefore, is the notion that it is not only something that is in people's heads; that it is also something which is interactionally accomplished. Arguing that what goes on in heads is not available for analysis, they focus instead on interactional data. They also attempt to describe communicative competence, not from the perspective of the the analyst, but from that of the participant. Accordingly, their interest is not in product (the analyst's rules) but in process (the interpretative procedures by means of which participants negotiate meaning). While some scholars do possibly overstate the case against a cognitive view of competence, thus becoming guilty of the ultra-relativism that Karabel and Halsev comment on (see pages 232-233), most interactional sociolinguists do not claim that the cognitive

view is wrong, but only that it partial. In other words, communicative competence has both a cognitive and a behavioural dimension: "One, it is the competence necessary for effective interaction. Two, it is the competence that is available in the interaction between participants" (Mehan 1979:130).

Another important contribution of interactional sociolinguistics to the understanding of the notion of communicative competence is that it includes the ability to create, together with other participants, the contexts for talk. The contextual information which the participants draw on to infer the social and functional meanings of one another's utterances and to trace the coherence in the talk is seen, not as available outside the communication process, but as part of what needs to be communicated during the interaction if communication is to be successful.

Interactional sociolinguists explain that an important aspect of any context for talk is the activity the participants are accomplishing together, and demonstrate that in negotiating what this activity is, they rely on a sharing of relevant interpretative schemata. They have also shown that many of these schemata are culturally-specific. It follows that an important aspect of communicative competence is a knowledge of the schemata not only of one's own socio-cultural group but also of members of other groups in society with which one converses.

Another aspect of contexts for talk which participants are obliged to negotiate is the nature of the relationship(s) between them. and interactional sociolinguists have shown that to accomplish this successfully, participants need to have access to a wide range of politeness strategies. and, because there are cultural differences in this area, to have an awareness of the patterns of preference in the use of strategies. not only of their own group, but of other groups in society.

Interactional sociolinguists also show that the ability to create contexts includes, not only a knowledge of relevant schemata and of politeness systems, but also of the contextualization cues which the participants use to signal to one another what the relevant schemata are, and what relationship is being assumed. Since they reveal that there are systematic differences in the contextualization conventions employed by different cultural groups, what has to be added to the notion of communicative competence is a knowledge of and ability to signal and interpret the contextualization conventions of not merely one's own group but of others.

A further important contribution is the interactional sociolinguist's recognition that communicative competence includes the capability not merely to signal and recognize the cues to the context, but also the capacity for



negotiating that context (see Widdowson 1983 for the distinction he makes between capability and capacity). Such capacity includes the ability to use interpretative procedures to modify and align the participants' schemata so that they match up sufficiently to one another for understanding to be reached and to fill in or express overtly the propositional and illocutionary links between the different parts of the discourse.

Finally, without making any claims that what is contained in this section represents an exhaustive list of what interactional sociolinguists have contributed to our understanding of the notion of communicative competence, they demonstrate that communicative competence includes the ability to co-operate with others in the achievement of conversational synchrony which enables speakers to signal and listeners to anticipate when significant next moments will occur, such as when new information is to be conveyed, when a turn change is appropriate, when a change of topic is possible and so on.

### 7.3 COURSE DESIGN PROPOSALS

As far as syllabus design is concerned, perhaps the most useful idea prompted by insights provided by interactional sociolinguists is that of a syllabus as something which should be interactionally accomplished. What is meant by this

is not merely that a syllabus should not be unilaterally decided upon by the course designers, but also that it should be constantly re-negotiated with the learners in response to their changing or evolving needs. The idea of evolving needs was prompted by an observation made by Richterich and Chancerel (1978) that a learner's needs may change while a course is in progress because of such circumstances as a change in his or her financial position, a modification of objectives because of lack of progress and so on.

The idea of learners being involved in the on-going planning of the courses they are enrolled for is, of course, not new. Breen (1984:50), for example, argues that "a 'good' pre-designed syllabus is one which is positively amenable to alternative interpretations and open to reconstruction through interaction in the classroom". while Allwright (1981) recommends learners' participation in decision-making as a means of developing learner independence (about which more below). However, such involvement is seen as particularly relevant to the needs of the target group, for two reasons. The first is that, in view of the negative stereotypes of white supervisors of black employees as lacking appropriate assertiveness (see pages 174-175) the Zulu job seekers should be given every opportunity to develop behaviours which would be at odds with these stereotypes, and that this could begin with the negotiating of the syllabus. The second is the recognition that in the course of such negotiation it might be possible to encourage open, frank discussion about the

prejudice and discrimination which they experience. This could be therapeutic because, not only would they have their feelings recognized, but they could be led to see that while much discrimination has its source in the larger structural forces of the society and in the personalities of individuals, some, at least, is interactionally accomplished. This would be reassuring in the sense that they would see it as something they have potentially some degree of control over.

An allied notion which is equally useful, is that the syllabus should attend not only to the product of learning, but also the process. As Boustred (ms) expresses it, "we need to establish not only the content - what is going to be learnt, but also what the learning/teaching process will be like - how we see students progressing towards their target." Once again, the idea of a process syllabus is not a new one (see, for example Breen 1984), but it is seen as particularly relevant in a situation where what has to be learnt, as the characterization of communicative competence given above shows, is so complex, covert and context-bound, that it cannot be taught as a body of knowledge in any straightforward way. Gumperz and Roberts (1980:3) present the case for learning instead of teaching as follows:

... the conventions of language use operate within such a great range of situations and have to take into account so many variables. There is no neat equation between a type of interaction and the conventions which

an individual might use. Every piece of good communication depends upon the response and feedback which participants elicit from each other in the course of the conversation itself and so every speaker has to develop his own strategies for interpreting and responding appropriately.

Amongst process aims listed by Boustred, which give some idea of how she envisages the teaching/learning process, are the following:

- to recognize the skills and knowledge the students bring to the course, and to build on and develop these skills and this knowledge;
- to value the beliefs and attitudes of the students while alerting them to the attitudes and expectations of the macro-culture in which they hope to function;
- to provide means for continuous feedback from students about their needs and learning experiences;
- to be sensitive to changing needs and flexible in responding to them;
- to keep in mind that a supportive atmosphere, while necessary in the learning process, is not always going to be found in the work situation and hence the need to wean

them from the former.

Some applied linguists have argued that a process syllabus precludes an externally prepared syllabus of content based on what a needs analysis has revealed is the target competence. Johnson (1983:55), for example, argues that there is a built in conflict between the notions that a teacher prescribes what is to be taught and that a student is able to choose what is to be taught. Breen (1983:64), too, argues that in terms of a process model a "syllabus of content - in the conventional sense - would have to be generated by and during the learning - teaching process." However, whether one sees a syllabus primarily as a means towards the achievement of something (the target competence), or the selection and organization of that something, it is apparent that course implementors and, as the course develops, the students, need to have a clear idea of what the target behaviour is. This is where a characterization of the target communicative competence necessary in terms of schemata, politeness conventions, contextualization cues and so forth would be so valuable.

