FACEWORK IN ENGLISH AND GERMAN SOCIABLE EPISODES

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Transcription Conventions

The conversational data presented in this study has been transcribed following the general methodology employed in Conversational Analysis (see ten Have 1999 and Hutchby and Wooffit 1998 for overviews). This involves the reproduction of the talk as it happened sequentially, that is, the words as they were uttered in real time. As a result, phenomena such as overlap, false starts, and incomplete utterances are included. The data will be presented with a series of line numbers to aid discussion when referring to specific parts of each transcript. In order to append this sequential representation, a series of transcription conventions has been used. These are largely drawn from those set out in Button and Lee (1987). The extent to which these have been used is similar to that seen in Malone (1997). This technique has allowed me to present salient aspects of the sequential organisation of talk as well as the propositional content.

Notation Symbol	**Function**
(Utterance)	Author's suggested for unclear utterance(s)
( )	Completely unintelligible utterance(s)
(1)	Length of pause within / between utterances (in seconds)
(.)	Micro pause (> 0.25 secs)
Equal=sign	No pause between two or more speaker utterances
Bracke[ts [Brackets	Overlapping of two or more speaker utterances
CAPITALS	Utterance spoken loudly
Underline	Utterance / part of utterance emphasised by speaker
Degree marks	Utterance spoken quietly
Colo:::n	Utterance stretched out by speaker
> Utterance <	Utterance spoken at slow pace
< Utterance >	Utterance spoken at quick pace
HAHAhehe	Variously represents laughter
((Comments))	Author's own comments

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Abstract

This research focuses on cross-cultural differences in facework between English and German conversation. Specifically, the research addresses facework occurring as part and parcel of sociable conversation, as it is played out within moments of focused topic development – what I term 'sociable episodes'. Drawing on extant literature, the study identifies a range of communicative parameters along which English and German communicative style has been shown to differ, non more so than those suggesting different facework norms, and orientation to face needs as opposed to such things as ideational aspects of talk. In an attempt to address these differences, the study develops a model of facework – *facework as alignment* – which is posited as being appropriate to the study of essentially *apolite* conversational interaction. Further, although utilising the notions of ritual equilibrium (Goffman 1967) and positive – negative aspects of face (Brown and Levinson), the posited model of facework focuses specifically on aspects of sociable selfhood informing sociable conversation. It is argued that facework in sociable episodes is a matter of positive and negative alignment of sociable selves in and through the claiming of solidarity with and autonomy from other co-participants in terms of expressions of definitions, evaluations, experiences. In terms of English – German differences, these are demonstrated to be a matter of alignment of different sociable selves, ones normatively and routinely positively and negatively aligned in the achievement of sociable conversation, and ones indexing prevailing but culturally differing positive social values (Goffman 1967). The study concludes by identifying areas for future research based on the *facework as alignment* model developed and applied throughout the thesis.

Introduction

The 'Research Problem'

Comparative research of English and German discourse has identified a number of salient ways in which German and English speakers differ in their communicative style. Studies have focused on an array of different data which includes both textual materials, (e.g. Snell-Hornby 1984; Evans 1998; Clyne 1987; Luchtenberg 1994; Krenn 1991; Kienpointer and Kindt 1997; Pufahl 1992) and spoken interaction (e.g. Blum-Kulka and House 1989; Byrnes 1986; Fetzer 1996, 1997; Friday 1994; Hellweg, Samovar, and Skow 1994; House 1979, 1982a, 1982b, 1982c, 1989; House and Kasper 1981; Kotthoff 1989, 1991, 1993, 1994; Straehle 1997; and Watts 1989). What these studies have shown is that German and English speakers differ along a range of communicative parameters, which include such things as levels of directness in realising speech acts, varying focus on one's own or one's interlocutors' concerns in communicative exchanges, interpersonal versus ideational concerns emphasis in talk, and the avoidance or pursuit of conflictual conversation.

Fundamentally, what many of these studies suggest is that the Germans and the English, across a range of discourse practices, engage in differing levels of facework (Goffman 1967; Brown and Levinson 1987), that is, the communicative practices engaged in to recognise and support either one's own or one's interlocutor's face needs. However, although the concept of face is often drawn upon in studies addressing German – English differences in communicative style, it is very often employed only cursorily. In fact, there exist to date no sustained systematic comparative study of facework in the two cultures. This study seeks to do exactly that – to address German and English differences in communicative style as cultural variations in facework.

Although the term face and facework have effectively nowadays become incorporated into common parlance, within discourse studies the terms refer to quite precise conceptualisations and communicative

practices. Over the past 30 or more years, scholars have attempted to draw on Goffman's (1967), and more recently Brown and Levinson's (1987) conceptualisations of face and frameworks for interpreting facework practices (see see Cupach and Metts 1994; Earley 1997; Metts 1997; Spiers 1998; Tracey 1990; and Ting-Toomey 1994). However, although the number of studies addressing face and facework in discourse has increased dramatically in recent years, the endeavour to identify face concerns and analyse discourse for its facework content and functions has become - largely as a result of increasing discussions around the issue - increasingly problematised. In short, discourse as it is practised in everyday settings, contexts, and situations has proved to be increasingly recalcitrant to a systematic analysis for facework practices therein.

In terms of cross-cultural applications of the concept of face and frameworks for addressing facework, the problem seems further compounded. Forged in an essentially Anglo-American milieu, increasing studies have undermined to varying degree predominant frameworks for addressing facework in discourse, no more so than those identifying fundamental weaknesses and limitations with the facework as politeness approach advanced by Brown and Levinson (1987), one which forms the conceptual and analytical basis for the majority of extant studies.

In respect of the observations made about English – German differences in communicative style, and the need for a systematic comparative study of facework in each culture, current debates surrounding face and facework studies per se, as well as those touching on fundamental problems with, for instance, the universal applicability of the concepts of face and reading of facework, would seem to preclude somewhat such an endeavour. In short, not only does a universally acknowledged framework for the analysis of facework not exist at present, but comments made by a range of scholars suggest such a framework might not be possible, at least with the concepts of face and facework as they exist at present.

Taking these problematics as a starting point – one empirical, the other analytical - this study shall nevertheless attempt, in the first instance, to address facework as basis for differences in English and German communicative style. In doing so, I shall necessarily consider the nature of face and facework, and how these might best be conceptualised in the cross-cultural analysis of communicative style, in particular, as part and parcel of what I shall refer to as sociable conversation.

On a Personal Note: Background to the Study

This research project has as much to do with personal experience, as it has to do with a specific 'research problem'. It does not – at least in the empirical sense – refer to a set of issues which were 'new' to me at the outset of the work which I would eventually submit in partial fulfilment of my doctoral studies. Rather, this study points to a set of issues with which I was already quite familiar before I embarked on the surveying of relevant literature and data gathering.

In spring 1992 I paid my first visit to Germany with my wife to be, Elke. I had the usual Anglo-centric preconceptions about 'the Germans'; loud, brash, and perhaps potentially aggressive towards me as an 'Englishman' (based in 'the War' schema that so many of we English carry as Anglo-centric baggage when travelling in Europe). These perceptions seemed confirmed very soon after first attending German 'sociable gatherings' and upon attempting to make 'sociable' contributions to conversation. For instance, my attempts to inject humour were often not taken as 'funny' at all and often picked up as matters for more serious comment, leaving me with the feeling that I hadn't (or shouldn't) have joked about such matters in the first place. 'Throwaway' comments were also something that I quickly learnt to avoid, as what was conversationally thrown away by myself was often quickly picked up by some other participant in the talk and subsequently given back to me to be further developed. It wasn't long though before I noticed it was not ME that was being patronised or discriminated against, in fact quite the opposite, I

seemed to be being treated in much the same way that the Germans (in conversation) were treating each other.

Several years later, on pondering the subject for my PhD research, and having already attempted to touch on these English-German differences in a post-graduate essay, I decided that the PhD would provide a perfect opportunity to tackle systematically the bases for these underlying differences in conversational style. This work is a result of that endeavour.

Emergence of a Thesis

This project began life with the following aims: To systematically gather a large corpus of conversational data in parallel settings across both cultures, in order to look for variations in conversational style, then to attempt to explain these by employing existing models of facework, most notably Brown and Levinson (1987) and Goffman (1967). In that sense, the intent was for the study to have a heavy empirical skewing, based on the systematic analysis of a large body of data. The plan satisfied both myself and the funding body from which the research grant was obtained. However, the ride to explanation over the course of analysing ongoing naturally occurring conversation from two cultures quickly turned out to be a rocky one.

Let me cite from the initial proposal for funding for this study:

> The purpose of this investigation is to conduct a cross-cultural comparative study of 'face-work' (Goffman 1967) in parallel German and English sociable settings (after-dinner conversations and the like). Empirical data will be collected in the form of recorded, translated and transcribed naturally occurring talk...Analysis will then be conducted within the Sociological framework of 'face-to-face' interaction. It is hoped that such an investigation will identify culturally specific elements of face-work during face-to-face spoken interaction in both cultures, and enable a systematic comparison of the two societies. (ESRC Research Studentship Proposal, 1998).

At the time, this proposal seemed essentially clear cut in terms of: a) what the 'research problem' was; and b) how I would set about addressing this problem. However it soon became clear, upon gathering and consulting the literature on face and facework, and looking at the nature of the conversational data coming in, that this would not to be such a clear cut systematic investigation. I quickly came to realise that the conceptual, methodological and analytic tools for executing such a study were far from the clinical and incisive ones I expected them to be. As a result, the study took on a double mandate: First, the original task of addressing German-English differences; and second the task of finding a framework and set of concepts and analytical tools suitable for the analysis of facework in naturally occurring conversation from two different cultures.

This thesis might best be described as equally exploratory and empirical in nature. This dual mandate is subsequently reflected in the organisation of the study in terms of the individual chapters, nature of the analysis, and set of propositions constituting the overall thesis.

Organisation of Chapters

In Chapter 1 I shall begin by considering key foundational texts, to which the majority of facework studies can be conceptually traced, namely, the work of Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson (1987). I will suggest that the fundamental premises set out in these two bodies of work are essential, not only to understanding the concept of face and facework practices in discourse *per se*, but particularly, to cross-cultural comparative analysis between cultures. Following this I shall point to recent conceptual debates addressing the concept of face as a universal, drawing particularly on work conducted by scholars focussing on non-Western conceptualisations, largely in response to Brown and Levinson. In essence, I shall show how, in order to fully understand face and facework as a universal phenomenon, the concept of the self – particular that advanced in Western readings of face and facework – requires some

degree of reconsideration and reconceptualisation. In particular I shall point to the analytical import provided by the concept of the self as 'self-construal'. I shall then move on to focus on evidence pointing to cross-cultural variation in communicative norms and practices, which seem to undermine conventional understanding of politeness and facework, particularly those, which equate facework with indirectness of expression. In concluding the chapter I shall suggest that how participants in various cultures achieve and sustain 'ritual equilibrium' (Goffman 1967) by engaging in quite different, and often *prima facie* contradictory – facework practices. The aim of this chapter will be, in essence, to ground the concepts and notions of facework in a cross-cultural context.

I shall begin Chapter 2 by inserting something of myself into the thesis, that is, I shall speak briefly of my own observations, feelings, and initial problems of participating in sociable gatherings within the German milieu. This personal grounding is a necessary one, as it is out of personal experience that my interest in the basis for English – German differences in communicative style originally emerged. Following this, I shall identity salient characteristics of German and English communicative style, a term I shall use as a generic one to encompass a range of discourse practices. Here I shall draw on literature that has addressed a range of discourse phenomena, from single speech acts to more general orientations to ongoing conversational interaction. The emphasis here will be to highlight essential differences between the two speech communities, ones which will effectively corroborate my own personal experiences, and which in a more general sense may point to issues such as cross-cultural (mis)perception. In an attempt to consolidate this range of observations and findings, I shall move on to identify salient cultural parameters along which German and English communicative style differs. Following this, I shall pose the question of how far the conceptualisations of face and frameworks for the interpretation of facework introduced in Chapter 1 can help illuminate the cultural basis for such salient differences in communicative style. It will be argued that, although current frameworks for understanding facework across cultures allows some insight into the bases for German – English differences, fundamental concepts such as

the self and its relationship to ongoing conversational style remain essentially under explored. Finally, I shall consider the methodological, analytical and procedural characteristics of extant comparative research into English – German differences in communicative style, identifying the benefits and limitations of each and suggesting areas, which require further investigation and elaboration. Here I shall also point to the nature of the data on which this study is based, and sites from which it is drawn.

Chapter 3 will be perhaps the most fundamental chapter of the whole study. This is largely due to the theoretical and analytical propositions developed and advanced. I shall begin by outlining the main approaches to the analysis of facework in discourse, these being largely applications or developments of Goffman's (1967) and Brown and Levinson's (1987) frameworks. Again, although I shall identify the analytical purchase provided by extant approaches to facework in discourse, I shall argue that, the nature of discourse itself – particular naturally occurring ongoing discourse – remains recalcitrant to systematic and valid analysis in terms of its facework features, due to such things as multi-functionality of utterances, the import of contextual factors, and inherent problems with identifying a particular unit of analysis for the analysis of facework. In conclusion I shall suggest that facework – particular the notions of positive and negative face (Brown and Levinson 1987) and equilibrium (Goffman 1967) – might best be treated as 'heuristics' in the analysis of facework, that is, as sensitising devices rather than indexing particular linguistic form of, for example, particular utterances. Following this - and changing footing somewhat - I shall consider the contingencies and dynamics of the particular type of discourse on which this particular study is based, that is, sociable interaction (Blum-Kulka 1997; Eggins and Slade 1997; Riesman and Watson 1964; Schiffrin 1984; Simmel 1949 [1911]; Tannen 1984; Watson 1958; Watson and Potter 1962). Here I shall draw on a body of literature that points to particular fundamental underlying dynamics, which guide conversational behaviour during episodes of sociable conversation. Drawing on these observations – and in the light of the particular empirical basis for this study - I shall move on to suggest how the sociological

concepts of alignments (Nofsinger 1991) and equilibrium (Goffman 1967) may be employed to accommodate the inherent dynamics of sociable conversation and, more importantly, be seen to provide some analytical purchase on the self in sociable conversation as a concept directly linked to both positive and negative face needs. I shall then present a framework of the analysis of facework as a matter not of utterances per se, but of selves, what I shall term a *facework as alignment* approach to the analysis of facework in conversation. Based on these theoretical propositions, I shall then point to certain questions which might need to be pursued if an understanding of English and German differences in conversational style as facework as alignment were to be arrived at. The propositions set out in this chapter shall be fundamental to the following analysis and he thesis as a whole.

In Chapter 4 I shall briefly spell out my methodology for the gathering and initial analysis of conversational data, one guided by the analytical and empirical parameters determined by the facework as alignment approach outlined in Chapter 3. Here I shall also address the nature of conducting data gathering and ethnographic observations in a sociable milieu – what I have referred to elsewhere as socia(b)l(e) science (Philburn 2003). Issues addressed here shall include ethical ones, and my particular role as both researcher and bona fide participant in sociable gatherings.

Chapters 5 to 8 will be analytical in nature and shall be organised around the presentation and analysis of observational and conversational data. In Chapter 5 I shall demonstrate how sociability can be seen to be delineated as particular form on interaction by identifying how participants in both cultures align at a general level to sociable gatherings. The aim of this chapter is to point out and emphasise two things: First, in drawing on ethnographic observations, I shall show how participants in both cultural milieu normatively orient to sociable gatherings and sociability as particular situated activity, evidenced in what I shall term *aligning for sociability*; second, and more specifically, I shall demonstrate how participants in sociable gatherings – at a very general level – orient to the

activity of sociable conversation, what I shall term *aligning for alignment*. This second category of analysis shall involve pointing out how – at a general level - participants in each respective milieu variously engage in sociable topic development, that is, the nature of topics routinely drawn upon, the extent to which topics are collaboratively developed, and how such topics are commonly framed – for example in a serious or more humorous way. In concluding the chapter I shall posit a set of basic descriptive topic categories under which much of the sociable topic talk in each milieu can be subsumed. Importantly, I shall suggest that each of the categories posited – and by definition the majority of sociable topic development in each milieu – variously allows for both positive and negative facework as alignment as it was conceptualised in chapter 3.

In Chapters 6 to 8 I shall move from a focus on observational to transcribed conversational data. The main thrust of Chapter 6 shall be to illustrate how sociable conversation can be seen to be characterised by instances of what I shall term both positive and negative alignment, that is, the claiming of solidarity *with* and autonomy *from* fellow-participants. These two readings of alignment, ones essential to the facework as alignment approach advanced in Chapter 3 – shall form the basis of the discussion in this and the following two analytical chapters. Aside from demonstrating how both positive and alignments as facework are routinely engaged in in each milieu, I shall consider the whole range of possible alignment contingencies suggested by the interpretative framework set out in Chapter 3. In effect this chapter shall work at an illustrative level to evidence the validity of the notion of facework as alignment in sociable episodes. In terms of the specific empirical concerns of the study, I shall show how the nature of these alignments clearly reflects some of the salient aspects of conversational style in general identified in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 7 I shall extended and develop the discussion of the self as a symbolic resource for alignment first touched on in Chapter 1. In particular I shall draw on Goffman's (1953; 1967) conceptualisation of the self under what he termed a dual mandate, that is, as involving the self as 'player' and the self as 'image'. Specifically, again by drawing on

conversational data from both cultures, I shall identify what I shall refer to as certain salient sociable selves routinely mobilised by participants in German and English sociable settings. These conversational selves shall be posited as being necessary symbolic resources to both engage in the sociable style demonstrated in each respective culture, and allow for the claiming and ratification of prevailing positive social values.
Fundamentally, such selves shall be demonstrated to be the symbolic resources through which participants are able to achieve both positive and negative alignment, and thus, over the flow of the conversation have both positive and negative face needs met within a wider reciprocal framework of mutually supportive ritual equilibrium.

In Chapter 8, I shall draw these theoretical threads and empirical snapshots together, to conduct a more thorough and detailed analysis of two extended excerpts of sociable conversation drawn from both German and English sociable episodes for their facework as alignment features. The aim of this final analytic chapter shall be twofold: First, to demonstrate the analytical purchase afford by a facework as alignment approach to the analysis of sociable conversation; and second to demonstrate how German and English participants in sociable episodes variously draw on effectively institutionalised sociable selves in the achievement of facework as alignment. Although differing in their symbolic and conversational manifestation, such practise shall be shown to allow participants in each sociable milieu to achieve and sustain what I shall term sociable equilibrium.

Finally, in Chapter 9, I shall conclude the thesis. Here I shall review the chapters one by one, before moving on to consolidate the theoretical propositions advanced over the course of the study, and assess the usefulness of facework as alignment approach. In terms of the specific research questions set out in Chapter 4, I shall consider in how far the facework as alignment approach has advanced our understanding of the bases for English – German differences in communicative style, in particular those practices routinely and normatively engaged in within sociable settings. Finally, I shall suggest areas for further research,

including the application of the facework as alignment approach in contexts other than sociable ones, possible extensions to and developments on the facework as alignment approach, and implications for cross-cultural research, particularly between those cultures where – as I noted in Chapter 1 - extant frameworks and conceptualisations have proved inadequate.

In the first instance, this thesis stands as a single document. Each successive chapter serves to lead the reader through the various stages of the study by providing the necessary conceptual and theoretical background, considering the empirical data, before concluding the study and suggesting areas for further research. However, it is possible to read each chapter independently of the others, depending on the reader's particular interest or familiarity with one or the other part of the thesis. With a wide and varied audience in mind, I have attempted to write the thesis in a way that makes it as accessible to as wide an audience as possible, whilst not compromising the academic rigour required of such a study.

A Plea for an Instructed Reading

As I outlined above, the study as it appears in its final form comes as a result of much musing over conceptual, analytical, and methodological contingencies associated with the analysis of face as a concept and its realisation in discourse as facework. Consequently, in an attempt to resolve some of these issues, a wide and rather eclectic body of literature, and concepts and propositions therein have been employed. These varied elements have then been drawn together in the hope of arriving at a workable 'way' of dealing with the specific research problem. The thesis as a whole will hopefully stand as at least as equal to the sum of these parts.

As this thesis is as much exploratory as empirical, the reader is asked to consider in quite general terms the usefulness of the central concepts and propositions developed over the course of the chapters, as

well as the validity of the claims made vis-à-vis the specific research problem. Above all else, the thesis should be read, not as a fixed and final theory of facework in conversation, but rather as a set of initial propositions, set out and applied to a specific research problem, and upon which further work and refinement may be carried out.

RP May 2003

CHAPTER 1

FACE AND FACEWORK: CONCEPT, CONTEXT, CULTURE

1.0 Introduction

In recent years 'face', 'facework', and associated issues have been the focus of numerous empirical studies of face-to-face spoken interaction. These have given rise to much conceptual and methodological debate across a variety of disciplinary fields including Socio-linguistics, Pragmatics, Second Language Teaching, Anthropology, Psychology, and Sociology. Facework studies have addressed a wide range of contexts, settings, and discourse types, and have employed various conceptualisations of face. As a result, the extant body of scholarly literature variously employing the terms 'face' and 'facework' is huge, and can only be partially addressed by even the most enthusiastic scholar (see Cupach and Metts 1994; Earley 1997; Metts 1997; Spiers 1998; Tracey 1990; and Ting-Toomey 1994).

More specifically, there has been a veritable explosion of studies specifically addressing face and facework in and across various cultures. Subsequently, the concept of face, and the identification facework strategies directed at face, have proved to be powerful conceptual tools for understanding how members of different cultures communicate with each other in a range of interpersonal contexts. Face has become a truly universal concern.

Despite its ubiquity of use as a conceptual framework, the study of facework remains what Ting-Toomey (1994) rightly termed a challenge[1]. Fundamental conceptual and empirical questions have been raised about the real nature of face itself. For instance, what exactly is face?, how is facework realised in discourse, and can we take face and facework to be the same thing for all people across all cultures? These and other questions will be the focus of this chapter.

The intent of this chapter is to provide the reader with a balanced and informative, yet digestible overview of face and facework. The intent is not - and for reasons of space and brevity cannot be - to provide an encyclopaedic overview of all that has been said and done in face and facework research (see Cupach and Metts 1994; Earley 1997; Metts 1997; Spiers 1998; Tracey 1990; and Ting-Toomey 1994). Rather, the chapter aims, in the first instance, to provide a necessary conceptual background to the more specific concerns of this particular study whilst, at the same time, providing the reader with a foundational understanding of issues surrounding the study of face and facework in general.

I shall begin by considering key foundational texts, to which the majority of facework studies can be conceptually traced, namely, the work of Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson (1987) (1.1). These two bodies of work are not only essential to understanding the concept of face and facework practices *per se*, but also provide the basis for the conceptual and theoretical arguments advanced later in this thesis. Following this I shall point to recent conceptual debates addressing the concept of face as a universal, drawing particularly on work conducted by scholars focussing on non-Western conceptualisations, largely in response to Brown and Levinson (1.2). I shall then focus on evidence of cross-cultural variation in communicative norms and practices which seem to undermine conventional understanding of politeness and facework (1.3). Next I shall provide a short summary of the preceding discussion (1.4) before moving on to conclude the chapter (1.5).

In the first instance, this chapter should not be read as an authoritative account of face and facework *per se*, but rather, a sketching of the conceptual terrain on which this particular thesis is built, and as a primer for subsequent chapters.

1.1 Foundational Texts

In order to gain some form of exegetic handle on the concepts of face and facework, Tracey (1990) divides extant research into two main camps. Socio-linguistic based 'politeness theory approaches' (stemming mainly from Brown and Levinson [1987]), and a cluster of 'socio-psychological approaches' (stemming largely from the work of Goffman [1967])[2]. Similarly, Metts (1997) reviews face and facework under the rubrics 'Goffman's Model' and 'Politeness Theory'. Likewise, I will employ a similar organisation here, albeit in a way pertinent to this particular study. Before addressing these two paradigms though, some brief mention must be made of the cultural provenance of the concept of face, namely, early Asian writings.

Although enjoying current favour amongst discourse analysts, face is not a 'new' concept. It can in fact be traced back as far as the early part of the last century (e.g. Hu 1944; MacGowan 1912; Smith 1894; Yang 1945). These early writings were primarily concerned with oriental conceptualisations of face, particularly the Chinese notion, and are best exemplified by Hu's (1944) systematic exposition of the concept. Hu identified two essential criteria by which face should be considered in Chinese society: 'mien-tzu' - essentially the success and reputation achieved through personal effort; and 'lien' - essentially the respect for and confidence in moral integrity of all members of that community. Both aspects informed the day-to-day conduct of individuals. Lien was regarded as central to the individual's claims to be a decent, honest, moral member of society. Immoral or dishonest acts, or a lack of circumspection and considerateness extended to others could result in the disapproval, condemnation or ridicule of the wider cultural group. Consequently, this could lead to the individual losing lien to varying degrees and ultimately humiliation and disgrace to the point where the individual might be unable to function as a normal member of that society. Mien-tzu was seen to have a wider variety of meanings, and could refer to both self-presentational aspects (the outer appearance of a person, the self as projected in face-to-face interaction) as well as an individual's social status. Although the consequences for one's self were not regarded as severe as losing lien, like lien, awareness and orientation to mien-tzu informed both the conduct of he self and the considerate shown to

others. Thus, Hu outlined how orientation to both one's own, and other's face was an omnipresent social dynamic which under-ran all social encounters.

Fundamentally, aside from providing an insight into the workings of Chinese everyday life (see also Ho 1976), this early paper, with its emphasis on the normative behaviour of members of a culture as being guided by a dual set of concerns for both oneself and others within the wider community can be regarded as the starting point for face and facework studies as they have come to be developed in western social sciences. The translation of this eastern concept to western sociological discourse came with Goffman's (1967) seminal essay 'On Face-Work'.

Goffman's development of the concept was not only informed by these early Asian writings (see Goffman 1967, n5), but also grounded in more general concerns with the expressive and performative nature of everyday interaction. For instance, in his work on the presentation of self in everyday life (Goffman 1969), persons were posited as essentially 'performers', regularly engaged in impression management in an attempt to create a desirable public image or 'character' for presentation to wider society. Social reality was essentially a dramaturgical affair, where the self was prepared and presented for acceptance and support by wider social audiences as part and parcel of the practices of everyday life. However, it wasn't until 1967[3] that Goffman employed the metaphor of facework to account for the mutual system of interpersonal support and set of moral obligations that underlay this presentational milieu.

Goffman asserted that, whenever persons come into communicative contact with another, they intentionally or unintentionally act out a 'line', that is, a pattern of verbal and non-verbal acts by which they express their view of the situation, themselves, and fellow-participants. These communicative lines of action form the basis for face, defined by Goffman as '...the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact...an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes'. (Goffman 1967, 5). 'Approved social attributes' and 'claims' to positive social values were thus reliant on mutual recognition and ratification by co-participants during social contacts. In this sense, an individual's

communicative action could be seen to index commonly recognised social values, rather than just being an egocentric outburst of expressive acts. Face then, although being *claimed* by persons as individual participants in social encounters, was intrinsically grounded in the social situation, '...not lodged in or on [the individual] but rather...diffusely located in the flow of events in the encounter' (1967, 7).

Central to the understanding of how face could be claimed, recognised as indexing some positive social value, and ratified was the idea of set of obligations persons brought to social encounters - obligations both to oneself and one's fellow participants. To oneself persons were expected to show 'self-respect' and 'demeanour' – both necessary if one was to present an image of self or make some face claim that could be supported by others. To one's fellow participants in the encounter, persons were expected to show 'considerateness' and 'deference', geared towards supporting and ratifying the self presented or face claimed by others. This dual orientation to both self (what Goffman termed a 'defensive' orientation) and others' face (a 'protective' orientation) led to a state '...where everyone temporarily accepts everyone else's line...a working acceptance...based not on agreement of candidly expressed heart felt evaluations, but upon a willingness to give temporary lip service to judgements with which the participants do not really agree...[a] mutual acceptance of lines' (ibid., 11).

The overarching interactional framework within which face claims were made and supported Goffman referred to as ritual equilibrium (1967). Equilibrium was not a fixed prescriptive state, but rather a fluid and dynamic one, contingent on the flow of expressive acts that constituted any given social encounter. Such equilibrium was thus seen to be reliant on participants' face to face interactional practices. The name under which this array of equilibric practices was subsumed was facework (ibid.), defined by Goffman as .

> ...the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face. Face-work serves to counteract "incidents"-that is, events whose symbolic implications threaten face...they often become habitual and standardized practices; they are like traditional plays in a game, or traditional steps in a dance. Each person, subculture, and society seems to have its own characteristic repertoire

> of face-saving practices. It is to this repertoire that we partly refer when they ask what person or culture is "really" like. (ibid., 12-13).

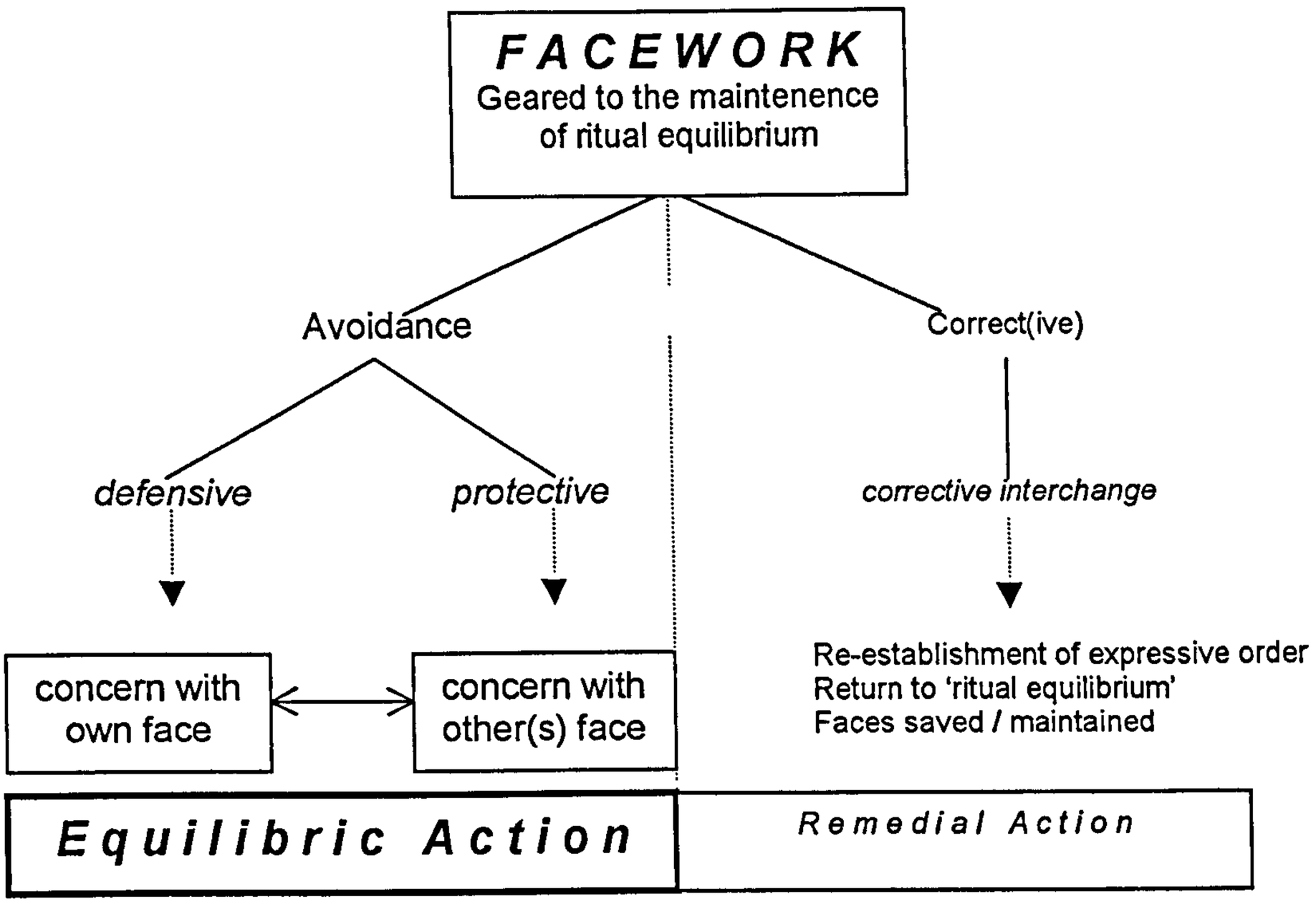
Importantly, Goffman saw almost all acts involving others as being modified, prescriptively or proscriptively, by considerations of face. In quite general terms, this manifests itself in the display of poise, tact, or savoir-faire, diplomacy, or social skill (ibid., 12). Although Goffman noted that some acts may be predominantly defensive (self-oriented and aimed at supporting one's own face), whilst others protective (other-oriented and aimed at supporting interlocutors' faces), the majority of practices operated with both orientations simultaneously guiding action:

> In trying to save the face of others, the person must chose a tack that will not lead to loss of his own; in trying to save his own face, he must consider the loss of face that his action may entail for others (ibid., 14).

Specifically, Goffman identified both avoidance (proscriptive) and corrective (prescriptive) facework practices. Avoidance facework included both defensive (concerned with self-face) and protective (concerned with other-face) practices and would include strategies such as politeness. In effect, these staved off any potential face-threat. Complementing this was corrective facework, whose function was to effectively repair any face threat incurred. Such practices would include for instance apologies or accounts for potential or actual face-threatening behaviour (see Cupach and Metts 1997 for an extensive overview of work in these areas following Goffman). This basic framework of pre- and post- face-threat facework is presented in Fig. 1.1.

Ritual equilibrium then, sustained and remedied by facework practices aimed at supporting proffered images and face claims was demonstrated by Goffman to be a fundamental framework with which we could interpret western everyday face to face encounters.

Fig. 1.1 Goffman's Model of Ritual Equilibrium Management



* A threat in this sense refers to '...acts through whose symbolic component the actor shows how worthy he is of respect or how worthy he feels others are of it' (Goffman 1967, 19).

Although Goffman highlighted the foundational nature of mutual orientation to this state of equilibrium, he also highlighted the possibility of what he termed 'aggressive facework'. Indeed, it is the very existence of reliance on face-saving and equilibrium restoring practices which allow persons to feel safe enough to be able to employ facework aggressively, relying on others to effectively 'go that extra yard' to maintain his / her face and consequently equilibrium. For instance, Goffman did note that the effective opposite of other-directed 'lip service' - self-directed facework at the expense of fellow interlocutors face needs - could be seen to occur in social encounters, making them '...less a scene of mutual considerateness than an arena in which a contest or match is held. The purpose of the game [being] to preserve everyone's line from inexcusable contradiction, while scoring as many points as possible against one's adversaries and making as many gains as possible for oneself' (ibid., 24). Although such aggressive facework, as well as what was

effectively consensual facework, could be seen to operate within the wider sustainable framework of ritual equilibrium, Goffman pointed to a marked preference for the latter – at least within the Anglo-American cultural milieu within which Goffman forged his framework and from which his data were drawn.

The potentially ethnocentric foundation for Goffman's framework of equilibrium may appear *prima facie* to undermine the analytical usefulness and general validity of the notion of ritual equilibrium and supporting facework practices therein. However, although not personally extending his analysis and propositions beyond the Anglo-American shores, Goffman was certainly aware of the issue of cultural variation in equilibric facework practices. An interesting and oft neglected aspect of Goffman's exposition of facework was comments made in respect of cultural variation in facework practices and, by implication, the nature of ritual equilibrium in various cultures. Although these were largely conjectural, his comments did point to the world outside the cultural context in which his work was forged to suggest fertile ground for cross-cultural consideration of facework practices and the nature of ritual equilibrium. For example, Goffman recognised that, even though face and facework as formal concepts were posited as universal, the nature of talk as it was played out as equilibric activity may be subject to considerable cultural variation. Although 'lip service' was posited as a prevailing ethos in Anglo-American society, Goffman did intimate to the fact that this may not apply universally:

> Each person, subculture, and society seems to have its own characteristic repertoire of face-saving practices. It is to this repertoire that people partly refer when they ask what a person or culture is "really" like. And yet the particular set of practices stressed by particular persons or groups seems to be drawn from a single logically coherent framework of possible practices (ibid p.13).

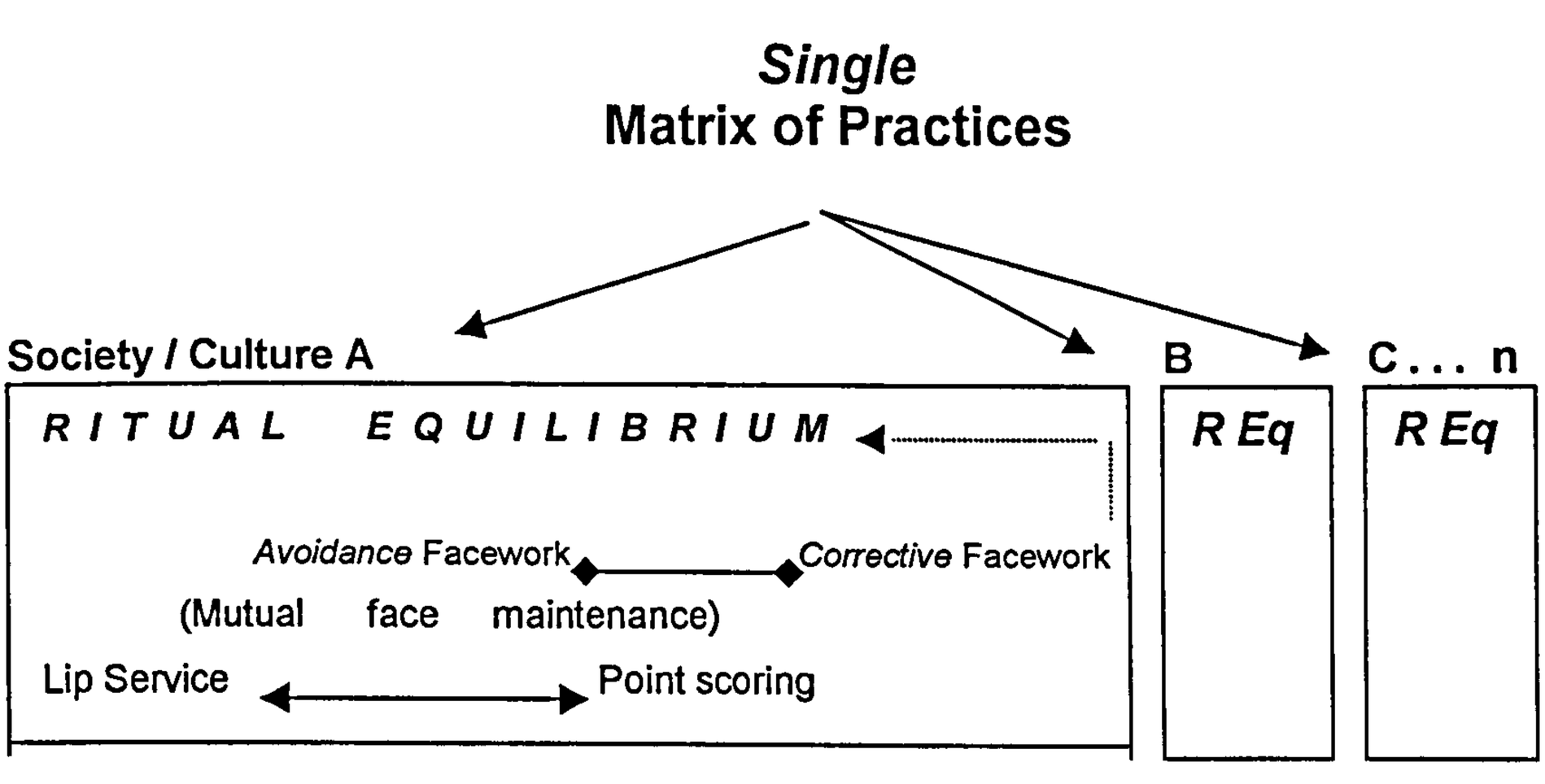
Thus, taking into account the universal propensities for face and facework and the maintenance of ritual equilibrium, and the existence of cross-cultural variation, Goffman surmised that:

> Universal nature is not a very human thing. By acquiring it, the person becomes a kind of construct, built up not from inner psychic propensities but from moral rules that are impressed upon him from without. These rules, when followed, determine the evaluation he will make of himself and of his fellow-participants in the encounter, the

distribution of his feelings, and the kinds of practices he will employ to maintain a specified and obligatory kind of ritual equilibrium... And if a particular person or group or society seems to have a unique character of its own, it is because its standard set of human-nature elements is pitched and combined in a particular way... if an encounter or undertaking is to be sustained as a viable system of interaction organized on ritual principles, then these variations must be held within certain bounds and nicely counter-balanced by corresponding modifications in some of the other rules and understanding. Similarly, the human nature of a particular set of persons may be specially designed for the special kind of undertakings in which they participate, but still each of these persons must have within him something of the balance of characteristics required of a usable participant in any ritually organized system of social activity. (ibid., 45).