Another useful notion is that, since interactional sociolinguistics reveals that communicative incompetence is as much what is displayed by participants, as what resides in people's heads, and therefore something for which all participants must share culpability, a syllabus must provide for the raising of the level of competence of all

participants, and not merely the Zulu job seekers. This could be accomplished by involving "gatekeepers" as much as possible in the training process, particularly in authentic, task-orientated activities, to be referred to later, and using post-task evaluative discussions to raise their level of awareness of their own contribution to asynchronous interactions.

Proposals for methods and materials are characterized by an emphasis on learner-centred, task-orientated activities and on opportunities for interaction with S.A. English speakers. All of these features are, of course, already orthodox practice in communicative language teaching methodology, but the South African context and insights from interactional sociolinguistics gives them additional significance.

Learner-centredness, for example, is seen as appropriate for a number of reasons. One reason is that, as noted earlier, the target competence cannot be taught but only learnt. Then too learner-centredness is seen as a way of developing learner independence considered vital in this situation. In the work situation white collar workers are required to perform a very wide range of complex verbal tasks and, since it is unlikely that all the necessary learning can be accomplished during a course, it is essential that the learning process should continue after they have taken up their positions. Such learning is difficult to accomplish because it has to take place, for the most part, in the

context of intercultural encounters with S.A. English speakers which may be asynchronous. This means that they need to have acquired the necessary learner independence during the course. Such independence will allow them to recognize the opportunities provided by intercultural encounters of negotiating an accurate mutual understanding of motives and intentions and an evaluation of abilities. It will also enable them to resist the temptation to break off asynchronous encounters and progressively avoid more and more of such encounters. Such avoidance behaviour, while offering short term benefits, reduces the chances of Zulu English speakers ever learning the relevant schemata, preferred politeness system and contextualization conventions of S.A. English speakers.

To build learner independence, Pelser (ms), following ideas suggested by Littlewood (1981), proposes a series of role play/simulation exercises which progressively become more and more like the sort of authentic communicative tasks the job seekers will have to complete in the work situation, and in which choice of what to say and how to say it is governed less by the teacher's pedagogical plan, and more by the communicative needs of the students as they emerge in the interaction. Thus, Pelser proposes, as the first stage, that students experience face to face telephonic role-plays using cue cards which give descriptions of roles and the responses that have to be made. They are required to greet a member of the public, find out who he or she is, and what his or her

business is, and state who he or she is. At the second stage they are given a role description only, and are required to use their own words. At the third stage they could have the same task but this time interact not with fellow students, but with native speakers. A similar three stage progression is followed with other activities such as providing information, dealing with requests and dealing with misunderstandings. This list of activities represents a progression of greater and greater risk-taking along another dimension, namely that of potential face loss. Depending on the progress made by students, greater stress could be added to any activity by, for example, introducing a "difficult" client.

A significant feature of Pelsler's proposals is that, as another way of building learner independence, the school leavers are encouraged to raise their level of awareness of communicative processes that operate largely at a subconscious level. For example, after the first stage of the first activity, they are encouraged to explore why they found the telephonic interaction more difficult than the face to face encounter. Then, too, they are invited to analyze and evaluate videotaped third stage, "authentic", interaction. This would provide an ideal opportunity for discussing culture-specific communicative styles, discrimination, and strategies that members of dominated groups can adopt to avoid being misunderstood and misjudged in intercultural encounters.



Not surprisingly, data analysis for pedagogical rather than research purposes is favoured by the few interactional sociolinguists who have involved themselves with applications, and by those who have collaborated with interactional sociolinguists in the design of courses. Gumperz and Roberts (1980) for example, working from the premise that people, for reasons outlined above, cannot be taught to communicate effectively interculturally, argue that what they can do is learn:

- a) how to analyse their own language behaviour:
- b) how their English differs systematically from English spoken by different cultural groups:
- c) to recognize what may go wrong in intercultural communication:
- d) to talk with the other participant(s) about what has gone wrong when there has been communication failure.

Accordingly, the basic method used in their course is the analysis of audio taped material (prepared role plays, real life recordings and class-initiated role plays) involving three situations identified as those in which confusion or irritation is likely to occur i.e. situations in which someone has made a mistake and one has to sort it out; situations in which one has to negotiate over a problem; and situations in which one has to explain. Significantly, because they identify as important aspects of the necessary

learning to learn to recognize how one's English differs systematically from that of other groups, and to learn to talk to the other person when communication failure occurs. they provide, in their course, for joint sessions for gatekeepers and workers in addition to separate sessions for each.

In similar vein Erickson (1979) dismisses direct teaching of, for example, culturally-distinct contextualization cues, arguing that such behaviour changes are too mechanical and too categorical to be effective. More effective, he suggests, is to get the participants to focus not on specific features of the surface message form, but on the processes of interpretation as they are occurring, though he does acknowledge that this may be difficult to sustain for any length of time. A more realistic goal, he suggests, is to develop the capacity for retrospectively analysing what is happening when one intuitively recognizes that something has gone wrong i.e. to learn to substitute this scanning for what he terms the "knee-jerk reaction of conversational inference". He suggests that practice in intercultural communication combined with the self-developed capacity for retrospective scanning may result in participants learning to change their patterns of communication in the direction of greater cultural convergence with those with whom they interact.

In a more recent paper Erickson (1985) again rejects the

notion of direct teaching, pointing out that "quick-fix" solutions such as giving one of the parties group-specific performance lessons (e.g. units on how to listen with Black Americans) are not only likely to fail, but to lend so-called "scientific" support for existing stereotypes. Instead he develops the idea of retrospectively scanning further, pointing out that this learning represents the refining of a capacity that participants already possess as part of their total communicative competence, rather than the acquiring of a new capacity. He suggests that the insight that interactional trouble is interactionally rather than unilaterally accomplished is, in itself, a liberating one, allowing participants to avoid unhelpful repair strategies which arise from either blaming the other participant or oneself. He argues that to develop more helpful strategies, participants need to learn to look behaviourally (focusing on features of the behaviour such as prosodic features) and dialectically (focusing on the process of mutually steering the conversation) at the relations between the participants. He argues that while this does not remove all the stress of communication "trouble", it does make it safer to deal with it as it begins, and that "within the experience of talking with culturally differing people one can learn about others' culturally differing and idiosyncratically differing ways of listening and speaking, and one can learn how to accommodate as an interlocutor with a wider range of interactional styles than one has been able to handle previously" (Erickson 1985:314). He also observes, helpfully, that, in such

situations. repair strategies that seem to work best are direct rather than indirect ones e.g. "I'm sorry but I'm not sure if you understood what I just said."

Returning to the project reports of my graduate students, perhaps the most useful proposals came from those who were concerned with evaluation.

They noted that a course which has as its target communicative competence as defined by interactional sociolinguists, and which is itself dynamic, open-ended and learner-centred, challenges traditional notions about:

1. how important testing is;
2. who does the evaluation;
3. who or what is to be evaluated;
4. when the testing is to be done;
5. what sorts of tests are required;
6. how valid and reliable assessment of the target competence is to be accomplished.

To respond very briefly to all but the last two of the issues raised, in a dynamic, evolving course, testing would clearly

assume great importance, since it would provide vital feedback which would be the basis for decisions about how to modify the course. This response suggests a response to the fourth issue listed, namely that who or what should be tested in such a course is not merely the students, but all participants in the programme, and the course itself. It follows also that the students should be heavily involved in the assessment of the course, the tutors and of their own performance. Such involvement would be invaluable in helping them to develop both appropriate assertiveness, and the learner independence which would enable them to continue learning after the course had been completed. Finally, it is apparent that the traditional pattern of pre- and post-testing would be inadequate and that evaluation would need to be an on-going, continuous process.

To respond more fully to the penultimate issue listed, there was consensus that what was required was tests which were pragmatically valid i.e. natural acts of communicative behaviour in realistic settings. To the description of pragmatically valid tests given by Johns Lewis (1981), Griffiths (ms) added the notion that these tests should be 'whole-task' tests, thus building on the task-orientated activities outlined in the observations on methods and materials. They would thus reflect the social and functional aspects of communication as found in the work situation, and involve interaction with S.A. English speakers. This would mean that they would also involve stress. As Griffiths

explains (ms) "we also have pragmatically valid reasons for introducing the element of stress. It enters into the everyday life of our students and to leave it out would render our tests unrealistic. The unusual, the unpredictable and unpleasant are very much features of the social scene and our students must be prepared to cope with them." Another important requirement, according to Allen (ms) is that the tests should be fully integrated into the course. Such integration is evident in Griffiths' proposals for orientation activities which are enjoyable, meaningful activities in their own right but are also used by the course personnel for assessment. It is also evident in her proposal for evaluating job seeker's behaviour before an interview activity. The job seekers are required to present themselves, one at a time, in alphabetic order, the first to appear within a specified time limit, say five minutes. A video system is left in action to record how the organization activity is accomplished and to "reveal aspects of assertiveness, confidence and co-operation in jointly accomplishing a fairly simple and natural functional task."

Finally, to turn to the issue of how one arrives at a valid and reliable assessment of the target competence, the students found it useful to elaborate on the suggestion for assessment bands which Margaret Meyer, Michael Crampton and I prepared at the prompting of Brendan Carroll at the SAALA Communicative Language Testing Workshop which took place in Cape Town in 1983. These bands are criterion referenced in

the sense that they display, in a relatively explicit way, characteristics of the targeted competence. The insights into the nature of communicative competence provided by interactional sociolinguistics are evident in the following proposals by Griffiths:

#### ASSESSMENT BANDS

9. Bicultural. Ability to negotiate at any level. Sympathetic, tactful, confident, independent, even under stressful conditions.
8. Very little stress in negotiating roles yet need for some assistance if synchrony is to be maintained. Has access to relevant schemata. Reveals a wide range of structures. No obstructive intrusion from first language.
7. Greater linguistic and social subtlety. Still some difficulty at interpersonal level. Unable to access all the relevant schemata. Role-relationships not often misinterpreted.
6. Development of theme not completely coherent. Grasps issues presented explicitly. Has an awareness of relevant schemata but not complete knowledge of the constraints on interpretation imposed by them.
5. Uncertainty and lack of confidence lead to avoidance strategies. Attempts to negotiate when pressed. Unwillingness to initiate, develop and sustain interaction despite awareness of contextual demands.
4. Able to sustain conversation for short periods only. Constant breakdown and need to renegotiate. Limited access to relevant schemata. Limited interpretative ability. Able only to avoid using those strategies which are offensive to the other participant.
3. Marked interference at syntactic, lexical, phonological levels. Misinterpretation. Intercultural misunderstanding is marked. Second language competence is superficial.
2. Unable to co-operate in thematic development. Extensive first language interference. Mistaking, misunderstanding. Speech broken, uncertain, often at single word/broken phrase level.
1. Complete misunderstanding at all levels. Communication not possible.

The above bands seem to split neatly into 3 distinct divisions:

A: bands 1-3 representing gross communicative incompetence. B: bands 4-6 representing a transitory competence and C: bands 7-9 representing competence for social survival.

#### 7.4 CONCLUSION TO THE CHAPTER AND THE THESIS

This chapter and the thesis ends with proposals for the design of courses which have as their goal the improvement of the quality of intercultural communication, and which draw on insights provided by interactional sociolinguistics. While I am not optimistic about the chances of such measures succeeding where structural circumstances are unfavourable, and where the gatekeepers concerned are very prejudiced against subordinate groups, I argue that structural change and intervention in the form of therapy for prejudiced individuals have equally poor chances of success unless accompanied by measures which focus on interactional sources of discrimination and equality. Such proposals have significance not merely for the situation examined, namely business and industry in the Natal/KwaZulu area, but also for South Africa as a whole, and, since the ability to communicate effectively determines the life chances of individuals in urbanized areas in most countries, throughout the world. For this reason it is not unreasonable to expect that many if not most of the innovations in communicative approaches to the teaching of languages in the next decade will come from this source.

In terms of the thesis as a whole, this chapter represents the most applied aspect of the research reported in it, which, as was noted in the introduction, is basically applied in purpose. Putting aside the theoretical significance of



interactional sociolinguistics which, although considerable, is dealt with directly only in chapter one of this thesis. The applied significance of the sub-field is demonstrated more generally at first by examining its contribution to the understanding of the relationship between language and context. Thereafter the contribution to the understanding of this relationship is explored in more specific terms by examining the role of contextual information in the form of culturally-specific interactional styles in the accomplishing of prejudice and negative cultural stereotypes in intercultural communication in South Africa. The significance of this explanation is explored further by showing how such an interactional account fits into a more comprehensive explanation of the causes of discrimination in South Africa, one that includes, also, structural explanations and explanations in terms of the psychology of individuals. This prepares the way for a consideration of the possible contribution of interactional sociolinguistics to solutions to the problem of discrimination both in South Africa and elsewhere.

Though this is the conclusion to the thesis, I am very conscious that the research reported on in it is far from complete. For one thing, the very sketchy proposals outlined in this chapter require elaboration. They also need to be tried out and revised in the light of this experience. More important, proposals are required for measures which will ensure that gatekeepers learn to communicate interculturally

more effectively.