Unfortunately, little work has been directed at addressing the 'unique character' of a particular culture, even though it does seem plausible that such cultural character can be interpreted within the equilibric framework advanced by Goffman (see Fig. 1.2).

Fig. 1.2 Goffman's Equilibric Facework



Goffman's contribution to our understanding of the concept of face and its relevance to equilibric practices in everyday face to face encounters has been invaluable. In giving primacy to the recognition and need for support of face, and normative facework practices engaged in to achieve and sustain ritual

equilibrium, Goffman in effect outlined a powerful and omni-present social maxim that can be seen to guide interpersonal communicative behaviour.

Goffman's comments on the equilibric nature of interaction and the societal practices used to maintain this interactional balance are - at the very least in a heuristic sense - universally recognised. However, systematic empirical application of the general equilibric framework to the actual analysis of ongoing talk are relatively few and far between. This may be in no small part due to the fact that Goffman's comments provided inspiration more than specific instruction for empirical analysis. Further, the obvious potential for cross-cultural analysis has received even less attention. This seems to be doubly unfortunate as the potential for the cross-cultural application of the equilibric framework is clear from Goffman's own conjectural comments. However, the second seminal body of work which I will refer to here has led to a huge number of studies applying the concept of face in a range of contexts and settings and, particularly pertinent here, across a range of cultures and societies.

Although Goffman had provided a lucid exposition of the of concept of face and facework back in the 1960s, it was not until Brown and Levinson's (1987) work that the concept of face accorded systematic conceptual development in the study of everyday discourse. This came in the form of the second of the umbrella terms employed here, and quite a different general framework for the analysis of facework in discourse – that of facework as politeness[4].

Although once restricted to phenomena such as deference (e.g. Shils 1968), personal pronouns (e.g. Brown and Gilman 1960) and general 'good manners' and 'appropriate behaviour' (as conveyed in etiquette books and politeness manuals), the term politeness has come to refer to a much wider range of discourse issues (see for example du Fon et al. 1994; Brown and Levinson 1987; and Kasper 1990 for extensive bibliographies). What I will dub here then the facework as politeness approach is just one of a wider body of work addressing linguistic politeness. As with the terms 'face' and 'facework', the term 'politeness' is used ubiquitously in scholarly publications, often with little or no definition (Fraser 1990), and has become a 'definitially fuzzy and

empirically difficult' phenomenon (Held 1992, 131). However, the foundational texts for the majority of contemporary studies of politeness are generally taken to be those by Leech (1983); Lakoff (1973; 1979); and Brown and Levinson (1987)[5].

Each of these works share common roots. That is, each owes some credit to H P Grice's (1975) paper 'Logic and Conversation'. In this paper, Grice posited the general premise that conversation was essentially a rational and co-operative effort:

> Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, co-operative efforts; and each participant recognises in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction. (Grice 1975, 45).

Under the heading of what was termed a 'cooperative principle', Grice set out four conversational maxims, each containing a set of sub-maxims, which guide conversationalists conducting conversation as a co-operative effort, namely: *quantity* - essentially providing an appropriate degree of information for a conversational contribution to be heard as co-operative; *quality* - not knowingly making false claims; *relation* - being relevant to the ongoing talk; and *manner* - avoiding obscurity of expression and ambiguity. Although conversationalists attempt to adhere to these maxims, as conversation develops there are in effect varying degrees of conversational latitude and expressive flexibility in terms of what any speaker may proffer as a relevant and meaningful conversational contribution. When (as is often the case) conversationalists appear to be exercising some expressive flexibility and thus 'violating' one or the other of the above maxims (for example by being ambiguous or obscure), fellow conversationalists as both mutually co-operative, rational, and perhaps most importantly, inference drawing actors, infer meaning from such deviation. In layman's terms, a recipient of such talk might ask "why is this person not being wholly rational?", and in effect attempt to 'figure out' what a person is attempting to convey indirectly. Such communication at the level of implicature is not only an omni-present possibility in talk, but rather

integral to conversation. Thus, conversation could be conceived of as both co-operative yet not wholly rational.

Following on from Grice's conversational maxims, discourse theorists such Lakoff (1973, 1979) and Leech (1983) have attempted to follow the 'conversational maxim' approach (Fraser 1990) to account specifically for one particular discourse phenomenon - that of politeness. Lakoff (1973) for example identified two basic 'pragmatic rules' - essentially opposed to each other which operate in conversational interaction - namely *be clear* (where the content of the message is a primary concern), and *be polite* (where the relationship between the speaker and hearer is a primary concern). In addition, three sub-maxims or *rules of politeness* were also identified, namely, *don't impose* (by displaying of *deference*), *give options* (the maintenance of *distance*), and *make [one's interlocutor] feel good* (the display of *camaraderie*) for example by generally being friendly and making one's interlocutor feel wanted or like a friend (see Lakoff 1973, 296). What these maxims formally accounted for was the observation that conversationalists routinely employed language not only to convey meaning, but to consider the feelings and rights of interlocutors strengthen interpersonal relations and generally reduce friction in interaction. Importantly, Lakoff noted that politeness usually superseded clarity in conversation. Thus for example, an orientation to be polite may well cause a speaker to breach to some degree the need to be clear, as interpersonal concerns superseded ideational ones.

Similarly drawing on, and seeking to append Grice's cooperative principle, Leech (1983) outlined what he termed a 'politeness principle' and developed a comprehensive set of maxims and sub-maxims, set out under the general rubric of 'interpersonal rhetoric'. Pragmatic discourse, that is, discourse where speakers seek to achieve some conversational 'goal', was seen to be guided by maxims of *tact* (minimize cost to *other;* maximize benefit to *other*); *generosity* (minimize benefit to *self;* maximize cost to *self*); *approbation* (minimize dispraise of *other;* maximize praise of *other*); *modesty* (minimize praise of *self;* maximize dispraise of *self*); *agreement* (minimize disagreement between *self* and *other;* maximize agreement between *self* and *other*); and *sympathy* (minimize antipathy between *self* and *other;* maximize sympathy

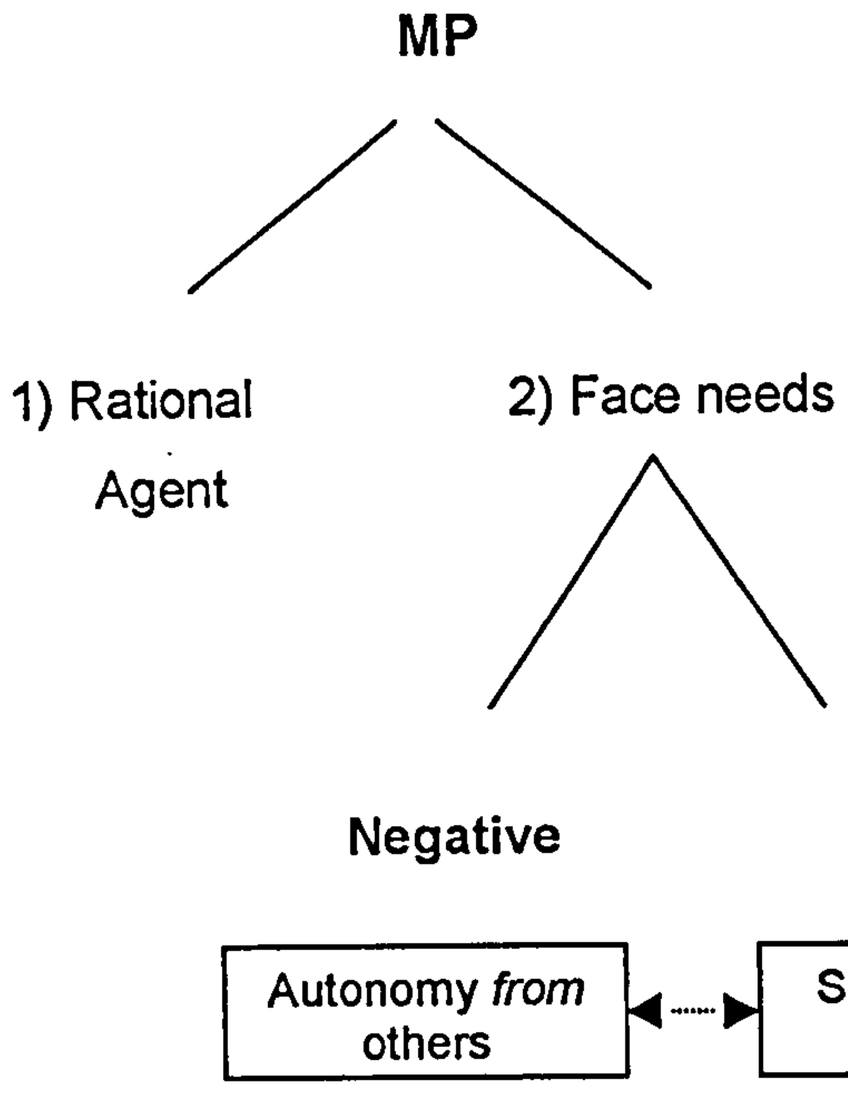
between *self* and *other*). Conversation was thus seen to normatively proceed under a general 'minimise impoliteness - maximise politeness' ethos. Again, as with Grice and Lakoff, Leech attempted to formally account for the contingencies of talk with a specific set of maxims, ones which in effect accorded primacy to politeness over directness in talk.

Both Lakoff and Leech base their approaches to of politeness on an essentially other-oriented stance then. By engaging in activity such as 'being friendly', displaying camaraderie, showing interest, or displaying tact, one is able to go about ones conversational work 'politely', and take the feelings and interpersonal needs of others into account.

Rather than relying on the rather fuzzy notion of others' feelings, Brown and Levinson (1987) sought to more formally conceptualise interlocutor interpersonal needs. To do this, as had Goffman earlier, Brown and Levinson employed the concept of face to allow for a reading of politenes as facework.

In order to formally account for the face needs of persons, Brown and Levinson employed the construct of what they term the 'model person' (henceforth 'MP') to refer to any competent member of a given society. This universal construct was presented as possessing certain fundamental and irreducible qualities. First, he / she must be conceived of as a rational agent, that is, interested in achieving conversational goals in the most rational and effective way; and second he / she must be conceived of as possessing certain fundamental and irreducible 'face wants'. Drawing on Durkheim's earlier work on negative and positive rites in tribal societies, these wants or needs were subsumed under two general conceptual headings, namely, *negative face* (essentially the want or need to be unimpeded in one's actions and have one's autonomy of action preserved and respected, and be treated as an autonomous agent) and *positive face* (essentially the want to be approved of, valued, and included on the basis of similarity to one's interlocutors) (see fig 1.3).

Fig. 1.3 Brown and Levinson's Model Person



Alongside possessing these basic qualities, Brown and Levinson posited persons as being mutually aware of both the rational maxims of communicative action and the fact that fellow interlocutrs possess such face needs. Verbal communication is therefore conduceted with both sets of needs in mind. It is out of the dialectic of the need to achieve conversational goals in the most rational way and the recognition of face conerns that speakers are able to encode politeness as a form of facework in the realisation of potentially face-threatening acts and hearers are able to hear this as such.

Having identified face as the central concept in their account of linguistic poiteness, Brown and Levinson focused not so much on the maintenance of equilibrium (Cf. Goffman 1967), but on the mitigation of particular linguistic acts which may – due to their intrinsic nature - threaten one or the other aspect of face. For example during talk, a wide range of utterances may potentially threaten either aspect of an interlocutor's face; what they termed face threatening acts (henceforth FTAs) (see table 1.1). Such FTAs normally require some form of mitigation to both reduce the threat they pose, and demonstrate the speaker's recognition of operative face needs, whilst at the same time, allowing the illocutionary force of the utterance to stand and communicative goals to be achieved. For example, criticisms – which may threaten interlocutors positive face needs – may often be softened or realised indirectly,

allowing in effect a speaker to criticise politely.

Table 1.1 Archetypal Face Threatening Acts and Aspects of Face Threatened

Particular face threatened?	Aspect of face threatened	
	Negative face	*Positive face*
Threaten S	Offers	Apologies
Threaten H	Requests	Criticisms

Brown and Levinson go on to organise a range of such strategies under a hierarchical typology of 'superstrategies for performing FTAs', directly relating to their conceptualisation of face, and centred around the concepts of *positive politeness* and *negative politeness*. I will come back to the specifics of negative and positive politeness in Chapter 3 and subsequent chapters. But, to take for example the act of disagreeing, speakers may encode a disagreement with varying degrees of politeness (see table 1.2).

Table 1.2 Politeness and Disagreement

Disagreement and politeness: Examples from Brown and Levinson's Superstrategies	
strategy 1 – baldly:	"that's a load of rubbish,
strategy 2 – ***positive politeness*** :	"come on mate, you must be jokin'",
strategy 3 – ***negative politeness***:	"sorry but I have to disagree there",
strategy 4 – off record:	"Well, I suppose that's one way of looking at it"
strategy 5 - don't do FTA	'don't disagree at all'.

Essentially then, Brown and Levinson see politeness as the avoidance or mitigation of certain face-threatening acts, according to the aspect of – primarily

hearer - face threatened. Face is conceptualised, not as proffered images or claims to positive social value which can be variously recognised and ratified by co-participants in and given encounter over the flow of interactional events (see Goffman 1967), but rather as fundamental human needs which require appropriate uses of politeness when specific aspects are threatened, largely in and through the realisation of specific speech acts. Politeness is the encoding of a recognition of these basic human face needs.

As with Goffman, Brown and Levinson posit their reading of face and general positive – negative framework for interpreting facework as universally applicable, that is, face needs are an intrinsic property of selfhood. However, they do recognise that there may cultural variation in the way that members of a given society orient to face needs – what they term variations in cultural ethos:

> Every observer in a foreign land knows that societies...differ in terms of what might be called 'ethos', the affective quality of interaction characteristic of members of a society...In some societies interactional ethos is generally warm, easy-going, friendly...in others it is characterised by displays of self-importance, bragging, and showing off (Brown and Levinson 1987, 243)

Although conducted from a linguistic perspective, Brown and Levinson's work clearly addresses the interpersonal bases for certain aspects of face to face interaction. Indeed, the authors pay frequent reference to the fundamental import of both Goffman and Durkheim in their ability to conceptually develop face, and build around this an interpretive framework for politeness in the realisation of face-threatening acts. Importantly, as with Goffman's equilibric framework outlined above, Brown and Levinson point to important aspects of everyday interaction as being a collaborative phenomenon, other-oriented, involving the omni-present concept of face and the need for recognition of face needs, normatively geared towards an avoidance of face-threat, and subject to cultural variation in the way it may be played out.

So far then I have reviewed the two seminal conceptualisions of face and readings facework. The equilibric approach essentially conceived of facework

as an equilibric practice, allowing for the presenting of self and claiming of positive social values across the flow on ongoing talk. The facework as politeness approach conceived of facework within a positive – negative paradigm of face needs. I shall discuss the analytical purchase afforded by these fundamental readings of face and frameworks for addressing facework below (see Chapter 3). Before this however, I want to consider more closely the question of the applicability of the concept of face as advanced over the preceding pages and underlying assumptions of facework in a cross-cultural context, that is, as universally valid and applicable.

In the preceding pages I have accorded considerable time to both Goffman's and Brown and Levinson's appropriation of face. This should rightly reflect the fundamental nature of these two texts in helping to understand how concerns with face, and routine practices to orient to face guide everyday interaction. Goffman's sociological writings essentially provided sensitising concepts for researchers to apply to everyday settings. Brown and Levinson's work however provided a linguistic basis for analysis, and thus set the ball rolling for the analyses of a multitude of specific speech acts, as well as inspiring texts variously recognising the import of face in studying discourse use (the present study included). However the preceding review is not to imply that face and facework are unproblematic issues. Indeed, as I suggested in 1.0, the opposite of this is the case, with an increasing number of studies conceptually developing the concept of face and the facework practices employed in everyday life.

Although many of these developments essentially corroborate the premises set out and implicit in the work of Goffman and Brown and Levinson, there has been work which, *prima facie* at least, seems to undermine the essentially Anglo-American paradigms for understanding facework.

1.2 Face and Facework across Cultures

In considering their respective paradigms on a universal footing, both Goffman and Brown and Levinson then recognised two things: First, face is a universal concern – part of human nature[6]; and second, facework will differ culturally / societally according to what verbal action can be regarded as 'ritually equilibric' or 'polite'. What I want to do now is to discuss the validity of face as concept suitable for cross-cultural analysis, and to highlight contrasting communicative style from several cultures to illustrate how ritual equilibrium or politeness may be variously achieved[7]

The preceding discussion has focused on what might be termed Western approaches to face and facework, that is, conceptual and theoretical propositions forged in an Anglo-US academic milieu. However, over the last couple of decades or so a new body of work has emerged which has taken its impetus from the universal claims set out in Brown and Levinson's conceptualisations. This second body of work might be generally termed non-western, with the majority of scholars citing evidence from their studies of the concept of face in Asian cultures.

The majority of these studies recognise the general validity of Goffman's general conceptualisation of face as public image of self, contingent on a person's behaviour vis-à-vis him- / her- self, co-present others, and prevailing 'occasioned' ground rules[8]. Brown and Levinson's treatment of face is however, a different issue. The volume of work stemming from Brown and Levinson original publication has been huge[9]. Although many of these works have lent support to Brown and Levinson's thesis, others have identified conceptual, analytical, and methodological concerns with the politeness theory reading of face and facework. This has led to varying degrees of support for the validity and reliability of Brown and Levinson's positive – negative paradigm for understanding facework practices[10].