Then too, although the insights provided by interactional sociolinguistics to date is considerable, so much more empirical work is required. Indeed so narrow is the empirical base for the findings about interactional styles in South Africa that some may regard application as premature. To discover to what extent the characterization of intercultural styles supplied here is accurate, there is the need, not only for data collection and analysis of Zulu English - S.A. English and Afrikaans English - S.A. English encounters in a wide range of situations, but also of encounters between these groups and other English speaking groups in South Africa such as Sotho English, Indian English, "Coloured" English and so on. As noted earlier, interaction with members of different groups often highlights aspects of interactional styles which do not come into focus in the analyses of encounters between members of two groups only. Potentially as interesting would be the analyses of similar encounters, but where, for example, Afrikaans or Zulu rather than English were the medium. Such research could help establish the extent to which interactional styles remain constant across language boundaries. Insights from such research could feed into further applications. Of course, since so many of the applications involve the close examination of interactional data, there is no need to see the relation between research and application as a uni-directional one. If some the proposals made in the final chapter are implemented on a

large scale. many useful insights may emerge from applications.

## APPENDIX A

## ENCOUNTER GEORGE-BONGANI

7. GEORGE: the best way of doing this ... I can't show you the  
 8. paper ... right
9. BONGANI: ve
10. GEORGE: um ... because that's um would be  
 11. against university regulations
12. BONGANI: yes
13. GEORGE: but what I  
 14. thought I would do
15. BONGANI: ve
16. GEORGE: is to try and find out what  
 17. You thought were your good and your bad papers and then  
 18. see how it ties up with what we think ... cos I think what's  
 19. important is that
20. BONGANI: vah
21. GEORGE: you ... what your expectations  
 22. are are the same as our expectations
23. BONGANI: I see
24. GEORGE: so this  
 25. will help you where you thought you'd prepared well say ...  
 26. and and knew what you were doing and we didn't agree you'll  
 27. be able to see
28. BONGANI: vah
29. GEORGE: alright ... er can we turn to paper two  
 30. do you have a copy of paper two here
31. BONGANI: ve ve ve paper two (unclear)
32. GEORGE: alright let's um let me  
 33. try and make use of er of ... mv ... question paper ... there's  
 34. paper ... paper one rather okay ... let's put it there then we both  
 35. can have a look at it ... um ... you answered questions 2 ... um  
 36. that's Halliday er question 3 ... I'm sorry no I'm wrong (not clear)  
 37. question 1 the Chomsky question
38. BONGANI: yes
39. GEORGE: question 2 the Halliday  
 40. question
41. BONGANI: um
42. GEORGE: and questions 5 which was the tense question
43. BONGANI: yes
44. GEORGE: alright now perhaps you can tell me which of those er you  
 45. thought ... you did best in ... which you were happiest about
46. BONGANI: I I'm not sure but
47. GEORGE: yes
48. BONGANI: I think it number 5
49. GEORGE: number 5
50. BONGANI: (not clear)
51. GEORGE: alright ... that that's right that that was the  
 52. question that we thought was your best question.
53. BONGANI: ■

54. GEORGE: alright ... erm
55. and then which of the two there
56. BONGANI: I ... I think one and two are
57. which was equally difficult
58. GEORGE: equally difficult
59. BONGANI: yah
60. GEORGE: and
61. BONGANI: and not actually difficult but I think er not prepared
62. thoroughly or my approach in answering was not quite ... according to
63. expected standard
64. GEORGE: er in the case of which one both of them
65. BONGANI: I think both
66. GEORGE: alright ... now well let me let me give this information
67. er your question 1 was a very bad answer in our terms whereas
68. your question 2
69. BONGANI: yah
70. GEORGE: was a pass you passed question 5
71. BONGANI: yah
72. GEORGE: you passed question 2 but failed question 1 rather badly
73. BONGANI: oh I I see the reason now with question 1 I think I said something
74. about a performance ... although (BONGANI continues to speak - unclear)
75. GEORGE: do you yah you know you spoke about ... sorry
76. can I cut in there
77. BONGANI: yes
78. GEORGE: erm you know you spoke about er your
79. preparation
80. BONGANI: ye
81. GEORGE: can I ask you you remember
82. we gave you the outline here
83. BONGANI: yes
84. GEORGE: can I ask you how set about ...
85. preparing that question
86. BONGANI: I ... I ... (unclear) my problem was
87. GEORGE: what did you do BONGANI: er
88. reading material to cover the topic
89. GEORGE: yes
90. BONGANI: yes
91. GEORGE: you mean you ... you
92. didn't have the reading ... or you didn't know what the reading was
- BONGANI: (starts to speak)
93. BONGANI: yes sir
94. GEORGE: what what reading did you use in fact ... in in preparing
95. for that one
96. BONGANI: ... I I think I found some portion in the notes
97. and one of the
98. GEORGE: from the seminar
99. BONGANI: ya ya from the seminars sir
100. GEORGE: yes
101. BONGANI: ya
102. and
103. BONGANI: I I thought it was not enough for the question
104. GEORGE: why why did you choose that question then rather than the other
105. question ... did you how many of the questions did you actually
106. prepare

107. BONGANI: I I prepared those three  
 108. GEORGE: those three ... yes  
 109. BONGANI: but a (slight pause)  
 110. GEORGE: I'm interested in knowing how you set about  
 111. your preparation  
 112. BONGANI: ya  
 113. GEORGE: what what you felt you needed to do  
 114. because I think this is the important thing to sort out what did  
 115. BONGANI: ye  
 116. GEORGE: you feel you needed to do in order to prepare for that question ... say  
 117. BONGANI: (unclear) yaa (softly)  
 118. GEORGE: do you did you feel that um you should  
 119. rely on what you had got from seminars ...  
 120. BONGANI: ... y ye yes er some part  
 121. of the question but I I thought I should have used the Chomsky  
 122. GEORGE: yes  
 123. BONGANI: but a  
 124. GEORGE: which Chomsky did you think you would use  
 125. BONGANI: th the  
 126. the precise book  
 127. GEORGE: which one ... the one one by Lyons  
 128. BONGANI: (unclear)  
 129. BONGANI: oh yes yes  
 130. GEORGE: the one by Lyons  
 131. BONGANI: yes  
 132. GEORGE: yes and did you feel that that would be  
 133. enough for the whole question  
 134. BONGANI: ... I think I discovered later that  
 135. it was not enough  
 136. GEORGE: when  
 137. BONGANI: when wh wh  
 138. GEORGE: how late I mean (laugh)  
 139. BONGANI: I am mean  
 140. GEORGE: in the exam  
 141. BONGANI: in the exam yes  
 142. GEORGE: ye  
 143. BONGANI: yaa  
 144. GEORGE: which  
 145. BONGANI: because  
 146. this er  
 147. GEORGE: in other words did you feel that the topic we  
 148. actually gave you was too different from what we had said here ...  
 149. which part of the question er worried you in the exam ... sorry to  
 150. be finding you these questions I don't know if you expected me to say this is  
 151. BONGANI: ya I see yes  
 152. where you went wrong I'm trying to see what I'm trying  
 153. BONGANI: ya I expected that  
 154. to find out is really how you set about doing it because I think if  
 155. we can find out I'm not trying to blame you  
 156. BONGANI: ye  
 157. GEORGE: in any way I'm  
 158. trying to find out where your preparation was not enough so I can  
 159. tell you  
 160. BONGANI: ye

161. GEORGE: how can you learn  
 162. BONGANI: va  
 163. GEORGE: er next time to do it  
 164. properly  
 165. BONGANI: (reading aloud) to what extent subsequent developments  
 166. within generative theory (unclear)  
 167. GEORGE: yes which is the part of the  
 168. question that you felt you couldn't deal with  
 169. BONGANI: er ... the last part

## ENCOUNTER GEORGE-JANE

7. (stage starts) the **Articulate mammal** or no they didn't have the  
 8. **Articulate mammal**  
 9. GEORGE: va  
 10. JANE: they ordered (unclear) they didn't seem to  
 11. know very much about anything at all and this lot here have got  
 12. virtually nothing  
 13. GEORGE: yes  
 14. JANE: very little ...  
 15. GEORGE: so have they got it I mean  
 16. JANE: what  
 17. GEORGE: are  
 18. JANE: no no copies available at either Lozans or Adams  
 19. GEORGE: va  
 20. JANE: which is very typical I suppose two months to order three months  
 21. after (unclear)  
 22. GEORGE: well we're having trouble with our undergraduate  
 23. course where er we you know we asked them to we said we're going to  
 24. have over 200 students in Durban and anything up to 100 students in  
 25. Pietermaritzburg  
 26. JANE: and they just haven't accommodated you at all  
 27. GEORGE: and you know there  
 28. are a whole lot of students who haven't got copies ... it's just so  
 29. frustrating  
 30. JANE: ~~no~~ and then they overcater when one doesn't need  
 31. GEORGE: va well I've not yet had the overcater yet ... look er  
 32. JANE: one thing  
 33. GEORGE: va  
 34. JANE: one thing I really did want to ask you was um ... just  
 35. thinking sounding my own reactions to both papers  
 36. GEORGE: aa  
 37. JANE: I felt  
 38. very strongly that I'd done much better I'd performed much better  
 39. on the second paper er than I had on the first  
 40. GEORGE: va GEORGE: right  
 41. JANE: which made me  
 42. decide very definitely that you are obviously looking for different  
 43. things because I felt desperate in the first one I couldn't I had  
 44. no facts at immediate recall.  
 45. GEORGE: va va  
 46. JANE: I couldn't sit down and say  
 47. right I've got a broad overview of rspective

48. GEORGE: va  
 49. JANE: I got sort of vaguely  
 50. panic stricken at the fact that I didn't have facts at immediate  
 51. recall  
 52. GEORGE: yes  
 53. JANE: I couldn't just say fine I've got a reasonably  
 54. structured approach and so on I was very much feeling for things  
 55. and articulating things that I hadn't formulated before  
 56. GEORGE: right  
 57. JANE: and left it feeling immensely dissatisfied  
 58. GEORGE: no well I'm  
 59. glad you're approach it from that point of view because that's  
 60. more or less the situation I wanted to put you in  
 61. JANE: mm  
 62. what I've done with the other people is to say to them well you tell  
 63. me what things you think  
 64. JANE: va  
 65. GEORGE: you did best in and worst in so that you  
 66. can find your expectations are (unclear) are matching ours  
 67. JANE: matching yours

## ENCOUNTER GEORGE-PETER

3. GEORGE: what I thought we might do ... is to sort of ... explore assump-  
 4. tions ... about what what are the requirements of a of an essay topic  
 5. say in other words um you tell me what you think the demands of a  
 6. particular topic are of a particular question ... and then I tell you  
 7. what I think they are  
 8. PETER: mm  
 9. GEORGE: and because I think this is more or less  
 10. what's what what shall we say goes wrong where people don't get um  
 11. the marks that they think they ought to have got or their  
 12. PETER: (unclear)  
 13. GEORGE: amount  
 14. of work is not necessarily translatable into the marks it's often  
 15. that they're straining at what is not required (laughter in voice)  
 16. than what is required  
 17. PETER: va va  
 18. GEORGE: and some in some cases you'll find  
 19. that what you assume is the right thing is what we assume is the  
 20. right thing in other occasions it will be quite different  
 21. PETER: va  
 22. GEORGE: so I  
 23. think this is what I see as as the value of of a chat like this  
 24. alright um let's put a this register thing away and have a look at a  
 25. the essay ... so you remember the topic was um {reading} being accord-  
 26. PETER: {together}  
 27. oriate to the situation is not some optional extra in language it is  
 28. an essential element in the ability to mean  
 29. PETER: va  
 30. GEORGE: alright (continuing  
 31. to read) how can language teacher develop his pupils' awareness  
 32. of this and their ability to respond appropriate to the different



33. situations um which
34. PETER: to different situations
35. GEORGE: to different
36. situations which of these two parts of the topic would you say um
37. tells you what you actually have to do in the essay
38. PETER: well well it's
39. the second part (continues)
40. GEORGE: the second the second part
41. PETER: va
42. GEORGE: now what would you
43. say the function of a (speeding up) because you often get a sort of
44. rubric like this don't you
45. PETER: va va
46. GEORGE: in a in a examination or some-
47. thing they give you a quotation and
48. PETER: um the function of the first part of
49. the essay is obviously is to is to is to point to the um the area of
50. linguistic study um which has um contributed to a
51. GEORGE: to what
52. PETER: to to
53. perhaps people making applications of a situation in relation to
54. language teaching um the function of this is just to to highlight the
55. area of a of the a of the theoreticians who (unclear, low volume)
56. relationship of language to situation I think this would lead towards
57. the application (increasing volume and speed) now I don't think I did
58. this in this essay um answered that question entirely in that frame
59. of reference
60. GEORGE: va
61. PETER: I think that is what you're going to say
62. GEORGE: well
63. well I'm I'm wanting to see
64. PETER: you're you're going to say I didn't actually um answer
65. the essay in relation to a what he can do to his pupils as to develop
66. his pupils' awareness of situation that's what the position is (con-
67. tinues)
68. GEORGE: well I
69. no I'm what I want to know is um you know don't don't make me more
70. Machiavellian than I am (continues)
71. PETER: no no I I am aware of what you (continues)
72. GEORGE: no what I'm interested in
73. is really in is to see as um as the function of different
74. parts of the essay a in other words what constraints does it
75. put upon you
76. PETER: well you have to answer the question in relation
77. to the pupils' awareness I mean of of how the teacher can develop his
78. pupils' awareness um
79. GEORGE: alright so what which part of this are you are
80. focusing on ... (starts to say something)
81. PETER: um the ... I would say I would say my my essay was
82. based on the relationship of situation to the teacher and um
83. GEORGE: yes
84. what I was quite interested in in your discussion here is that you're
85. saying how can the language teacher develop his pupils' awareness and
86. you're saying a this essay should have been more about how the language