As I noted above, a central proposition in Brown and Levinson's thesis was the universal applicability of their 'model person'. However, many non-Western researchers have questioned the validity of such a claim to

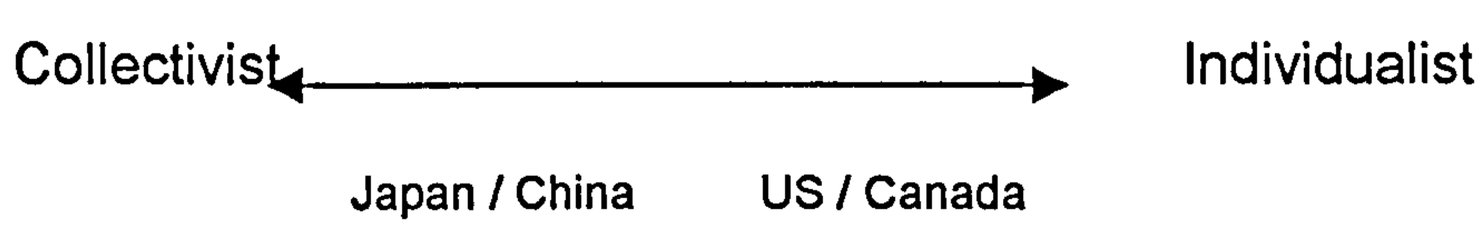
universality, particularly in studies of Asian[11] cultures (Gu 1990; Matsumoto 1988; Mao 1994; Morisaki and Gudykunst 1994; Scollon and Scollon 1994; Ting-Toomey; 1988; Ting-Toomey et al. 1991; Cockcroft and Ting-Toomey 1994).These concerns have been based largely on what has been identified as the inapplicability of the negative aspect of Brown and Levinson's face - i.e. the need for individual autonomy from others based on the conceptualisation of the person as an essentially independent entity. For example, Matsumoto (1988) and Morisaki and Gudykunst (1994) argue that Brown and Levinson's autonomy face is not applicable to the Japanese culture. Such a concept is based on the basic unit of society being the individual, and neglects the fact that it is the acknowledgement and maintenance of the relative position of others, rather than the preservation of an individual's proper territory which governs social interaction. It is not the claiming of an autonomous territory with the individual as its locus, but rather the 'fitting in' with the rest of the group, which is a primary concern to Japanese interactants. Similarly, Mao (1994) sees this overly individuated conceptualisation of face as being inapplicable to Chinese culture, where the emphasis is placed not the accommodation of individual wants or desires, but the harmony of individual conduct with the views and judgements of the community. These rejections of what are seen as an overly individualistic aspect to face extend into other Asian cultures sharing a similar on connectedness with the rest of society.

This apparent fundamental incongruity between East-West conceptualisations of face has led to the identification of the additional sets of dimensions which might better account for how face should be conceptualised and how this might inform cultural variation in facework practices, such as individualism-collectivism (Hofstede 1980), and high-context / low-context cultures (Hall 1976; 1983) (e.g. Ting-Toomey 1985; 1988; 1990; Ting-Toomey et al. 1991; Cockcroft and Ting-Toomey 1994; Trubisky, Ting-Toomey, and Lin 1991).

The individualism - collectivism paradigm is employed for instance to generally refer to the cluster of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours towards oneself and co-members of society which reflect a common system of underlying values. The former is usually characterised by, in the first instance, a

recognition of and orientation to the individual as an autonomous entity (á la Brown and Levinson), the latter by taking the individual to be intrinsically bound up to a much greater extent with the wider community. Because of their conceptualisation of the individual and beliefs and values associated with facework, various cultures can be placed along the individualism – collectivism continuum (see fig. 1.5).

Fig. 1.4 Examples of Collectivist and Individualist Cultures



Similarly affecting communicative style across cultures, the high-context - low-context dimension has been posited as more appropriate for understanding cultural variation in situated facework practices. In the former, contextual factors such as the hierarchical relations between interlocutors heavily impact on the nature of the interaction. Conversely, in low-context cultures this is much reduced, with, in effect, more expressive freedom allowed the individual speaker. Again, scholars drawing on this paradigm frequently place Eastern and Western cultures towards opposing ends (see fig. 1.5).

Fig. 1.5 Examples of HCC / LCC Cultures

A culture's positioning along either of these dimensions, not only informs the general attitude an individual may have toward his / her own and others' face concerns, but is manifest in the communicative preferences routinely played out in face to face communication (see table 1.3).

Table 1.3 Individualist (LCC) and Collectivist (HCC) Communicative Behaviour

Individualism	Collectivism
Emphasis on "I" identity	Emphasis on "We" identity
Self-face concern	Other-face concern
Need for autonomy, disassociation (neg. face need)	Need for inclusion, association (pos. face need)
Self-oriented facework	Other-oriented facework
Direct speech style	Indirect speech style
Controlling / confrontational style	Obliging / avoidance style
Competitive strategies	Integrative strategies
Direct emotional expression	Indirect emotional expression

Derived from Ting-Toomey (1988, 230)

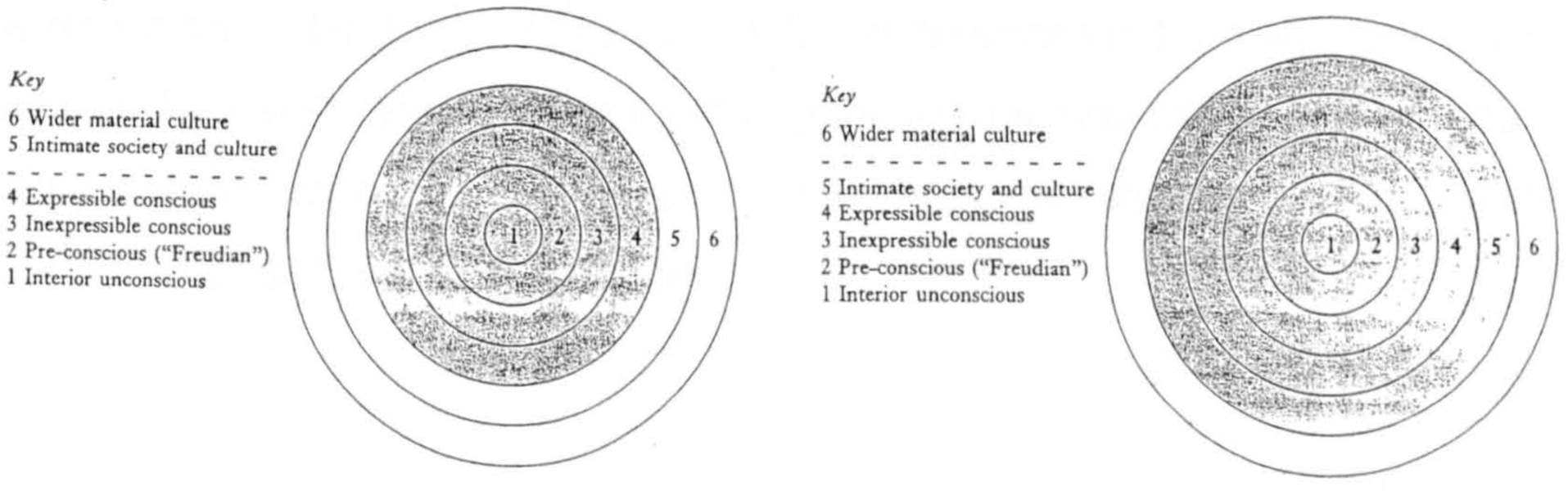
Although useful in helping us to 'classify' various cultures – largely emphasising and reinforcing East-West differences – the real conceptual ramifications for understanding facework as an interpersonal practice are those concerning the status of the individual, or more specifically, the conceptualisation and status of 'self'

Several cross-cultural studies have noted that a true understanding of face and facework practices can only be achieved if one takes into account the nature and status of the self. The concept used in cross-cultural reading s of selfhood is somewhat different to the concept as employed in the work of Goffman (1967) or sociological literature in general. It is however one which is, albeit of a different conceptual provenance, essential to the understanding of facework as universal practice.

For example, the diverse conceptualisations of face used in Western and Asian culture are seen as being based essentially on different conceptualisations of the self (Mao, 1994). Brown and Levinson's conceptualisation of the self is seen as being an overly individualistic conceptualisation, one that is in the last analysis, a self-image (Mao 1994). As Mao describes it, the self is in this sense '...the principal constituent that informs and contextualizes the content of face; it acts like an 'epicenter' towards which others...converge, and against which they are measured. The self is 'public' only to the extent that it depends on other's face being maintained...it is 'negotiated' with others via discourse activity. The self 'appropriates' the public only to preserve its own interest...it only concerns the individual's 'wants' and 'desires' (ibid. 459). Converse to this, Mao posits Asian conceptualisations of the self and face as 'intimately linked to the views of the community and to the community's judgement and perception of the individual's character and behaviour...to quote Goffman...it is "on loan...from society"...it belongs to the individual or to the self only to the extent that the individual acts in full compliance with that face' (Mao 1994, 460). Rather than 'self-image' then, face as it operates in Asian cultures is equated more to a Goffmanian notion of 'image of self' in the eyes of others.

Further highlighting the fundamental relationship between cultural readings of the self and conceptualisations of face is the work which has conceptualised cultural selfhood as variously overlapping with the self boundaries of other selves. For example, Scollon and Scollon (1995) show how Asian notions of selfhood extend beyond the boundaries of the individual to include others in the wider community. (see fig. 1.6).

Fig. 1.6 The Individualistic and Collectivist Self



Adapted from Scollon and Scollon (1995, 132-133)

Morisaki and Gudykunst (1994) employ the term 'self-construals' to encapsulate these cultural variations, with western cultures being characterised by independent self-construals (essentially autonomy of the self from others), and Asian ones by interdependent self-construals (essentially 'connectedness of the self to others'). Thus, a culture, or individual, may sit somewhere on the independent-interdependent dimension (see fig. 1.7).

Fig. 1.7 Predominance of Independent and Interdependent Self-Construal Types

Derived from Morisaki and Gudykunst (1994)

Face is seen as being located in these construal, and facework as reflecting the concerns associated with each construal of self. In short, in predominantly[12] independent cultures, persons engaged in interaction will base facework primarily on concern for both self- and other- independent face, whilst in interdependent cultures, persons will work to mutually support interdependent face. A summary of characteristics of each is given in table 1.4

These readings of cultures as being characterised in their beliefs, attitude, and communicative behaviours as individualist or collectivist, and of the related conceptualisations of self as a basis for ho face is perceived seem to provide for an understanding of East – West differences in face and facework practices. However, rather than employing these readings to account for and amplify cultural dichotomy in face and facework, some scholars have suggested a more fluid and dynamic application.

Table. 1.4 Predominant Characteristics of Independent and Interdependent Self-Construals.

Independent ⟷ Interdependent	
Self separate from others	Self connected to others
Stable social identity	Social identity contingent on context
Uniqueness	Fitting in with others
Express personal identity	Occupy proper place
Work toward personal goals	Work toward group goals
Esteem derived from self-expression (personal)	Esteem derived from harmonious behaviour (collective)
Direct speech acts	Indirect speech acts
Direct expression of emotion	Indirect expression of emotion
Individual-based boundary regulation	Group-based boundary regulation
Independent self- / other- face as primary concern	Interdependent self- / other- face as primary concern

Derived from Morisaki and Gudykunst (1994)

An interesting observation to emerge out of these studies is the implication that the status of the self, and thus face, may not be 'fixed' at some point on a cultural continuum, but rather enjoy a more dynamic status. Rather, one or the other members of a given culture might be better perceived as possessing both individualistic and collectivist values, with one set however variously predominating or being culturally preferred over the other (Morisaki and Gudykunst 1994). For example, much of the writings addressing East-West differences suggest that the Asian concept of face does not negate the individual, surrendering the self completely to wider societal forces. Although an overly defensive orientation to one's own face is generally frowned upon in Asian cultures, concern for and attempts to protect this seem equally a concern, as in Western societies.

Mao (1994) addresses this tension between the autonomy of the individual and the sub-ordination of the self to wider society by drawing on two cultural ideals which shape interactional behaviour: 'ideal social identity' and 'ideal individual autonomy'. Underlying these are two competing forces: a centripetal force, where social recognition and interdependence inform behaviour, as in Asian communities; and a centrifugal force, spiralling outwards from individual desires or wants, as characteristic of Anglo-American settings. Where ideal individual autonomy is oriented to, individual's behaviour will be geared to establishing and maintaining personal territory, whilst orientation to the ideal social identity will see interactants engaging in almost total communion with other group members. Importantly, Mao argues that in interaction, '...speakers are constantly in the process of pursuing one ideal or the other' (1994, 472).

In terms of cultural differences, Mao goes on to state that, although the face orientation of cultures may differ, with one or the other orientation being privileged, and the other essentially diminished, although not precluded as '...the other 'eclipsed' ideal does not always remain in the background, and it may...be represented, in some discourse activities within the same community' (ibid., 473)'. Similarly, Ho (1976) notes that, although western treatment of face is cited frequently as being based generally on individualism, whilst Asian face is based on collectivism, and associated obligations such as reciprocity of obligations and esteem protection, the two frameworks are not mutually exclusive. As Ho (1976, 883) noted, 'these two orientations need not, and should not, be regarded as mutually exclusive. Rather they are complementary. Neither, when taken alone, is capable of yielding a complete account of the total complexity of [face]'. These comments on face as based on two competing dynamics seem to reflect what Scollon and Scollon (1995) referred to as a 'false dichotomy' between East and West.

These latter comments are interesting in that they suggest not a dichotomous either / or reading of – in this particular case – East-West differences in the attitudes, values and behaviours, the status of the self, and face and facework in interaction, but rather a more dynamic one with both propensities present in both cultures. This is an interesting idea which, although

intimated to be scholars such as Ho and Mao, has not been developed beyond the dichotomous application marking much cross-cultural comparative facework studies. It is however one that I shall return to below.

Although work coming out of an Asian and non-Western milieu has responded to Brown and Levinson's positive – negative paradigm, much of the argument still seems to recognise the two as cultural propensities for belonging to yet being distinct from the wider social milieu within which one is interacting. I want now to move on to briefly outline a quite different body of observations of cultural variations in facework and politeness, ones which seem quite different to the norms identified in Asian cultures and even suggesting a greater orientation to individual autonomy than implicit in the work of Goffman and Brown and Levinson.

Much of what has been said up to now, in both an Anglo-American and Asian context, focuses on essentially how mutual recognition of face concerns (albeit based in differing conceptions of the self) act as a kind of 'restraining' factor on unfettered interest in self-concerns. Even in individualistic Western cultures such as the US and UK, persons regularly conduct themselves in an other-oriented manner, that is, recognising in their expressive behaviour the face needs of interlocutors. This is reflected in a mitigation of expression taking into account the potentially disruptive influence this might have on interpersonal relations. More specifically, facework in Goffmanian sense and politeness as facework a la Brown and Levinson is generally associated with indirectness of potentially face-threatening communicative behaviour. However, work from non-Anglo-American cultures other than Asian ones has identified another set of face practices in quite the opposite direction, namely, an apparent cultural preference for direct expression and seeming interest in self concerns over the feelings of others (e.g. Blum-Kulka 1987; Wierzbicka 1985; Katriel 1986; Tannen 1981a; 1981b; Schiffrin 1984). Whereas facework and politeness has in the preceding discussion been – albeit to varying cultural degrees - associated with deference, these studies point to a cultural diminishing of attention paid to deference, in favour of one paid to demeanour.

Tannen's work (1981a; 1981b) perhaps best epitomises cultural differences, specifically those relating to conversational style which *prima facie* run contra to the lip service, polite behaviour, and pursuit of interpersonal harmony outlined above. For example, for New York Jewish speakers, Tannen observed that potentially face threatening conversational behaviour (e.g. direct contradictions, unmitigated argumentation) was culturally perceived to be not highly face-threatening, but rather provided the cultural and social context within which interlocutors were able to present and realise various aspects of conversational selfhood within a generally equilibric interpersonal framework. Similarly, Schiffrin (1984) has demonstrated the positive interpersonal function that a cultural tendency for apparently face-threatening behaviour might have. Drawing on Simmel's ([1911] 1961) notion of sociability (see Chapter 3), Schiffrin (1984) showed how openly competitive and unmitigated disagreement to the point of argumentative confrontation in Jewish talk functioned as 'a cultural form of sociability' (Schiffrin 1984, 311), with interactants jointly engaging in such conversational activity to display their solidarity with the group and immersion in a culturally recognisable form of collective behaviour[13]. This recognition of overarching cultural activities is cogently argued by Katriel (1986) who focused on *dugri* – a particular form of Jewish conversational activity. During dugri episodes, what Brown and Levinson identified as 'bald on record' acts such as unmitigated criticism or disagreement are performed frequently. However, such heightened and unmitigated directness is regarded by participants involved in such talk, not as the height of impolite conversational behaviour, but rather as the realisation of a culture-specific idea of politeness in that speakers recognise the ability of their interlocutors to be able to take such attacks and respond similarly.

Indeed, work has shown that what is taken as polite behaviour in one culture can lead to opposite perceptions in another, with directness of expression being perceived as polite, and indirectness carrying more negative implications. For example, in comparing English and Hebrew speakers, Blum-Kulka (1987) identified salient differences in terms of how polite interactants perceived certain mitigated speech acts such as hints actually to be. Whereas English speakers generally perceive hints as polite (due to their indirectness), Hebrews perceive them as far less polite, largely due to the fact that their

indirectness and lack of explicitness requires more inferential work to determine what a speaker meant. Wierzbicka (1985) has also identified salient differences in terms of directness across a range of speech acts and discourse strategies between English and Polish speakers. These extend not only to particular speech acts, but to speaker disposition vis-à-vis their own and their interlocutors stances in talk, with Polish speakers valuing a holding to personal beliefs and a reluctance to concede these to interlocutors' stances, something that in English generally attracts disapproval.

Although not specifically highlighting conceptual problems with and pointing to development s in the concept of face, this body of work has demonstrated the fact that some cultures routinely engage in what to an Anglo-American, and perhaps more so to Asian culture, would be perceived as highly face-threatening behaviour. However, just as facework and politeness in these latter sets of cultures leads to a maintenance of interpersonal equilibrium, so it does in cultures normatively orienting to a more direct and potentially conflictual communicative style.

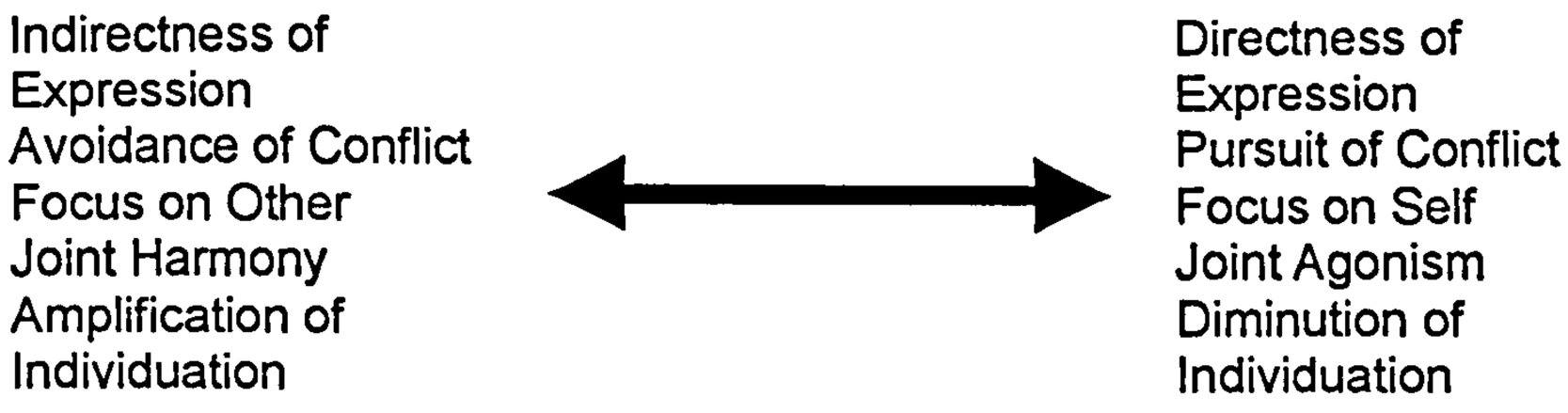
This work highlights the problems associated with an ethnocentric view of what constitutes facework and facework and '...all cultures value agreement more than disagreement, discourage self-praise, encourage praise of others, and view imposition as the main sin in interaction' (Wierzbicka 1991, 69). It appears that some cultures are able to engage in essentially conflictual interaction, whereby selves are essentially mobilised as the foci of expressive stances and symbolically 'pitted' against each other, whilst at the same time maintaining an equilibric state of interaction in which face needs are mutually catered for. Rather than an overriding centrifugal force sending members of such cultures spinning into atomistic incommensurability, persons are held together in a state of equilibrium.

1.3 Culture, Facework, Equilibrium

What the preceding discussion has demonstrated is that face and facework, when considered in a cultural context, are subject to considerable variation in the way face is perceived and facework carried out. One common denominator to the sets of practices enjoyed in the various cultures is that, scholars have posited them as being examples of culturally variable manifestations of essentially equilibric behaviour, that is, behaviour which indexes face concerns.

Thus, universally, within the boundaries of equilibrium lie a range of cultural preferences for doing face to face talk. These range from an avoidance of conflict at the expense of the person based self, where communal concerns subsume the idea of the individualistic self, to an active pursuit of conflict in which the self is mobilised as an expressive and autonomous entity. However, rather than being mutually exclusive, these two sets of dynamics - albeit conceptualised using various terminology - seem to be two sides of the same interactional coin, and index the orientation to face concerns in interaction. What I shall term the universal poles of equilibric facework are represented in figure 1.8.

Fig. 1.8 The Universal Poles of Equilibric Facework



I will develop this rather crude conceptualisation of facework across cultures below (see Chapter 3).

A fundamental concept to emerge out of a cross-cultural reading of facework is that of the self. I began the review by quoting Goffman's reading of facework as one oriented essentially to supporting selves presented as images over the flow of talk. It has also been shown that variability in the conceptualisation of self had directly informed facework practices. Although the arguments based on cultural variations in selfhood have drawn upon this for explaining East-West differences in facework practices, work has also suggested that facework based on the prevailing notion of the self may be a more dynamic issue, with propensities for, for example individualist and collectivist orientation being omni-present ones in all cultures. There appears than to be a direct relationship between culturally specific conceptualisation of the self from both a Goffmanian perspective and what was classed as a self-construal reading, and the normative communicative practices routinely engaged in to achieve equilibrium – that is, face ratificatory and face supportive interaction. I shall further develop these suggestions below.

1.4 Summary

At the beginning I described this chapter as a 'primer' and issued a caveat about its 'non-encyclopaedic' status. For this reason, there is much that has been omitted. However, the preceding discussion can now be summarised. First, face is a universal phenomenon. It can be seen to exist, albeit in its various nuances, across all cultures. Second, face consists of both the needs for solidarity with and independence from others. Again, striking cultural differences have been shown in various cultures, none more so than Asian versus Western societies. However, these two essentially competing forces should not be regarded as mutually exclusive, but rather two ends of a dimension which applies equally to all societies. These first two points lead on to the third, namely that face as a concept, and facework as a practice can be subject to cross-cultural variation. Fourth, face is closely associated with the concept of the self. Indeed, it is the self as mobilised in talk which allows participants to claim aspects of face. Fifth, face resides in discourse, that is, it is only manifest in the communicative practices as facework which work to index, ratify and support it. Finally, and perhaps fundamentally, the practice of

facework operates on an underlying condition that all participants are working towards, or are at least willing to work within, a set of interactional and communicative boundaries which will allow for the maintenance of ritual equilibrium.

1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I began by sketching out the key premises of what I identified to be foundational works for the majority of extant face and facework studies, viz., Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson (1987) (1.1). Following this, I addressed the notion of face and facework across cultures, and identified discrepancies between Eastern and Western conceptualisations of face, based largely on differences in conceptualisation of the self as construal. In addition, cultural variations in facework were identified which *prima facie* appeared to be face-threatening activity but, when considered in their cultural context, were posited as equilibric (1.2). I will draw upon these issues in more detail in later chapters. Next however, I want to address more closely the central problem which this study seeks to illuminate, that of differences in English and German communicative style.

Notes to Chapter 1

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[1] This is no doubt exacerbated by the fact that the term 'facework' enjoys today a seemingly generalised 'umbrella' meaning of '...a variety of communicative devices', aimed at one's own or another's face (Metts 1997, 374). Alongside this, the concept of 'face' to which facework is directed is often given short definitional shrift, with most works relying on Goffman (1967), Brown and Levinson (1987), a sketchy synthesis of the two, or sometimes no definition at all (See Ervin-Tripp et al 1995 for an attempt to trace the etymology and outline the semantics of 'face' in several cultures including English).

[2]Tracy further sub-divides Socio-psychological approaches into: (1) Goffman based work; (2) largely psychologically based self-presentational studies; and (3) studies focussing on face-concerns in bargaining. The first approach need only concern us here, and, is in effect the foundation on which the other two are based.

[3] Originally published as Goffman, E. (1955) 'On face-work: An analysis of the ritual elements in social interaction', *Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes* 18(3), 213-231. Goffman's (1967) collection of essays however, which contains the later publication, is invariably cited as the seminal text in facework studies.

[4] See Fraser (1990), Kasper (1990; 1994), Thomas (1995), Watts et al. (1992), as well as special issues of *Journal of Pragmatics* (1990, Vol. 14), and *Multilingua* (1988, 7-4; 1989, 8-2/3) for more thorough discussions of key perspectives in politeness research.

[5] Here I will focus on what is usually termed 'volitional' politeness, i.e. politeness based in speaker strategies to achieve certain pragmatic or interpersonal goals, as opposed to 'discernment' politeness which is based on fixed hierarchical relations between interlocutors and is more oriented to linguistically 'marking' these relations. See Hill et al (1986) for a discussion of 'volition' and 'discernment' politeness.

[6] Lakoff, Leech, and Fraser also see their work as being universally applicable. However, it is Brown and Levinson's work – essentially *designed as* a universal thesis – which stands as by far the most influential work on cross-cultural analyses of facework as politeness.

[7] The following review is based largely on responses to Brown and Levinson. In this respect, although section 1.1 was organised around the general approaches of Goffman and Politeness, it is the later which is being accorded more treatment here. This exegetic 'skewing' is simply due to the huge amount of research directly inspired by and subsequently responding to Brown and Levinson's conceptualisations. It also reflects the relative neglect which has been shown to Goffman in favour of Brown and Levinson by those scholars engaged in cross-cultural research - one which this thesis hopes in part at least to rectify.

[8] Due in no small degree no doubt to Goffman's 'close appropriation' of the Chinese conceptualisation of the term.

[9] A comprehensive overview of work carried out cannot be given here. See Brown and Levinson (1987, 1-51); Kasper (1990; 1994); and Tracy (1990) for overviews.

[10] Indeed, Tracey and Baratz (1994) note that studies applying Brown and Levinson's model fall into two camps: those calling for revision and those calling for an abandoning of the model.

[11] 'Asian' here will be used as a generic concept relating to cultures geographically located in the general area known as Southeast Asia, including China, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and The Philippines.

[12] Ting-Toomey (1998) also draws on the distinction between independent and interdependent self-construals to illustrate'...the degree to which people conceive of themselves as relatively autonomous from, or connected to others' (p. 196). In an interesting extension to these two types, Ting-Toomey (op cit.) incorporates these two opposing types and two new types – bi-construal (high in both independent and interdependent characteristics) and ambivalent (low in both).

[13] Schiffrin does note that such argumentation only functions as sociability as long as the 'search for truth' does not override the relational work of actively engaging in 'truth searching' as it were. (p. 316). See also Muntigl and Turnbull (1998) who identify familial settings *per se* as being characterised by a different form of argumentation - one based on overarching solidarity, as opposed to antagonism.

CHAPTER
2
ANGLO-SAXON CHALK AND TEUTONIC CHEESE: ENGLISH AND GERMAN 'COMMUNICATIVE STYLE'

2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a primer on face and facework, beginning with the work of Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson (1987), I went on to highlight issues arising out of subsequent cross-cultural discussions which pointed to cultural variations in the way face was perceived and facework realised in discourse. Here I want to focus more specifically on the two cultures at the centre of this study: the Germans and the English. In order to do this I will draw on a body of literature addressing various discourse phenomena, but which together point to salient differences in communicative style and suggest differing orientations to face concerns[1].

The bulk of this chapter will attempt to identity salient characteristics of German and English communicative style, a term I am using as a generic one to encompass a range of discourse practices. This will involve drawing on literature that has addressed a range of discourse phenomena, from single speech acts to more general orientations to ongoing conversational interaction (2.2). Following this I shall attempt to draw on some of the concepts and cultural parameters identified in Chapter 1 in an attempt to make some preliminary sense of the cultural basis for such difference (2.3). Next I shall consider the methodological, analytical and procedural characteristics of extant comparative research into English – German differences in communicative style, identifying the benefits and limitations of each and suggesting areas which require further investigation and elaboration (2.4). Finally I shall conclude the chapter (2.5).

Before addressing the literature however, I should begin by making explicit my own relationship to both the English and German milieus which this chapter will focus on. I cannot claim to be completely objectively distanced from

either of the cultures I am addressing in this study. Indeed my connections with both cultures have guided and influenced this study. It is on these personal grounds then that I should begin by highlight the personal elements as far as I myself am concerned (2.1).

2.1 Personal Musings

As an 'Englishman'[2] with limited experience of other cultures, upon first conversing with the Germans, some ten plus years ago now, I experienced a certain degree of 'cultural shock'. On my first participation in what I shall term hereon in German 'sociable episodes', that is, conversation conducted as part of informal gatherings between friends, family and close acquaintances (see chapters 3 and 5), I was taken aback upon receiving seemingly unfriendly, patronising, or even aggressive responses to my early tentative steps at 'speaking German'. Verbal contributions to ongoing talk that I thought would allow me to display my openness for interaction, present myself as a 'good conversationalist' and share with others something of my self – jokes, 'throwaway' comments, 'quips', amusing little anecdotes (deliberately in their 'not taking issues too seriously' formulation) - seemed to have the opposite effect. Frequently, I felt as if I had 'gone and said the wrong thing', 'put my foot in it', made a 'gaffe', or even said something insulting. I often found myself having to defend what I had just said and not infrequently being 'dragged' into a conversation that I had not really intended nor wanted, and quite frankly, didn't know how to deal with - the closest thing to which that I knew of from my own background being 'pre- fisticuff' argumentation. I was unfortunately at a loss to know exactly what it was I was *doing wrong*.

Several cognitive in situ 're-runnings' of such episodes failed to reveal exactly what aspect of my contribution could have brought about the need for such responses and subsequent treatment at the hands of my conversational others. This was at first quite disconcerting, made me feel a little ill at ease - intimidated even, and served to confirm the negative stereotypes that I had brought with me from the entrenched post-war mentality of the UK. My German interlocutors did indeed appear to be aggressively face-threatening, rude, and

impolite. However, I soon came to realise (following a number of conversational 'de-briefings' with my wife Elke) that, to 'fit in' as I was hoping, as an unobtrusive, natural, and essentially functional conversational component, I had to adapt to this new conversational milieu. Quite literally, on top of learning how to *speak the language*, I also had to learn how to *do the conversation* in a culturally appropriate manner. This entailed, not only improving my *linguistic skills* (vocabulary, grammar, sentence construction), but equally as importantly, my *conversational skills*, which I had assumed until that point were long since mastered. These encounters both informed my understanding of what it meant to 'learn a foreign language' and in turn re-directed my focus on learning, and spawned an interest in English – German differences in conversational interaction that would ultimately lead to the current study some six years later.

This study is firmly rooted then in my own personal experience, observations, and set of questions arising first in the form of layman's musings, but later to become formal concerns in the form of research questions. However, my own subjective experience is not the only basis for assuming differences in communicative style. Several texts have highlighted salient differences across a range of discourse types, and it is these that I want now to briefly address.

2.2 German – English Comparative Research[3]

Comparative research of English and German discourse has focused on a range of language usage in everyday settings. Studies have for example have focused on textual materials, such as directives displayed on public signs (Snell-Hornby 1984), magazine articles (Evans 1998), academic text (Clyne 1987), computer software manuals (Luchtenberg 1994; Krenn 1991), letters sent to the editors of magazines (Kienpointer and Kindt 1997), and the structure of television news reports (Pufahl 1992). A second body of work has focused more closely on spoken interaction (e.g. Blum-Kulka and House 1989; Byrnes 1986; Fetzer 1996, 1997; Friday 1994; Hellweg, Samovar, and Skow 1994; House 1979, 1982a, 1982b, 1982c, 1989; House and Kasper 1981; Kotthoff 1989, 1991, 1993, 1994; Straehle 1997; and Watts 1989). These studies have

identified a range of differences in language usage between the two speech communities. It is however this second body of work that is of most relevance to the current study, primarily on two grounds: First, these studies have largely addressed face to face verbal interaction; and second, although invoked often only in passing, a common thread connecting many of these works is the degree and nature of facework as part of everyday language use.

Perhaps the most substantial contribution to comparative research of German and British-English discourse came from work conducted as part of and subsequent to the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) (see Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989) and Bochum Project (see Edmonson et al 1982). Grounded in a concern with contrastive pragmatics (see Edmonson 1981) and speech acts (Austin 1962, Searle 1969), this work sought to focus specifically on cross-cultural similarities and variation in the realisation of intrinsically face-threatening (Brown and Levinson 1987) speech acts, such as requests and apologies. From this work, clear indications of differing socials norms informing German and English discourse have emerged (see e.g. House 1979; 1982a; 1982b; 1982c; 1989; Blum-Kulka and House 1989; House and Kasper 1981), none more so than an apparent markedly differing orientation displayed by English and German speakers to 'interpersonal' and 'ideational' aspects of discourse, with the English orienting more to interpersonal aspects of talk (for example by employing more 'facework'), and the Germans orienting more to the ideational aspects (i.e., the content of a particular utterance)[4].

For example, House and Kasper's (1981) study – which was grounded the observation that Germans are often perceived by English speakers as impolite - revealed how German and English speakers routinely employ a variety of discourse components in the construction of their utterances geared variously at face concerns. In terms of for example the intrinsically face-threatening acts of complaints and requests (see Brown and Levinson 1989), German speakers were shown to display a significant preference for the direct realisation of complaints. This was compared to English speakers, who favoured more mitigated versions of the same speech act. Further, German speakers displayed a notable tendency to intensify the force of their utterances

in potential or actual conflict situations where complaints were being realised. House and Kasper attributed these salient variations to differing social norms associated with the act of complaining in each culture, noting that '...attacking one's interlocutor's identity seems to be a taboo in the British cultural context, while it seems perfectly appropriate behavior for Germans under specific interactional conditions' (House and Kasper 1981, 183).

In the realisation of requests (another potentially face-threatening action), German speakers were shown to be similarly more direct than their English counterparts. In making requests, German speakers were shown to employ significantly more direct forms than English speakers, an observation corroborated in later work by House (1989) and Blum-Kulka and House (1989). Again, rather than concluding that the English were simply 'more polite' than their German counterparts (in their apparent heightened orientation to their interlocutors face needs), these differences were attributed more to differing social norms which could be seen to guide the realisation of speech acts across cultures. Specifically, Blum-Kulka and House noted that:

> ...though directness is usually associated...with impoliteness, its exact social meaning may also be a cross-cultural variant...if other norms, such as clarity in expressing intentions and a show of sincerity are preferred over a display of non-imposition , then directness will not necessarily be associated with impoliteness. (Blum-Kulka and House 1989, 138)

Moving away from specific speech acts to focus on general communicative behaviour within particular discourse phases of conversational encounters, House (1982a) identified further salient differences between the two discourse communities, again in terms of their varying orientations to interpersonal and ideational aspects of talk. For example, in 'opening phases' of conversational encounters, English speakers reciprocatively employed more formulaic phatic utterances (Malinowski 1934), such as engaging in 'how are you?' type interchanges which House argued encode interpersonal concerns. Similarly, in 'closing phases' of encounters English speakers were observed to focus more on the interpersonal aspects of talk. Conversely, Germans concentrated more on ideational aspects, for example by 'summing up' what

had just been talked about, or using what House termed 'outcome checks' to reiterate the details of the preceding talk. On the whole, German speakers were shown to favour non-routinised ideational discourse over the formulaic interpersonal exchanges found in the English data.

Yet more evidence for these salient differences in communicative style was provided House's (1982b) consideration of how German and English speakers variously employed a range of conversational strategies prophylactically to both achieve conversational goals and avoid threatening the face of one's interlocutor. German speakers were demonstrated to prefer what were classed as content-oriented to person-oriented conversational strategies, tending to 'underscore', 'expand', and strategically focus on the propositional contents of their utterances in pursuit of their conversational goals. Conversely, as might be expected from House's previous studies, English speakers employed more hearer-supportive and co-operative strategies to support their particular central speech act. In addition, German speakers were also shown to make more frequent and explicit reference to themselves (e.g. 'Can I...') as opposed to fellow interlocutors (e.g. 'Would you like me to...?).

Finally, similar communicative tendencies were shown to exist in the realisation of conversational 'gambits' (House 1982c). Whereas German speakers tended to use more utterances designed to show awareness and understanding of a fellow conversationalist (e.g. 'ja', [yeah] 'hmm') and to call for hearer's sign of agreement and understanding (e.g. 'nicht' [is it not]), English speakers favoured what were termed 'clarifiers' (e.g. 'you see', e.g. 'to tell the truth', 'the thing is'), the key function of which, according to House, was to 'dienen dazu, die Harmonie und Kooperation zwischen Sprecher und Hörer zu etablieren, erhöhen oder wiederherzustellen') [...serve to establish, increase, or re-establish harmony and cooperation between speaker and hearer.] (1982c, 129).

Additional more recent work by House has demonstrated such differences not to be restricted to spoken discourse. For example, in more recent work focusing on English-German / German-English translation of various texts (e.g. film titles and subtitles), House (1998a) has noted similarly

salient differences. For example, German translations of English were shown to be more direct, explicit, content and ideationally oriented and with weakened interpersonal components which would essentially have made the reader 'feel good' (ibid, 67). Conversely, English translations of German texts displayed more marked interpersonal components, and appeared less formal than the German original. Again, House again attributes this to what she terms differing 'communicative preferences' operating in the two cultures, suggested in earlier studies.

Further corroboration and insight into these differences has been provided by addressing interlocutor expectations about conversational interaction. Recently turning to informant interview data, House has shed light on both cross-cultural perceptions and the normative expectations brought to conversational encounters:

> The basic problem is that Germans normally believe what you say and take it at face value, ... where people in an English speaking situation wrap up their comments or use throw-away phrases which indicate that they don't really mean it.
>
> Informant data taken from House (1996, 356).

Germans, House tells us favour clarity of expression and sincerity, preferring to be able to tell what people really mean rather than be faced with a great difference between "dem Ausgesprochenen und dem Gemeinten",' [What is said and what is meant] (House 1996, 357). This is illustrated by further informant data:

> Ich finde es viel besser doch direkt und aufrichtig zu sein... zu sagen, was man auch meint, nicht dieses Höflich-Freundliche.
>
> [I find it much better to be direct and truthful...to say what one means, not this being polite and friendly]
>
> Informant data taken from House (1996, 357-358)

Consolidating this array of findings, House (1996; 1998a, b; in press), has identified five dimensions, along which German and English speakers 'habitually display different preferences in terms of communicative choice' (House 1996x, 345) (see table 2.1).

Table 2.1. Parameters of German – English Communicative Differences

Directness	⟷	Indirectness
Orientation towards Self	⟷	Orientation towards Other
Orientation towards Content	⟷	Orientation Towards Addressees
Explicitness	⟷	Implicitness
Ad-Hoc Formulation	⟷	Verbal Routines

Source: House (in press)

Findings from the analysis of a range of discourse phenomena and textual materials provides not only evidence for differences in the realisation of specific speech acts, but clearly points to more fundamental differences in social norms informing how discourse, fellow interlocutors, and one's self as speaker are normatively oriented to in verbal interaction in the two speech communities. I shall discuss these issues further below.

Although approaching discourse from a different disciplinary and analytical standpoint, Watts (1989) corroborated much of what has been observed by House and colleagues. Based on a comparative analysis of two conversations between English and Swiss-German family members in their respective cultural settings, Watts identified salient differences which further suggested fundamental social norms guiding speakers' orientations to verbal intercourse and conventional understandings of facework practices.