87. teacher can develop his pupils' awareness  
 88. PETER: no ... a ...  
 89. GEORGE: um  
 90. PETER: va I  
 91. a um I had some difficulty with the essay I was going to say you  
 92. anticipated me when you said that you said you'd been Machiavellian  
 93. but um the thing is that um what I said was that I had some difficulty  
 94. with the essay in tension between these two things  
 95. GEORGE: yes  
 96. PETER: a for a start teacher cannot develop his pupils' awareness until he  
 97. realises the relationship between language and situation himself  
 98. GEORGE: va  
 99. PETER: so therefore  
 100. GEORGE: did you say that  
 101. PETER: um va I did say that well I  
 102. GEORGE: was  
 103. that the point of your essay  
 104. PETER: I quoted Bloomfield  
 105. GEORGE: yes but I mean  
 106. PETER: I  
 107. GEORGE: a you see if you had said that if you'd made that  
 108. PETER: quoted Brunfit and Johnson yes  
 109. GEORGE: your key point  
 110. PETER: it was a key point in the essay  
 111. GEORGE: va but in other  
 112. words if you had said um that first of all the teacher needs to  
 113. know ... this if you like  
 114. PETER: va ... I mean essentially that that  
 115. GEORGE: well  
 116. that that was your your major essay I mean that was your major point  
 117. which you developed that would be that would be dealing with  
 118. PETER: va va that was part of my essay  
 119. GEORGE: that point  
 120. PETER: va (continues unclear)  
 121. GEORGE: now if you'd done that would you say that you had  
 122. met the constraints that were um that were put on you by the topic  
 123. PETER: ... not the alone no

## APPENDIX B

The questionnaires reproduced below were devised at an early stage of the research reported on in this thesis in order to test the hypothesis that the source of some negative cultural stereotypes was differences in ways of speaking, and to discover what these stereotypes were. In a pilot study the questionnaires were completed individually by 72 native speakers of English (90% of whom were S.A. English speakers) and 42 native speakers of a Bantu language (63% of whom were native speakers of Zulu). All the respondents were undergraduates. The percentages given on pages 156 & 170 are part of the results from this pilot study. The study was not pursued further, partly because subsequent reading suggested that a more effective means of investigating such phenomena was the fine-grained qualitative analysis of authentic interactions, and partly because of the negative reactions of the respondents to the exercise. They complained that the questionnaires obliged them to make generalizations that they were uncomfortable about making, and argued that individuals within ethnic groups behaved differently, and that context affected the ways in which they behaved. Also some respondents were suspicious about the motives behind the exercise, fearing that its purpose was to emphasize differences.

(To be completed by speakers of Bantu languages:

Most of the items call for observations about your own ethnic/language group (native speakers of Bantu languages) or about the other ethnic/language group (native speakers of English). You will be asked what "you" or "they" do. Unless you are specifically asked for your personal response (in which case "you" will be capitalized) try as far as possible to answer for your group. Try not to be influenced by the fact that either some of your personal responses are not typical of your group, or that you know a few individuals belonging to the other group whose behaviour is not typical of their group. If all the alternative answers provided are unacceptable, provide your own. If, in your experience, answers apply to a sub-ethnic group only (e.g. Indian English, "White" English) indicate that. If you feel your experience of the other group is insufficient to answer any question, or if you feel you have no conscious knowledge of a way of communicating of your own group, write "uncertain" or "I don't know". If you feel that your answers would differ depending on situation or context, then specify the context/situation in which you would give a particular answer. (With most answers merely a tick will be required. You may tick more than one answer.)

1. Which Bantu language do YOU speak? .....
  
2. Indicate whether YOU are a man or a woman .....

3. If YOUR experience of communicating interethnically is mainly with speakers of a particular English-speaking ethnic group (e.g. Indians, Whites, Coloureds) then name that group .....

4. Indicate the level of education reached by most of the people with whom you communicate interethnically.

- primary or less .....
- secondary .....
- post-matric .....

5. Have YOU spent most of your life:

- in towns or cities? .....
- in the country? .....

6. Indicate the years of schooling completed by YOUR parents

Mother		Father
.....	0 - 3	.....
.....	4 - 7	.....
.....	8 -12	.....
.....	Bachelors degree or equiv.	.....
.....	Honours degree or equiv.	.....

7. How many years of schooling have you successfully completed? .....

8. When communicating with them, do YOU mainly:

- use their language? .....
  - use your language? .....
  - alternate? .....
  - use Fanakalo? .....
  - use some other language? .....
- ..... (Specify)

9. When Bantu and English speaking strangers meet socially who is most likely to start talking?

- Bantu speaker .....
- English speaker .....

10. When Bantu and English speaking strangers interact, are the English speakers:

very talkative? .....  
 reasonably talkative? .....  
 rather withdrawn and difficult to get to know? .....

11. When Bantu speakers receive a gift or favour do they tend to:

express stronger feelings of gratitude than they actually feel? .....  
 express less than they feel? .....  
 express what they actually feel? .....

12. When English speakers are asked by someone in authority (e.g. teacher, employment officer) about their knowledge, abilities or achievements do they tend to be:

rather boastful or cocky? .....  
 rather unsure of themselves? .....  
 modest and respectful? .....  
 confident and purposeful? .....

13. When English speakers are praised or what they are doing is admired, do they tend to:

express genuine pleasure? .....  
 play down their abilities or achievements? .....  
 return the compliment? .....

14. When you interact with English speakers do you find that they:

have few ideas of their own? .....  
 ignore your ideas and are concerned only with their own? .....  
 introduce ideas unrelated to the topic .....

15. What do Bantu speakers consider to be the most important function of communication?

to convey information .....  
 to establish or maintain relations with other people .....  
 both are equally primary .....

16. When English speakers are asked to give explanations or information are they frequently:

inaccurate about their facts? .....  
 rather slow to get to the point? .....  
 rather curt or abrupt in their responses? .....