Watts observed that German conversation was primarily geared towards the setting up of positions and the consequent need to disagree with and disavow co-participants' positions. Floor occupation (the conversational slot one takes when one is speaking) to proffer such positions was considered by German participants to be one of the major *raison d'etre* for verbal interaction (ibid. 160-161). Conversely, English conversation was more geared towards the negotiation of the topic and the support of every participant's rights to the floor. The proffering and countering of personal positions characteristic of German conversation appeared much reduced in English familial conversational (ibid. 161).

Although concentrating on naturally occurring conversation rather than speech acts and pragmatic talk, Watts attempted to consolidate these observations by identifying five salient ways in which the two cultural styles differed. First, in German conversation, the rate of intervention at non transition relevant places[5] was shown to be higher. That is, whereas English speakers tended to hold off their turns until a speaker had finished or was about to finish a turn at talk, whereby possible transition to another speaker became a conversational option, German speakers more frequently overlapped others' turns at talk. Importantly, this was not done simply to provide support for the current speaker, but often to proffer forcefully counter-propositional statements or challenge what was being said. In fact, Watts noted that the prevalence of such a strategy led German speaker's to expect to be interrupted and for that turn to contain a contradictory position. Second, in making conversational contributions, German speakers appeared primarily concerned with the setting up of individual personal positions or assessments as part and parcel of conversational activity. Third, as a consequence of this collective alignment to talk and each other as participants, Watts argued that German participants actually expected to be contradicted and have their standpoints countered in and through the normative playing out of conversational topic development. Fourth, in German conversation, personal standpoints were seen to be not things to be jointly negotiated, through for example the merging of individual positions (as in fact the English seemed to favour), but rather, regarded as personal stances to be accepted or countered by fellow interlocutors. Finally, in terms

of specific discourse components used, English speakers used discourse markers oriented towards topic negotiation ('well') and topic change ('anyway', 'still'), whilst German speakers used markers to either support their own positions ('und' [and]), or express agreement ('genau'; 'ja ja' ['correct'; 'yeah yeah']) or contradiction ('ja aber', 'doch' ['yes but'; *marker to express contradiction*]) with others' positions. The result of these characteristics was two rather contrasting styles of 'in-group' conversation.

Similar to House, rather than condemning the Germans as overly aggressive individuals with little interest in interpersonal relations and interlocutor face concerns, and elevating the English to sensitive and harmonious practitioners of equilibric conversation, Watts pointed to differing social norms that directly inform such culturally specific verbal behaviour. A key, essentially heuristic framework employed to account for these styles as culturally specific variations on a universal theme was what Watts termed 'politic work'. Each contrastive style was part and parcel of such 'politic work', that is:

> ...socio-culturally determined behaviour directed towards the goal of establishing and/or maintaining in a state of equilibrium the personal relationships between the individuals of a social group...during the ongoing process of interaction. (ibid., 135)[6].

Compared to the English style of politic work, and read from an Anglo-centric position, the conversational behaviour favoured by the German conversationalists might *prima facie* appear to run the risk of endangering the fabric of interpersonal relations, of threatening or disturbing equilibrium. However, echoing Houses earlier claims as to differing communicative norms, Watts noted that such politic work by definition functioned equally to achieve and maintain - indeed was integral to - the harmony between participants in each cultural milieu. Both styles of conversational behaviour, although prima facie contradictory, could be seen to perform then the same function, namely maintaining interpersonal equilibrium and strengthening closed group bonds, whilst allowing for the normative development of essentially sociable conversation.

Finally, although Watts argued that such politic work variously functioned at an interpersonal level, to for instance ratify and maintain in-group cohesion, individual face concerns could be seen to be contingent on speaker contributions and conversational performance in being to proffer and defend these contributions. Pointing to German politic (equilibric) work in particular, Watts noted that for example, for German speakers, holding the floor to proffer a position, and contradicting other positions was seen of primary importance. Speakers failing to engage in such politic work may subsequently run the real risk of being regarded negatively as 'passive' communicative partners.

Watts' observations of familial conversation seem to corroborate many of House's findings then concerning speaker orientation to ideational and interpersonal aspects of talk. Importantly, what Watts adds to our understanding of German – English communicative style is that it may be perceived, not only as a goal oriented or pragmatic issue, (as for example would be the making of requests, apologies, or complaints), but also – and perhaps fundamentally - as a collective enterprise geared towards maintaining in a culturally specific state of equilibrium by participants recognisable conversational and interpersonal practices. Thus, both speaker and recipient alignment are implied in this equilibric reading of verbal interaction. Communicative style is thus a product of both speaker and recipient general alignment to conversation based on a set of normative expectations and discourse practices.

The substantial body of work conducted by House and colleagues, and Watts has primarily focused on British-English communicate style. However, interestingly these differences are reflected in comparative studies between German and other English speaking speech communities outside of the British-English context. Such differences can be seen no more so than in US-English – German comparative studies, where marked differences have been identified in the way Germans differ from US-English speakers in terms of their respective communicative styles (e.g. Byrnes 1986, Friday 1994; Straehle 1997; Kotthoff 1989; 1991; 1993; 1994). Even though strictly speaking the English and Americans can not be cast as one and the same culture, differences noted between US-English and German communicative style are remarkably similar to those outlined in the preceding paragraphs.

An interesting set of mainly anecdotal yet insightful observations are those provided by Byrnes (1986). Drawing on Tannen's (1984) work on 'conversational style', Byrnes (1986) compared observations of US-English and German interactional style – essentially normative orientation to the activity of joint topic talk - in conversation. Again, striking differences emerged in terms of how German and US-English speakers in their respective cultural settings oriented to developing conversational topic. For example, compared to German conversation, US-English conversation was marked by a noticeable preference for greater general levels of indirectness and focus on interpersonal concerns. Conversely, German interactional style was characterised by a much greater preference for direct and clearly conveyed informational aspects, where message content rather than interpersonal concerns was treated as primary concern by interlocutors. These two differing general orientations - indirectness and interpersonal vs. direct and substantive - were clearly manifest in the way conversational topic was collaboratively handled in conversation. Byrnes noted that:

> [US-English conversation] tend[ed] to give the general impression of less commitment to the topic at hand, but more commitment to creating an air of civility and graciousness toward the other. A topic is more a vehicle for personal bonding than an issue whose truth is to be ascertained. Should there be a focus on topic, a deferential style is more likely to produce negotiable, inconclusive, non-committed contributions, a cautious presentation of one's own position [which] ...avoids potential damage to the surface harmony that upholds conversation. (Byrnes 1986,199-200).

Whilst with German conversational style, in general:

> there is greater emphasis on the information-conveying function of language, as compared with its social bonding function. Such an orientation is concerned more with facts and truth values, and in their service seeks, or at least should not shy away from, overt disagreement and confrontation (ibid., 200-201).

Thus, negotiation of truth versus truth-seeking and cautiousness versus confrontation, and were two of the salient differences between US-English and German conversational topic development. In structural terms - i.e. the turn organisational features of conversation - further differences were identified. For example, Byrnes pointed to an American preference for turn-taking with

relatively little overlap, and a general willingness to concede the floor – i.e. stop talking and allow another participant to take a turn at talk – should overlap occur. Conversely, German conversation was marked by significantly more overlapping, shorter or no pauses between turn-taking, and loud and emotional speaker contributions.

In an attempt to access the underlying motivational bases for such differences in style, Byrnes drew on differing prevailing social values in the two cultures. A prevalent value underlying the German data was that of 'truth searching', where '...disagreement and confrontation are valued, and have become ritualised, in that they are deemed to further the process of establishing the truth (Byrnes 1986, 201). This observation reflects similar comments by Wierzbicka (1991) who more recently noted that this Teutonic value not only contrasts with the American culture, but also the British-English speech community:

> Anglo-American culture appears to be more 'pragmatic' in its attitude to truth than European culture. This is reflected, for example, in the concept of 'a white lie', which doesn't seem to have any equivalents in German [...] (Wierzbicka 1991, 103).

Similar to Watts's (1989) comments on the relationship between face from conversational performance, Byrnes also pointed to the consequences for participants' images by engaging in such truth seeking episodes. To participate in such activity, the German speaker must '...put his or her ego on the line in defense of a particular position whose validity often can only be ascertained if the position of others is proven flawed' (Byrnes 1986, 202). However, similar to Watts's observations, Byrnes noted the positive interpersonal functions that German interactional style could have for those participating in it. Far from resulting in disaffiliative and potentially face-threatening and disequilibric episodes of interaction, such conversational activity may be perceived as solidarity enhancing, and thereby carry positive personal rewards for the individual ego:

> Perhaps, in its own way, [disagreement and confrontation] becomes a form of social bonding for those who customarily engage in it...On one level, it is knowledge of the topic at hand, which drives the discussion, and not the concern about maintaining social bonds. But on another level, such agreement on the broad goals and directions for

> conversations, realised through active commitment to them during the course of the conversation, creates its own social bonding and feeling of well-being for all participants (Byrnes 1996, pp.201-202).

The reward for putting ones ego on the line is thus a ratification of solidaric bonds and a subsequent feeling of self-worth.

Thus, interactional style in both US-English and German was posited as fulfilling the same function, albeit requiring a different orientation on the part of participants to topic development, and one's own self and face concerns, and the selves proffered by and face concerns of fellow-conversationalists.

Byrnes's comments on the returns for the ego by engaging in conversational activity have also been corroborated by scholars such as Friday (1994). In focusing on differences between US-English and German conversational style between business managers, Friday identified the motivational basis for engaging in conversation as being the desired image of self that both US and German speakers sought to claim. Reflecting the comments by Byrne, Friday noted salient differences in terms of the images of self sought by US-English and German business managers respectively, ones which apparently guided conversationalists in their conversational contributions and general orientation to talk. Specifically, Friday noted that:

> The American's need to be liked is a primary aspect of his or her motivation to co-operate or not to co-operate with colleagues [whereas] The German counterpart to the American need to be liked is the need to establish one's credibility and position...(Friday 1994, 276).

Further,

> The American character with its need...to be liked avoids argumentum ad hominem. Any attack on the person will indicate disrespect and promote a feeling of dislike for the other...In contrast, the German manager, with his personal investment in his position and a need to be credible to maintain his or her position, may strike with vigor and enthusiasm at the other's error. (ibid., 280).

Thus, positive social images – the US desire to be 'liked' and the German desire to be seen as 'credible' - directly informed conversational

contributions, with the former set of concerns leading to a focus on interpersonal harmony, and the latter to substantive development of talk and focus on propositional content. Thus dominant positive social values were shown to guide participants in talk and which, through their various conversational practices, participants in both milieu sought to claim and have ratified by their fellow participants.

This body of work has provided invaluable insight into German and English orientations to conversational interaction. However, perhaps the most comprehensive piece of US-English – German comparative research, specifically addressing salient variations in conversational style was that conducted by Straehle (1997). Drawing on these earlier findings, Straehle (1997) further explored differences in the ways in which participants in German and American talk worked towards producing casual conversation[7]. Specifically, Straehle focused on the various 'involvement strategies' (Tannen 1984) used by US and German conversationalists as part and parcel of the development of ongoing conversation, that is, how members of each culture conversationally signalled their aliveness to and involvement in ongoing conversational interaction. In producing such talk, salient differences emerged in the way participants from each culture both normatively oriented to the collaborative activity of topic development, and variously focused on self or other face concerns. One important finding to emerge from Straehle's study was the apparent tendency for US-English speakers to focus on deference in talk (Goffman 1967), and German to focus on demeanour.

Straehle's analysis of US-English and German conversation was conducted against a backdrop of interview data from informants from both cultures which largely corroborated Byrnes's earlier work on US-English and German conversational differences. For instance, in attempting to define 'good conversation', Straehle's German informants listed such things as being able to learn something, having one's standpoint challenged and being able to defend it, having the opportunity to challenge and 'beat' others in argumentation, a reciprocal granting of uninterrupted attention to each others' standpoints, and a necessary thematic focus on the developing topic. Conversely, Americans listed such things as the sharing of experience, discovery of commonality and areas

of mutual interest, the respect of others views by avoiding contradiction, the use of humour, and the chance for equal participation.

These characteristics were borne out in the conversational data analysed. American conversations for example clearly displayed a preference for the telling of personal stories in the form of narratives, serving variously to 'entertain, to make a more serious or abstract point, to display one's verbal talents, to reveal a moral or other self, or any combination of these or more' (Straehle 1997, 333). German conversations on the other hand displayed far fewer examples of such extended narratives, and where these did occur they tended to be quickly dispensed with. Rather – in line with comments obtained from informant data - German conversation was characterised by what Tannen (1994) termed 'agonistic' discussion, that is, talk characterised by extended, animated dispute around a common conversational topic. As with the German relative scarcity of memorable narratives, US conversations showed a marked absence of such agonistic topic development. Thus, conversational styles clearly reflected participants' understandings of for example, what was required of them in terms of their contributions to make the talk 'good talk'.

Straehle identified not only differing ways of handling conversation (i.e. 'how' topic talk was managed), but also differences in the sort of topics routinely drawn upon as conversational resources for either style (i.e. 'what' got talk about. German conversationalists for example were shown to orient more towards 'heavier' topics such as those 'socio-political' in nature. US conversationalists on the other hand oriented by and large to more personal topics. Indeed, if and when more serious topics did arise in the US conversations, participants tended to 'personalise' them by developing them within a wider context of personal experience rather than subsuming such experience within a dominant frame of objective discussion, as did German speakers. Finally, not only was conversational topic shown to differ in terms of what got talked about and how it was framed (as part of narrative or objective discussion), but also the extent to which each topic was developed. For example, US conversationalists treated any given topic superficially and often switched between numerous topics, what was termed 'topic-surfing'. Conversely, German conversationalists on the whole developed topics more

fully and substantively, what was referred to as 'topic-diving' (ibid. 349). Thus, *prima facie*, US-English conversation gave the appearance of being less serious and less in-depth that German conversation.

Similar to Byrnes, Watts, and Friday, Straehle identified cultural variations in face concerns as informing differences in conversational style. Drawing on Goffman (1967), Straehle suggested fundamental differences in how US-English and German speakers oriented to a focus on deference on the one hand and demeanor on the other (Goffman 1967). Fundamentally, US-American speakers were seen to be working under the implicit assumption that each was focusing on deference, that is, '...protecting the face concerns of others and showing considerateness, rather than projecting one's own' (Straehle 1997, 342). Conversely, the German focus on the '...strong expression of opinion, a show of one's general knowledge ("Allgemeinbildung"), and agility in directly challenging the positions of others' (ibid., 342), was suggestive of an effective diminution of other considerateness, in favour of a focus on demeanour:

> In other words, part of the "game" [German agonistic conversation] requires a protection of one's own face, which is achieved through the confident assertion, support, defence, and challenging of viewpoints as well as the display of world knowledge and logical, strategic thinking. These characteristics imply a focus on demeanour (Straehle 1997, 342).

Again, the positive social function of such demeanour-focused practices in German were noted. The German tendency to present one's own standpoint whilst directly criticizing another's, by for example explicitly revealing the flaws in another's reasoning, could be viewed quite positively in the German context, '...it is as though individuals abide by a rule which states: "since I want to appear (i.e., demeanor) knowledgeable and logical, you do me a favour (i.e., show deference to my face) by telling me directly when this is not the case'" (ibid., 344). This culturally specific aspect of conversational style may be perceived as solidaric amongst German conversationalists but quite oppositely as face threatening by US speakers.

Thus, agonistic discussion, although being an apparent arena for ego-centric presentation of incommensurable selves, could be seen to facilitate a mutual orientation whereby both self-oriented demeanour and other-oriented deference could be equilibrically played out. This is important in that it suggests that facework as a mutually reciprocative activity (being an effective balancing act between respect for self and considerateness for others) can actually be played out conversationally as an apparent surface level face-threatening activity (Cf. Blum-Kulka 1987; Wierzbicka 1985; Katriel 1986; Tannen 1981a; 1981b; Schiffrin 1984) (see 1.3).

The final body of work that I want to review here is the one that has addressed quite specifically instances where both US-English and German conversationalists have been involved in the potentially face-threatening activity of disagreement. What this work has shown is that the cultural differences discussed I terms of a general orientation above, can actually be seen to have informed the turn-by-turn normative organisation of talk itself.

Specifically, Kotthoff (1989; 1991; 1993; 1994) has explore the preference for establishing and defending one's standpoint in German as compared to US-English conversation, not in terms of a preference in the sense of 'disposition' or cultural tendency *per se* – one commonly employed in several of the studies already cited - but in the more technical sense of conversational preference as used in Conversational Analysis (Sacks 1987; Pomerantz 1984). That is, preference organisation as referring to the culturally institutionalised way of, in this particular case, agreeing and disagreeing in terms of how turns are formulated and sequentially organised in conversation.

Kotthoff focused specifically on dispute sequences in US-English and German conversation to look for structural and sequential variations in the conversational organisation. Salient differences were identified in the way American and German speakers oriented to potentially argumentative encounters. Again, reflecting previous findings, American speakers were shown to be more oriented to maintaining consensual conversation (what Kotthoff termed *Konsens*), this being evident in their routine collaborative avoidance of open disagreement. Conversely, German speakers were shown to be more

oriented to unmitigated disagreement (what Kotthoff termed *Dissens*) characterised by a more intense focus on the topic itself as the bone of contention (Kotthoff 1989).

Importantly, the orientation to *dissens* and *konsens* was not realised solely at a propositional or semantic level, but at a sequential one, at the level of preference organisation of turns. Kotthoff (1991; 1993) demonstrated how the general preference for agreement in Anglo-American conversation[8] (see e.g. Pomerantz 1984) may in German actually be reversed, as conversationalists move from agreement into disagreement sequences (Cf. Schiffrin 1984). For example, in German argumentative exchanges, over a series of turns disagreement becomes less and less modulated as participants move towards what Kotthoff termed 'opposition formats'. The result is a re-contextualising of the talk from a preference for agreement into a preference for disagreement. This re-contextualisation brings certain expectations and obligations on the part of the participants involved. For example, interlocutors in such contexts produce, and expect others to produce, unmitigated disagreement, each attempting to undermine his / her interlocutors position whilst strengthening their own. This orientation is accompanied by a heightened state of strategic attention to what is being said, and a readiness to quickly retaliate against an interlocutors position using any point of weakness in his / her argument. Concessions in such exchanges are understandably regarded as potentially face-threatening (by for example indicating submissiveness, weakness, or an inability to defend a position already argued for). Thus, when concessions are made, they are not made suddenly, but marked by strategies such as hesitancy, extensive listening without offering a counter-argument, and concession to the central point of their interlocutor's position. This may have face-saving functions for the conceding participant as he / she is able to concede in a way that can be viewed as a result of ones own thinking rather than a passive submission to or defeat at the hands of one's interlocutor. Conversely, Kotthoff (1991) noted that in her American data there were no such opposition formats. Rather than counter-posing and intensely scrutinising personal stances, interlocutors oriented collaboratively towards maintaining a harmonious relationship, with potential dissent being minimised as much as possible in

favour of a strong orientation to consensus over the episode of talk. Participants' images and faces were not put in a position of potential threat, but rather mutually and reciprocatively protected.

Again, however, rather than being counter-productive to the relationship between the interlocutors and damaging to the faces of the participants, Kotthoff (1991) noted that German interlocutors routinely perceive such encounters as Spaß [fun], as intellectually stimulating and enjoyable for the participants involved, indeed as sociable events[9]. Such 'Wettkampf' [competition] encounters were posited then as signalling a positive relationship between the interactants rather than outright aggression or feelings of ill will.

Kotthoff's work then has not only corroborated earlier findings, but identified salient differences in the way talk is sequentially organised as a collaborative practice as participants move in and out of consensus and dissent phases of conversational episodes.

Over the preceding pages issues of communicative style have been addressed ranging from speech acts to more general conversational style. Importantly, although this range of discourse phenomena has been treated by individual scholars in isolation, a reading of the extant research points to certain underlying and fundamental differences between the two cultures in terms of their orientation to conversational as an activity in itself and to one's self and interlocutors' face needs in talk.

I now want to briefly and more specifically consider the possible communicative underpinnings for such variations in style before moving on to consider the question of systematically addressing these differences in the context of the current study.