17. When talking to superiors do Bantu speakers tend to talk:
- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| loudly?                                     | ..... |
| about the same volume as they do to equals? | ..... |
| softly?                                     | ..... |
18. When Bantu speakers meet for the first time at social gatherings, do they tend to:
- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| say very little?   | ..... |
| talk about as much as they do when with friends and intimates? | ..... |
| feel uncomfortable with even short silences?                   | ..... |
19. When asked by someone for general information or directions, do Bantu speakers think:
- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| that their main task is to give him the answer he wants to hear? | ..... |
| that their main task is to give accurate facts?                  | ..... |
20. What do Bantu speakers most admire in a leader? (e.g. manager, administrator, principal):
- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| willingness to take care of followers                   | ..... |
| eloquence   | ..... |
| willingness to listen to followers' ideas or grievances | ..... |
| self-confidence   | ..... |
21. When interacting with English speakers do you find that they tend to:
- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| look you in the eye?   | ..... |
| look down or to one side?                                      | ..... |
| look you in the eye only occasionally and at unexpected times? | ..... |
| stare you down?  | ..... |
22. When talking to strangers do Bantu speakers tend to talk:
- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| loudly?  | ..... |
| about the same volume as they do to people they know well? | ..... |
| softly?  | ..... |
23. When communicating with people who are well known to them, do Bantu speakers tend to be:
- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| very talkative?                                | ..... |
| about as talkative as they are with strangers? | ..... |
| comfortable with even long silences?           | ..... |

24. When Bantu speakers are praised, or what they do is admired, do they tend to:
- express genuine pleasure? .....
  - play down their abilities or achievements? .....
  - try to return the compliment? .....
  - present themselves in the best light? .....
25. If the choice were offered them, would most Bantu speakers choose a teacher who was:
- knowledgeable and eloquent? .....
  - skilled at getting students to display their knowledge and abilities? .....
26. When interacting with English speakers do you find that they frequently:
- interrupt you just as you are about to speak? .....
  - fail to take the opportunity to speak when you give them a turn? .....
  - interrupt you before you have completed your point? .....
  - fail to produce a whole coherent idea? .....
27. When interacting with English speakers do you find that they tend to:
- give the impression that they understand when they don't? .....
  - be so concerned with the facts that they often fail to sense what they really want? .....
  - say so if they don't understand what you mean or want? .....
28. When communicating with intimates do Bantu speakers tend to be:
- uncomfortable when there are even short silences? .....
  - comfortable with even long silences? .....
29. Has your experience of giving English speakers gifts or doing them favours made you feel that:
- they do not know the meaning of gratitude? .....
  - they are usually able to express gratitude sincerely? .....
  - they are overly effusive in their thanks? .....
30. When Bantu speakers are asked by a teacher, job interviewer or employer about their knowledge, abilities or achievements, do they tend to:
- emphasize their strengths and play down or omit their weaknesses? .....
  - underplay their strengths or emphasize strengths & weaknesses equally? .....

31. How do most Bantu speakers like to be addressed by someone who has higher status than themselves (e.g. employer, lecturer). Tick your choice and mark a cross next to the alternative they would be most uncomfortable with (embarrassed, insulted):

Title - last name (e.g. Mrs Tshabalala) .....  
 First name (e.g. Siso) .....  
 Title (e.g. Sir, Madam) .....  
 Last name (e.g. Mkhize) .....

32. If Bantu speakers ask acquaintances for a big favour, do they tend to:

imply that they have a closer relationship than they have? .....  
 apologize for imposing? .....  
 imply or tell them that they will return the favour at some future date? .....  
 say that it would not be unreasonable for them to refuse? .....

33. If Bantu speakers ask friends for a big favour, do they tend to:

emphasize the closeness of their relationship? .....  
 apologize for imposing? .....  
 imply or tell them that they will return the favour at some future date? .....  
 say that it would not be unreasonable for them to refuse? .....

34. At the conclusions of conversations with English speakers do YOU most often feel that:

they are still waiting for YOU to say more? .....  
 you have been dismissed? .....  
 they left you before YOU had really finished? .....  
 they make it difficult for you to disengage yourself? .....  
 the conversation has been satisfactorily concluded? .....

35. When Bantu speakers have a complaint or grievance against a superior (e.g. lecturer, employer) do they:

seek an opportunity to tell him about it? .....  
 wait for him to raise the subject? .....  
 hint at it and wait for him to follow up the hint? .....  
 use someone else to plead their case? .....  
 avoid confrontation at all costs? .....

\*\*\*\*\*



(To be completed by speakers of English)

Most of the items call for observations about your own ethnic/language group (native speakers of English) or about the other ethnic/language group (native speakers of Bantu languages. You will be asked what "you" or "they" do. Unless you are specifically asked for your personal response (in which case "you" will be capitalized) try as far as possible to answer for your group. Try not to be influenced by the fact that either some of your personal responses are not typical of your group or that you know a few individuals belonging to the other group whose behaviour is not typical of their group. If all the alternative answers provided are unacceptable, provide your own. If answers in your experience apply to a sub-ethnic group only (e.g. Xhosa, Zulu, Venda) indicate that. If you feel your experience of the other group is insufficient to answer any question, or if you feel you have no conscious knowledge of a way of communicating of your own group, write "uncertain" or "I don't know". If you feel that your answers would differ depending on situation or context, then specify the context/situation in which you would give a particular answer. (With most answers merely a tick will be required. You may tick more than one answer.)

1. Give further details of YOUR ethnic background (e.g. indicate whether Coloured, Indian, White) .....
  
2. Indicate whether YOU are a man or a woman .....
  
3. If YOUR experience of communicating interethnically is with speakers of a particular Bantu language (e.g. Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana) then name that language .....
  
4. Indicate the level of education reached by most of the people with whom you communicate interethnically
 

primary or less	.....
secondary	.....
post-matric	.....
  
5. Have YOU spent most of your life:
 

in towns or cities?	.....
in the country?	.....
  
6. Indicate the years of schooling completed by YOUR parents:
 

Mother	.....	0 - 3	Either	.....
	.....	4 - 7		.....
	.....	8 -12		.....
	.....	Bachelors degree or equivalent		.....

..... Honours degree or equivalent .....

7. How many years of schooling have you successfully completed? .....

8. When communicating with them, do YOU mainly:

use their language? .....

use your language? .....

alternate? .....

use Fanakalo? .....

use some other language? ..... (Specify)

9. When Bantu and English speaking strangers meet socially, who is most likely to start talking?

Bantu speakers? .....

English speakers? .....

10. When Bantu and English speaking strangers interact, are the Bantu speakers:

very talkative? .....

reasonably talkative? .....

rather withdrawn and difficult to get to know? .....

11. When English speakers receive a gift or favour do they tend to:

express stronger feelings of gratitude than they actually feel? .....

express less than they feel? .....

express what they actually feel? .....

12. When Bantu speakers are asked by someone in authority (e.g. teacher, employment officer) about their knowledge, abilities or achievements do they tend to be:

rather boastful or cocky? .....

rather unsure of themselves? .....

modest and respectful? .....

confident and purposeful? .....

13. When Bantu speakers are praised or what they are doing is admired, do they tend to:

express genuine pleasure? .....

play down their abilities or achievements? .....

return the compliment? .....