2.3 Communicative Underpinnings

The preceding pages have been used to identify and outline the extant body of research comparatively addressing English and German communicative style. Various discourse phenomena have been addressed, ranging from specific speech acts (House 1981, 1989; House and Blum-Kulka 1989), through cultural variations in politic work (Watts 1989), interactional and conversational style (Byrnes 1986; Straehle 1997), to variations in preference organisation (Kotthoff 1989, 1991, 1993, 1994). Although varying in terms of their empirical and analytical focus (see 2.4), one common thread runs through these works - that of face. More specifically, what is apparent is that face concerns are normatively and routinely oriented to differently in the two cultures across arrange of communicative practices. How then should one make sense of these differences. Fundamentally, how might these differences be interpreted in terms of some universally applicable framework for understanding how facework informs everyday discourse?

If we work from the premises set out in the previous chapter, that face is a universal concern (Brown and Levinson 1987), and facework is a universal condition of interaction (Goffman 1967), it appears that English and German interactants convey politeness and maintain 'ritual equilibrium' by routinely employing culturally specific facework strategies at a discourse level. First, in terms of the underlying assumptions of conventional approaches to politeness (Lakoff 1973; 1979; Leech 1983) it appears that the thesis that politeness usually supersedes clarity requires some amendment in respect of German norms, with Germans apparently employing and preferring clarity over politeness. More specifically, in terms of what was noted earlier about politeness as being associated with conversational indirectness and mitigation of potentially face-threatening verbal behaviour (Brown and Levinson 1987), it appears that the equation of politeness with indirectness and mitigation of such face-threatening acts is less applicable to German communicative style than it is to English. This is clearly evidenced by the observation that Germans are routinely and normatively more direct in realising specific face-threatening acts such as requests and complaints. One must assume that this is not a manifestation of routine and normative impoliteness or routine and normative

face-threatening behaviour. Indeed, it has been suggested that, in respect of negative face threats (in the conventional sense), it is perhaps the imposition indirectness itself – requiring longer inferential roots on the part of the hearer to understand what the nature of the speaker's utterance is - rather than the imposition of the act itself which is perceived as less polite in German (see Pavlidou 1994). Thus in the realisation specific speech acts at least, it may be the case that the 'more direct the more polite' runs as a norm of politeness.

A salient characteristic to emerge from the studies reviewed over the preceding pages is also the apparent variations with which what was classed earlier as positive face (Brown and Levinson 1987) is handled. It appears that - in the achievement of equilibrium at a relational level positive face can be frequently threatened across a range of discourse types. This is best exemplified by the German tendency to routinely and normatively attack or undermine interlocutors' positions whilst going about what has been invariably framed by scholars as equilibric or even harmonious interaction (e.g. Byrnes 1986; Watts 1989). Thus, although the positive – negative conceptualisation of face advanced by Brown and Levinson is not itself brought into question by English – German comparative studies (as was shown to be the case by Asian based studies) reveal obvious cultural differences as to how these aspects of face are oriented to in and through actual discourse practices. Importantly, these practices seem to run contra to the mitigation of imposition and avoidance of threats to positive face characteristic of English communicative style and underlying the rather Anglo-centric work of Brown and Levinson (1987).

The apparent tendency for an avoidance of conversational lip-service in conversational interaction in the pursuit of some wider equilibrium also appears to undermine somewhat Goffman's comments on the nature of facework as a type of working consensus in talk. As with the premises on which politeness theory was based (Lakoff 1973, 1979; Leech 1983; and Brown and Levinson 1987) Goffman's (1967) notion of ritual equilibrium was posited on the assumption that this was achieved by harmonic and non-conflictual behaviour at the level of conversation. Work on German data has somewhat contradicted this equation of ritual equilibrium with 'lip-service' (ibid.). Ritual equilibrium has been shown to be achieved in German conversation not necessarily by lip-

service but by more confrontational or agonistic talk, framed for example by Watts as politic work. In this sense, there is evidence for the operation of a culturally specific working consensus, somewhat different to how this is manifest in Anglo-American culture.

Of course, Goffman's notion of ritual equilibrium and working consensus was directly linked to prevailing positive social values that participants in face-to-face encounters sought claim. Indeed, it was the claiming and ratification of such values that formed the basis of Goffman's reading of the concept of face. Much of the variation between the two speech communities in what plays out conversationally as equilibric interaction might be explained by differing prevailing positive social values. Germans for example have been argued to claim social value based on the need to be seen as 'alive' to and actively involved in the interaction (Byrnes 1986; Watts 1989; Kotthoff 1993), proffer a credible position (Friday 1994) and defend this (Byrnes 1986), and not be seen as submissive or weak in being able to hold one's position (Kotthoff 1993), or conversationally 'passive' as an interlocutor (Watts 1989) and generally be able to conduct oneself in talk with a certain focus on demeanour (Straehle 1997). Conversely, much of what has been observed about English speakers – both British and US-English – corroborates both Goffman's and politeness theorists assertions of persons hoping to perceived as polite, tactful, and tolerant, one might say 'charming' or 'likeable'[10] in and through their communicative acts and to display a certain deference to fellow-interlocutors.

Positive social values, although applying in both cultures, seem then to be different in nature across the two lingua-cultures and importantly, clearly inform the images of self sought in and through their conversational contributions. It seems then that again, as with Brown and Levinson's positive-negative bases for facework, the findings on English – German differences in communicative style do not undermine Goffman's fundamental notion of ritual equilibrium and the face as images of self based claims to positive social value, but rather point to different cultural variation operating within these universal paradigms. Thus, the positive – negative and ritual equilibrium paradigms would still appear valid explanatory frameworks. Indeed, the findings presented above

clearly reflect both Goffman's and Brown and Levinson's comments as to the culturally variability allowed for by their respective frameworks.

In addition to the potential import of the premises set out in Goffman's and Brown and Levinson's work, other cross-cultural facework oriented frameworks have been cited as allowing some interpretary purchase on these differences. For example, drawing on the German tendency for self-orientation versus the English for other-orientation, House (1996) has suggested that differences in communicative styles may well be interpreted in terms of Hofstede's (1980) dimension of 'collectivism-individualism' discussed above (see 1.2):

> [The Self-orientation vs. other-orientation dimension]...is similar to Hofstede's (1980) dimension of "collectivistic vs. individualistic" cultures, respectively displaying features such as an "us vs. an I feeling" or "responsibility to society vs. responsibility to self". Germans appear to be more on the individualistic end of the scale than Anglo-Americans (House 1996, 352).
>
> (House 1996, 352)

This proposition is interesting in that it demonstrates the applicability of a framework on which explanation of East-West differences have been based might provide some analytical purchase on understanding differences in communicative style between two western and historically and geographically quite close cultures. This may also carry consequences for the reading of cultural conceptualisations of the self, particularly in terms of the self as construal, bounded by the individual in individualistic cultures, but encompassing aspects of the wider community in collectivist cultures. Both Byrnes (1996), and Kuhn (1995) have also drawn on frameworks largely associated with explanations for East-West differences, specifically the in-group – out-group distinction. It has been suggested that, compared to Anglo-US cultures the German culture may be marked more by 'in-group' orientation, where fundamental solidarity between participants is assumed rather than explicitly referenced. This might explain for the absence of overt politeness and facework, particularly in contexts where agonistic conversation is pursued.

Finally, additional explanatory dimensions have also been drawn upon which, although not specifically addressing face concerns, do seem to provide some insight into interpreting these competing styles. For example, drawing on Tannen's (1990) work on gendered conversational orientations, Straehle suggests how German and US-English conversational differences display similar characteristics to these gender associated styles. Germans show a greater general tendency towards the former more male oriented style (including for example maintaining and negotiating hierarchical status, exhibiting knowledge and skill, verbal performance, self-display, and employing minimal small-talk in favour of more abstract and non-domestic topics). US speakers tended towards the latter more female oriented style (including for example displaying similarities, matching experiences, employing more small-talk, gossip and personal experiences)[11].

Of course, what the preceding exposition of German communicative style in particular points to is an orientation to discourse similar to that identified at the conclusion to chapter one by scholars such as Katriel (1986), Schiffrin (1984), and Tannen (1981a, 1981b) (see Chapter 1). In terms of the poles of ritual equilibrium set out in Chapter 1, it appears that the Germans and the English fall towards opposing ends.

There is then a set of conceptual language which might be brought to bear on a consideration of the differences in communicative style between English and German cultures' 'norms' English – German communicative style. That is, the concept of equilibrium, the claiming of positive social values in and through talk, and related images of self proffered in talk. These are central themes running through extant studies. Neither the Goffman's nor Brown and Levinson's essential premises have been undermined by the findings to emerge from these studies, but the conversational work routinely and normatively engaged in to sustain equilibrium, or orient to negative and positive face needs has been shown to differ markedly. Further, concepts applied more often to account for East-West differences have been employed to account for English – German variations in term of, for instance self- and other directedness in talk. These suggest that not only positive social values, but the fundamental status of

the self in each culture as construal might provide analytical import to understating facework in the two speech communities. I shall argue below that this corpus of conceptual language can be systematically brought to bear on both English and German communicative style as facework. To conclude my discussion of German – English differences however, I want to mention the nature of the data and data sites as exploited in extant studies, before moving on to consider these issues in the context of the current study.

2.4 Methodological, Analytic and Procedural Considerations

Before moving on to further explore these conceptual and analytical issues in the following chapters, I want to briefly review some of the empirical and methodological aspects of the extant research drawn upon here. As I stated at the outset of this chapter, from the extant studies focusing on English German differences in communicative norms, of most relevance here are those focusing on spoken interaction (e.g. Blum-Kulka and House 1989; Byrnes 1986; Fetzer 1996, 1997; Friday 1994; Hellweg, Samovar, and Skow 1994; House 1979, 1982a, 1982b, 1982c, 1989; House and Kasper 1981; Kotthoff 1989, 1991, 1993, 1994; Straehle 1997; and Watts 1989). The studies cited here all draw on instances of spoken interaction. However, these data provide a rather disparate corpus, having been drawn from a range of contexts and settings and elicited using various techniques. Although this constitutes spoken data therefore, the data itself cannot be treated as one and the same.

A common source of data drawn upon in many of these studies is that derived from various 'role-play' scenarios. This usually involves recruiting native speakers from each speech community (frequently drawn from university student cohorts to whom the researchers have immediate access), and asking them to enact certain scenarios whereby they are engaging in potentially face-threatening activity such as asking request or complaining. Commonly, socio-pragmatic variables such as status differences and age are manipulated. Such a technique allows for the controlled elicitation of spoken data – for instance requests, complaints, or conversational behaviour in specific types of conflict episodes. However, although this technique allows for a focused inspection of

specific communicative practices, as scholars employing such techniques have themselves noted, these data can hardly be regarded as 'naturally occurring' (Kotthoff 1994), nor can the settings be regarded as naturalistic settings but rather 'artificial' (House and Kasper 1981).

Although data drawn from constructed settings have undoubtedly yielded important findings, several of the scholars conducting comparative research note the additional benefits of employing naturally occurring data (e.g. Watts 1989; Straehle 1997). House and Kasper for example recognise the need for research in cross-cultural differences to '...take into account of the entire discourse, in which [such] individual acts are embedded' (1981, 183). The most obvious proponents of this focus on naturally occurring conversation are Straehle (1997), and Watts (1989), both of whom focused on the collection and analysis of naturally occurring talk drawn from naturalistic settings. Aside from noting the validity of naturally occurring conversational data, Watts (1989) further alludes not only to the need to acquire such data, but also points to the nature of the settings which might best yield the most naturalistic examples of naturalistic conversational freeplay, what might generally be referred to as 'closed-group'[12].

> ...I suggest that we turn our research efforts to the intensive investigation of what goes on in closed group interaction in order to gain clearer insights into the roots of cross-cultural differences in politeness behaviour. (pp.161-162).

Although as I shall make clear below, these two criteria - naturally occurring talk and closed group settings - will guide my own methodology here (see Chapter 4), there are intrinsic problems with attempting to analyse the nebulous and disparate nature of the ongoing flow of naturally occurring conversational interaction. These seem particularly salient when one attempts to take a analytical 'broad brush' approach to facework in ongoing naturally occurring conversation. Indeed, as I shall outline in the following chapter, although several of the above scholars have pointed to the need to address naturally occurring conversational interaction if one is to fully understand facework practices, extant models for the analysis of discourse for facework maker this a deceptively difficult enterprise. However, as I shall demonstrate below, this is not an impossible task.

In the following chapters I shall spell out more comprehensively the particular analytical framework I wish to employ here (Chapter 3) and general methodology for data collection and initial analysis (Chapter 4). However, in the light of the preceding comments I want to draw this chapter to a close by briefly spelling out the basic premises of my intended approach to the study of facework in English and German sociable episodes.

First, in terms of data, in line with comments by House, Watts, and Straehle (1997), I shall be basing my analysis of German and English facework on naturally occurring conversational data, that is, data not drawn from constructed scenarios involving role play, but rather non pre-determined conversational talk as it is actually played out in situ by members of each particular culture. Secondly, in terms of the actual data sites from which my data will be drawn, in line with comments made by Watts (1989) in particular, I shall be focusing on essentially closed-group gatherings, that is, gatherings involving friends or family members. I shall refer to such data sites from here on as sociable gatherings, and data drawn there from as 'sociable episodes'.

In terms of my analytical interests, I shall focus in large on the salient points of difference between the two speech communities in terms of their conversational style. Indeed, it is due to these differences that I embarked on this research project, in order to understand the bases for my own uneasy introduction into another culture's communicative practices. I do however have specific conceptual concerns, ones which I have argued are central to understanding the sociological bases for these differences. Thus, I shall attempt to apply a broad Goffmanian notion of equilibrium in an attempt to understand the nature of such equilibrium in each culture. In order to do this, I shall explore further what might be termed the style-selfhood linkage which is implied in much of the work reviewed. That is, my focus for the basis of the variations in conversational style in the two cultures is not in the first instance a linguistic one, but more a sociological one, namely, the 'self' in talk and its relationship to equilibric practice in the achievement of cultural style. Although conducted in the first instance from a Sociological perspective, I shall not neglect the positive – negative framework for the interpretation of facework practices advanced by

Brown and Levinson (1987). Indeed, I shall argue that how solidarity and autonomy are indexed in conversational framework is fundamental to understanding the cultural variations between the Germans and the English in terms of their respective conversational styles.

This then is the empirical and conceptual remit with which I shall pursue my investigation of variations in English and German sociable style in the present study. It is one which will evidently draw on the work carried out already by scholars addressing English – German comparative research, but one which will also address conceptual, analytic, and empirical avenues not fully explicated but identified as holding significant potential for the furthering of an understanding of the bases for differences between the two speech communities.

2.5 Conclusion

I began the chapter by outlining my own experiences as a participant in English and, more importantly, German sociable gatherings (2.1). Here I spelt out from quite a subjective standpoint my own experiences of and difficulties with engaging unproblematically in sociable conversation as an Englishman attempting to speak German. I noted that my early difficulties and negative misperceptions may well have been grounded, not in a lack of awareness of language usage, but of what was essentially conversational style. Following this I moved on to identity salient characteristics of German and English communicative style (2.2). I focused on a range of discourse phenomena, from single speech acts to more general orientations to ongoing conversational interaction. Specific salient differences were identified. Of particular interest here was what I termed conversational style, that is, culturally normative and routine ways of engaging in ongoing naturally occurring conversational interaction. Following this, I invoked the fundamental concepts and extant interpretative frameworks set out in Chapter 1 in an attempt to identify the underpinnings of the salient variations in facework practices in the two cultures. I noted that, although many of the works cited in this chapter have touched on face as a concept, and pointed to cultural variations in the achievement of

equilibrium and positive social values informing selves proffered in talk, as well as noting cultural variations to both positive and negative aspects of face, none has systematically applied itself to the study of these fundamental concepts over and throughout the flow of any piece of interaction (2.3). Following this, in discussing methodology, I pointed to the most appropriate data and data sites to conduct such an analysis, and identified the conceptual parameters which will guide this particular study (2.4).

In the next chapter I want to take forward these conceptual, empirical, and analytical interests to consider how they might be combined to arrive at a workable methodology for the investigation of English and German facework. In short, I shall be attempting to identify a useable framework for the analysis of facework in naturally occurring ongoing conversation in both cultures, with the concepts of the self as informed by positive social values, equilibrium, and both positive and negative face needs as central organising features in talk.

Notes to Chapter 2

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[1] I use the term 'communicative style' here as a generic one. It refers to German and English 'ways of speaking' in everyday conversation. Such 'style' may be apparent from the way interlocutors formulate specific speech acts, such as apologies or requests, to the way persons orient generally to one another over some common conversational topic. It may also be reflected in certain textual communications found in everyday settings. In layman's terms it might be referred to as 'the way the Germans or the English talk when they're together'.

[2] I have adopted this term from the German vernacular. The label 'Englishman' is regularly used in German as a term of endearment, invoking images of bowler hats, straightened ties, and heightened politeness. This is the 'membership category' (Sacks 1992) that was frequently invoked in early encounters and through which I was generally perceived and still to some degree am perceived by my German acquaintances today.

[3] I shall consider here both German - British English and German - US English comparative studies. The intent is not of course to cast the British and the Americans as one and the same speech community, but to add to the contrastive nature of this review which seeks to draw out salient aspects of particularly German communicative style, which the English reader may not be aware of and which essentially underlie the research problem on which this study is based. In addition, I would draw the reader's attention to comments made by scholars such as Byrnes (1986) and Straehle (1997), who both employ British and US data in their contrastive reviews with German.

[4] 'Ideational' here refers in general terms to the propositional content of spoken discourse; 'interpersonal' refers to the relational aspects, for example in showing affiliation, solidarity, or deference.

[5] Transition relevant places are those sequential slots in conversation where a speaker can be 'heard' to have completed or be about to complete his / her current turn at talk. This term is most often employed by scholars working in the field of Conversation Analysis (Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998, Silverman 1999, and ten Have 1999 for recent overviews of Conversational Analysis).

[6] Watts notes that the term equilibrium does not here refer to social equality. The social status's of participants may differ markedly in any one gathering. In closed-group settings though, any act by any participant '...may at any time impose a set of obligations on co-interactants regardless of social status and social distance' (p.163n.1).

[7] I will say a little more about 'casual conversation' below (see Chapter 3). Here however, the term should be taken to refer to the kind of talk that goes on between friends, family, and close acquaintances.

[8] There are exceptions to this rule in Anglo-American culture such as responses to compliments and self-deprecation. An unmitigated agreement with the former would threaten one's own face (being overly conceited), and to the latter would threaten one's interlocutor's face (by agreeing unreservedly with the self deprecation).

[9] This corroborates my own experience of German conversationalists, who have remarked on the 'Spass' to be had from combative discussion. It should be noted here that the German word 'Spass', although commonly translated as the English 'fun' is in fact subtly different. Whereas Fun implies a lack of work, effort and discipline in favour of more hedonistic pursuits, Spass is very much more associated with personal discipline, control, and success as an individual.

[10] Indeed, I have on occasion myself 'played up' to this image of the charming Englishman whilst in the German milieu, much to the delight of my German interlocutors who invariably take my behaviour as a 'refreshing change'.

[11] See also Malone (1997) who employs individuating and affiliative styles to male and female styles respectively.

[12] Watts does make the point that this reduction of overt politeness is particularly salient in 'volitional' cultures (e.g. England, Germany, and Western cultures in general) compare to 'discernment' oriented cultures (e.g. Asian cultures) (See 1.2).