14. When you interact with Bantu speakers do you find that they:
- have few ideas of their own? .....
  - ignore your ideas and are concerned only with their own? .....
  - introduce ideas unrelated to the topic? .....
15. What do English speakers consider to be the most important function of communication?
- to convey information .....
  - to establish or maintain relations with other people .....
  - both are equally primary .....
16. When Bantu speakers are asked to give explanations or information are they frequently:
- inaccurate about their facts? .....
  - rather slow to get to the point? .....
  - rather curt or abrupt in their responses? .....
17. When talking to superiors do English speakers tend to talk:
- loudly? .....
  - about the same volume as they do to equals? .....
  - softly? .....
18. When English speakers meet for the first time at social gatherings, do they tend to:
- say very little? .....
  - talk about as much as they do when with friends and intimates? .....
  - feel uncomfortable with even short silences? .....
19. When asked by someone for general information or directions, do English speakers think:
- that their main task is to give him the answer he wants to hear? .....
  - that their main task is to give accurate facts? .....
20. What do English speakers most admire in a leader? (e.g. manager, administrator, principal):
- willingness to take care of followers .....
  - eloquence .....
  - willingness to listen to followers' ideas or grievances .....
  - self-confidence .....

21. When interacting with Bantu speakers do you find that they tend to:
- look you in the eye? .....
  - look down or to one side? .....
  - look you in the eye only occasionally and at unexpected times? .....
  - stare you down? .....
22. When talking to strangers do English speakers tend to talk:
- loudly? .....
  - about the same volume as they do to people they know well? .....
  - softly? .....
23. When communicating with people who are well known to them, do English speakers tend to be:
- very talkative? .....
  - about as talkative as they are with strangers? .....
  - comfortable with even long silences? .....
24. When English speakers are praised, or what they are doing is admired, do they tend to:
- express genuine pleasure? .....
  - play down their abilities or achievements? .....
  - try to return the compliment? .....
  - present themselves in the best light? .....
25. If the choice were offered them, would most English speakers choose a teacher who was:
- knowledgeable and eloquent? .....
  - skilled at getting students to display their knowledge and abilities? .....
26. When interacting with Bantu speakers do you find that they frequently:
- interrupt you just as you are about to speak? .....
  - fail to take the opportunity to speak when you give them a turn? .....
  - interrupt you before you have completed your point? .....
  - fail to produce a whole coherent idea? .....
27. When interacting with Bantu speakers do you find that they tend to:
- give the impression that they understand when they don't? .....

be so concerned with the facts that they often fail to sense what you really want? .....

say so if they don't understand what you mean or want? .....

28. When communicating with intimates do English speakers tend to be:

uncomfortable when there are even short silences? .....

comfortable with even long silences? .....

29. Has your experience of giving Bantu speakers gifts or doing them favours made you feel that:

they do not know the meaning of gratitude? .....

they are usually able to express gratitude sincerely? .....

they are overly effusive in their thanks? .....

30. When English speakers are asked by a teacher, job interviewer or employer about their knowledge, abilities or achievements, do they tend to:

emphasize their strengths and play down or omit their weaknesses? .....

underplay their strengths or emphasize strengths & weaknesses equally? .....

31. How do most English speakers like to be addressed by someone who has higher status than themselves (e.g. employer, lecturer). Tick your choice and mark a cross next to the alternative they would be most uncomfortable with (embarrassed, insulted):

title - last name (e.g. Mr Smith)	.....	.....
first name (e.g. Mary)	.....	.....
title (e.g. Sir, Madam)	.....	.....
last name (e.g. Smith)	.....	.....

32. If English speakers ask acquaintances for a big favour, do they tend to:

imply that they have a closer relationship than they have? .....

apologize for imposing? .....

imply or tell them that they will return the favour at some future date? .....

say that it would not be unreasonable for them to refuse? .....

33. If English speakers ask friends for a big favour, do they tend to:

emphasize the closeness of their relationship? .....

apologize for imposing? .....

imply or tell them that they will return the favour at some future date? .....

say that it would not be unreasonable for them to refuse? .....

34. At the conclusions of conversations with Bantu speakers do YOU most often feel that:

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| they are still waiting for YOU to say more?           | ..... |
| you have been dismissed?                              | ..... |
| they left you before YOU had really finished          | ..... |
| they make it difficult for you to disengage yourself? | ..... |
| the conversation has been satisfactorily concluded?   | ..... |

35. When English speakers have a complaint or grievance against a superior (e.g. lecturer, employer) do they:

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| seek an opportunity to tell him about it?          | ..... |
| wait for him to raise the subject?                 | ..... |
| hint at it and wait for him to follow up the hint? | ..... |
| use someone else to plead their case?              | ..... |
| avoid confrontation at all costs?                  | ..... |

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APPENDIX CROLE PLAY EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRESClient's Evaluation

1. I experienced this interview as
  - a. very comfortable
  - b. comfortable
  - c. stressful at times
  - d. very stressful
  
2. As a result of this interview
  - a. there is a good chance that I will become a customer
  - b. there is some chance that I will become a customer
  - c. I will definitely not consult this person again
  
3. As a result of this interview I saw him/her as
  - a. very competent
  - b. fairly competent
  - c. incompetent
  
4. I felt I understood his/her message
  - a. all the time
  - b. most of the time
  - c. very little of the time
  
5. He/she appears to be
  - a. an excellent communicator
  - b. clear but left me feeling uncomfortable
  - c. pleasant but rather confusing
  - d. both confusing and difficult to please
  
6. His/her behaviour was
  - a. typical of that shown by many Afrikaans folk that I have met
  - b. indistinguishable from that of most English-speaking South Africans
  - c. typical of neither English- nor Afrikaans-speaking folk

7. Interaction such as this would tend to confirm/disconfirm the general impression that Afrikaans people tend to be  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

\*\*\*\*\*

Banker's Evaluation

1. I experienced this interview as
- very comfortable
  - comfortable
  - stressful at times
  - very stressful
2. As a result of the interview
- There is a good chance that he/she will become a customer
  - there is some chance that he/she will become a customer
  - I will clearly not see him/her again
3. As a result of this interview he/she is likely to perceive me as
- more competent than I am
  - competent as I really am
  - less competent than I am
4. I felt I understood his/her message
- all the time
  - most of the time
  - very little of the time
5. In the interview I was able to communicate
- all that I needed to say
  - most of what I needed to say
  - only those things that I was able to say
6. The prospective client appears to be



- a. an excellent communicator
- b. clear but not easy to please
- c. pleasant but rather confusing

7. The client's behaviour was

- a. typical of that shown by most other English speaking clients
- b. indistinguishable from that of most of most Afrikaans speaking clients
- c. typical of neither most English speaking or Afrikaans speaking clients

8. Interaction such as this would confirm/disconfirm the general impression that English speaking people tend to be

.....  
.....  
.....

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