CHAPTER
3
FACEWORK AS ALIGNMENT

...a proper model of face dynamics must incorporate the idea that people are interacting for the purposes of companionship and affiliation as well as self-definition...interaction is typically regulated by varying degrees of an affiliation motive and a desire for self-definition. (Earley 1997, 62)

3.0 Introduction

In the preceding pages I have introduced the notions of face and facework, and gone on to consider cultural variations in both the conceptualisations of the face and the linguistic realisation of facework (Chapter 1). I have also more specifically outlined how German and English communicative style displays marked differences along a range of communicative parameters, which points to variations in the way face concerns inform everyday discourse in either culture (Chapter 2). Having set out the conceptual and empirical terrain then, I want now to address the question of an appropriate analytic framework for systematically addressing English – German differences in the realisation of facework in ongoing talk. I have accorded this question a whole chapter due to its centrality to both the research questions and empirical foci of this study.

I shall begin by outlining the main approaches to the analysis of facework in discourse, these being largely applications or developments of Goffman's and Brown and Levinson's frameworks (3.1). I shall then change footing somewhat to consider the contingencies and dynamics of the particular type of discourse on which this particular study is based, that is, sociable interaction (3.2). Based on these discussions, I shall go on to posit an approach more suitable than extant frameworks to addressing facework in ongoing sociable conversation, that is, an approach not having as its primary unit of analysis sociable utterances, but rather sociable selves, and their mobilisation in the achievement of ritual –or as I shall refer to it from here on 'sociable equilibrium' (3.3). Finally I shall conclude the chapter (3.4).

This chapter then can be regarded as being central to the procedural and analytic stance taken in this study. To that end it will guide the following analytical chapters (see Chapters 6-8), and is one on which the thesis rests.

3.1 Facework in Discourse

In Chapter 1 I outlined the general stances taken by Goffman and Brown and Levinson towards the concept of face and facework practices. I now want to consider more carefully the analytical purchase afforded by these major paradigms and subsequent attempts to further develop them in the light of the current conceptual, empirical, and analytic concerns.

Although not setting out a formal model for analysis as such, Goffman's musings filter into most studies of facework. Indeed several cross-cultural studies, including those focusing on non Anglo-American or non-Western cultures, extol the virtues of Goffman's approach. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Goffman identified a range of discreet phenomena which he framed as facework (see Goffman 1967; 1971). These have formed the basis of much work drawing specifically on Goffman's interpretive stance in the consideration of actions such as accounts and apologies (e.g. Owen 1983), actions generically referred to by Goffman as components of 'remedial interchanges' (Goffman 1971). Issues such as embarrassment, and self-presentational work has also been subject to Goffmanesque interpretation (see Cupach and Metts 1994; Metts 1997; and Tracey 1990 for reviews). What Goffman's approach has done is in effect sensitise researchers to these phenomena as being part and parcel of facework.

Unfortunately, the majority of studies employing a Goffmanesque standpoint focus not on equilibric action *per se*, but rather on actual or potential disequilibrium, where face may be under threat in some way. Actions such as requests or apologies are thus framed using Goffman's conceptual schema as 'aligning actions' – essentially remedial in nature. Indeed, even though Goffman himself highlighted the fundamental nature of facework as a condition of interaction, his own work seems to be best suited to moments in interaction where face becomes potentially or actually threatened – becomes 'an issue' (Goffman 1967). Salient, often highly ritualised and formulaic acts such as accounts and apologies, although clearly

indexing face concerns, provide it seems little analytical purchase where face concerns are not an issue – where they are not potentially of actually threatened.

Of course, the fundamental weakness with the equilibric framework for understanding facework practices is the lack of an explicit model set out by Goffman. One suspects that this is in no small part down to the difficulty with pinning down equilibric as opposed to non-equilibric, or equilibric reparative (see fig. 1.1) facework practices. It may be then that – at least in considering equilibric facework practices – the analytical purchase offered by the Goffmanian framework of facework is at best heuristic.

Conversely, Brown and Levinson's conceptualisations of face (see Chapter 1) allowed for the development and presentation of a systematic model for the analysis of facework as politeness in discourse. Subsequently this has gone on to become the seminal framework for facework researchers. What brown and Levinson present is essentially a hierarchical ordering of facework practices ranging from direct and unmitigated utterances to ones encoding negative politeness (see fig. 1.2). To append this framework and allow a systematic analysis of specific utterances, Brown and Levinson present a series of specific ways in which both positive and negative politeness can be encoded. This approach to facework as specific linguistic manifestations of politeness provides the researcher with a clearly defined set of strategies and a codification system for specific linguistic units of analysis.

Drawing on Brown and Levinson's model, scholars have turned to the analysis of facework in a range of settings and contexts. Subsequently, Brown and Levinson's framework has been successfully applied to include encounters between strangers, interaction in work settings, consultations between medical practitioners and patients, talk between intimate partners, courtroom cross-questioning episodes, and obscure contexts such as talk between aircraft crew in potential emergency situations. The applicability of the politeness model to these varied situations and contexts bears impressive testimony to the analytical purchase of the facework as politeness approach.

However, several weakness with the framework have been identified. For instance, rather than being influenced primarily by – as Brown and Levinson claim -

basic irreducible sociological variables of power and distance between interlocutors, discourse has been identified as being subject to a much broader range of situated and relational contingencies. Thus, several scholars have called into question the adequacy of the contextual sensitivity of Brown and Levinson's framework. Further, certain omni-present discourse phenomena have been identified which are not easily incorporated into the politeness based analysis of discourse. Two such prominent examples are the need for self-oriented facework and the uses of aggressive facework (see e.g. Baxter 1984; Cupach and Metts 1994; Coupland, Granger, and Coupland 1988; Craig, Tracey, and Spisak 1986; Katriel 1986; Lim and Bowers 1991; Metts 1997; Muntigl and Turnbull 1998; Penman 1990; Tracey 1990; Wilson et al 1991; Wood and Kroger 1994)[1]. The facework as politeness model does not easily accommodate these and other factors, and to that end suddenly appears rather limited in its ability to allow a full interpretation of the contingencies of actual discourse usage.

Perhaps more fundamental problems lie with not the nature or complexity of the analytical framework itself, but rather, in the central question of the ability of any framework to fully cater for the complexity of utterance construction as encoding face concerns. Finally, of course, even Brown and Levinson attempt to provide an explicit framework for the analysis of facework in discourse and taking into account the above criticism the emphasis again seems to be on facework practices as operating essentially in the face of some actual or potential face-threat.

Alongside neglected aspects of discourse, utterances themselves have been shown to be far from the unproblematic units of analysis implied by Brown and Levinson's framework. Rather, speaker utterances have been shown to have wide and complex array of functions vis-à-vis face, beyond their markedness for positive and / or negative politeness. These observations have led to a growing corpus of terminology employed across a range of studies to point to how specific utterances can *aggravate, antagonise, compensate, co-operate with, show contempt for, depreciate, derogate, enhance, give, honour, mitigate, protect, respect, restore, be neutral for, save,* or *threaten* various aspects of face. Further, the multifunctional quality of single utterances points to the fact that they can function to perform more than one of these things simultaneously, have their true function non-determinate until subsequent utterances are made[2] or perhaps even remain inaccessible to persons outside of the relationship of the interlocutors at all[3]. Trying to interpret the function and effects of a given utterance vis-à-vis *some*

aspect of *some* persons face at *some* point in the interaction is then, as several scholars have noted, hugely complex. Cultural variation aside then (see Chapters 1 and 2), the analysis of discourse *per se* has become a complex array of issues.

There have been attempts to develop more discreet readings of facework in discourse, sensitive to nuances in actual discourse practices missed by the positive-negative, speaker-hearer based framework. This has led to alternative terminologies such as personal and interpersonal face (Arndt and Janney 1987), the refinement of the concept of positive face to arrive at a tripartite conceptualisation of autonomy, approval, and competence aspects of face (Lim and Bowers 1991), the inclusion of an intimate aspect of face in the form of social, relational, relationship face (Cupach and Metts 1994), the inclusion of a more collective nuance such as mutual face (Ting-Toomey 1988), as well as highlighting the orientation of discourse to non-present third party's face (e.g. Shimanoff 1987)[4]. These studies have each posited preliminary interpretive schema – usually in the form of typologies of utterances. The basic tenets of positive and negative face remain however largely in place and underlie the majority of attempted recastings or developments of the facework as politeness framework.

This multifunctionality of the 'utterance' becomes further complicated when one moves out from facework as an issue of encoding specific utterances, to consider the more diffuse and indeterminate flow of interaction that is naturally occurring ongoing conversation. The analytical purchase the politeness framework does afford us in the analysis of certain specific utterances seems even less at home in this particular discourse environment. A handful of scholars have attempted to resolve this latter issue by considering not the utterance as the appropriate unit of analysis, but rather the 'episode'. This rather fuzzy discourse unit is characterised by Wood and Kroger as:

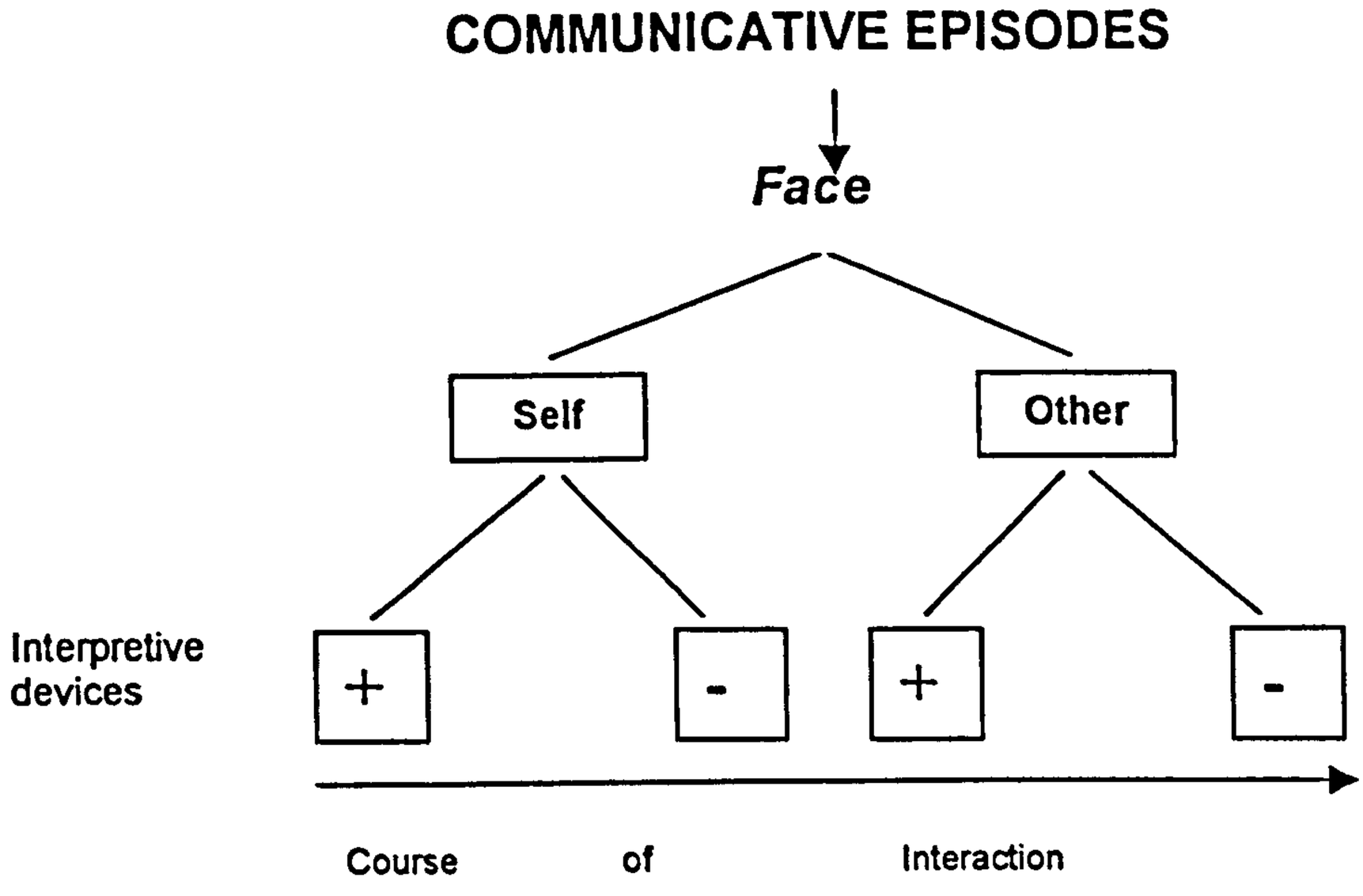
> ...any identifiable segment of social life, organised according to a principle of unity and having a recognizable beginning, course, and ending. The social episode is the ethogenic unit of analysis; it provides the context for the interpretation of the meaning of utterances for social-psychological purposes...context refers to the social episode in play and its component parts: the definition of the situation, the kinds of relationships of the persons involved and the relevant rules or conventions. (Wood and Kroger 1994, 256-257)[5]

This emphasis on the situated contingencies of facework appears to counter many of the criticisms outlined above, and echoes comments by scholars such as

Fraser (1990) who, in also attempting to provide for a situationally sensitive framework for the analysis of politeness in ongoing talk referred to such conversational contingencies as being best conceived of as a 'conversational contract' whereby politeness can only be interpreted by considering the current context of the conversational and the relational stances one speaker is taking up vis-à-vis another.

Importantly, this switch from utterance to episode does not preclude the positive – negative conceptualisation underpinning Brown and Levinson's framework. Indeed, in probably the most comprehensive attempt to analyse facework as an episodic phenomenon, Penman (1990) develops a model of facework, based on the negative – positive conceptualisation of face.

Fig. 3.1 Communicative Episodes and Face Concerns



As perhaps suggested by the reading of extant studies over the preceding pages, both Wood and Kroger and Penman note that, due to the inherent complexity of discourse in terms of its facework functions, even the most developed model can achieve at best a 'crude interpretavism' of how participants realise face concerns in discourse (Penman 1990). The problem of fully understanding what is

going on in terms of facework practices would seem to be compounded when considering naturally occurring conversation where face concerns are not a primary issue[6]. Both Wood and Kroger and Penman consider episodic contexts where the potential for face threat is high ('letters of recommendation' and 'court-room cross-questioning' episodes). Thus, no model has been posited which might be applicable to the contingencies of normal, everyday conversational episodes.

It must be said that even though a series of valid criticisms have been launched at Brown and Levinson's framework, and attempts at refining the framework have been made with some scholars going so far as to call for a completely 'new' framework for the analysis of facework in discourse, their model still forms the interpretive and conceptual bedrock of the majority of face and facework studies.

How best then to approach equilibric facework in naturally occurring ongoing discourse whilst retaining the analytical purchase, at least in a general sense, evident in the equilibric and facework as politeness paradigms? Scollon and Scollon (1994) suggest an approach that moves away from the close analysis of utterance formulation, to a more heuristic one:

> Perhaps it is ultimately not possible to have a theory of face which is simple enough to be analytically meaningful...it is only possible to say for certain that current conceptions of face...are at best heuristic; they are helpful in understanding some of the ways in which linguistic phenomena and socio-psychological phenomena interact (Scollon and Scollon 1994, 152-153)

What I want to suggest next is to take up these comments on the heuristic status of face, particularly in respect of the positive-negative reading around which the preceding discussion has been based. More specifically, I want to forward the general argument that the reconceptualisation of positive and negative face needs as heuristic or sensitising devices could provide for an approach to the analysis of conversational episodes for facework practices. In doing this, it appears a workable possibility to employ these two basic dynamics within the wider framework of ritual equilibrium. In order to ground such a proposal in actual discourse, I want now to turn to consider the discourse type which is of central concern to this study, namely, sociable conversation. It appears that, in closely considering the dynamics of sociable conversation, one finds conversational propensities that seem suddenly

particularly amenable to such a heuristic based framework for the analysis of facework.

3.2 Sociable Conversation: The To and Fro of Sociability

I mentioned at the start of this chapter a change in footing I would take in my discussion of facework. This is a necessary one, as the connections I wish to make here between extant approaches to facework and the nature of sociable conversation is perhaps the most crucial of the whole thesis. In order to do this I shall begin by characterising sociability as a particular form of interaction, before moving on to consider the nature of the talk which goes on in sociable gatherings, for what it might tell us about the nature of facework in episodes of ongoing naturally occurring conversation – what I will term herein as 'sociable episodes'. More specifically, I want to look at some of its fundamental dynamics, ones which I think can inform the study of facework in ongoing conversational interaction.

To understand sociability as a form of interaction one must first understand that it is guided by a certain ethos. Generally, differences between participants based on sociological variables such as social status and distance are normatively minimised lest they 'interfere' with the smooth running of sociability. In this sense, sociable encounters can be regarded as apolite (Watts 1989 and Chapter 2), displaying and calling for very little of the conventional politeness required in encounters in the everyday world. To use Turner's (1969) phrase, sociable encounters are characterised not by a sense of *societas* but rather one of *communitas* (see Katriel 1986), between persons of equal standing and with, conversationally speaking, with equal expressive rights (Wilson 1987)[7]. Further, sociable interaction tends not to be goal directed (as are for example speech acts such as requests and complaints). Rather, it can be regarded as primarily concerned with association for its own sake between persons of symbolic and equal personalities, interaction characterised by a 'frictionless free-playing' that facilitates both individual expression and independence, and a collective solidarity which resolves the solitariness of the individual into a union with others (Simmel (1949 [1911]). In this sense, sociable interaction is the epitome of what I have been referring to throughout as equilibric interaction.

Importantly, this ethos is taken to be reflected in and confirmed through the verbal communicative practices engaged in by its participants. Here, Simmel's early comments are worth quoting at length:

> ...in sociability talking is an end in itself; in purely sociable conversation the content is merely the indispensable carrier of the stimulation, which the lively exchange of talk as such unfolds. All the forms with which this exchange develops: arguments and appeals to the norms recognized by both parties; the conclusion of peace through compromise and the discovery of common convictions; the thankful acceptance of the new and the parrying-off of that on which no understanding is to be hoped for-all these forms of conversational interaction, otherwise in the service of innumerable contents and purposes of human intercourse, here have their meaning in themselves; that is to say, in the excitement of the play of relations which they establish between individuals, binding and loosening, conquering and being vanquished, giving and taking (Simmel 1949 [1911], 259)

Further, in terms of the conversational content:

> In order that this play may retain its self-sufficiency...the content must receive no weight on its own account...it turns its compass point around as soon as the verification of truth becomes its purpose. Its character as sociable converse is disturbed just as when it turns into serious argument. The form of the common search for truth, the form of argument, may occur; but it must not permit the seriousness of the momentary content to become its substance (ibid., 259).

What is of interest to the current discussion are comments made by Simmel about the sociable 'play of relations'. That is, Simmel clearly points to a set of dynamics under-running sociable conversation - 'binding and loosening', 'giving and taking' - operating in a context where participants do not have access to the normative resources with which face needs are normatively indexed.

Since Simmel's seminal writings, the number of studies specifically addressing sociable conversation has been fairly limited (e.g. Riesman and Watson 1964; Watson 1958; Watson and Potter 1962; Tannen 1984; Schiffrin 1984; Blum-Kulka 1997). Taking on board the sociable dynamics framed by Simmel as 'ethos', as well as corroborating Simmel's insights, some of these works have highlighted more specific interactional contingencies operating in sociable settings. For example, operating under the general rubric of 'The Sociability Project', Riesman, Watson, and Potter (Riesman and Watson 1964; Watson 1958; Watson and Potter 1962) focused specifically on the task of attempting to systematically identify and analyse the interactional contingencies of sociable interaction. The body of work produced as part of this project was limited in terms of the volume of published findings and was essentially exploratory rather than definitive. It did however

identify certain underlying dynamics associated with sociability as it was oriented to and played out by its participants.

At a general level, sociable interaction was seen to be geared towards a joint building of an 'in-group' culture, whilst allowing for a normative integration of the individual interests and experiences. Although sociable interaction was characterised by the development of shared values and 'definitions of reality', it also allowed for the opportunity for participants to express themselves as 'unique individuals', drawing not on hierarchical characteristics such as roles or achievements, but rather on for example, the projection of personality. More specifically, what emerged from a consideration of actual episodes of sociable conversation were certain dynamics which were characteristic of, and to some extent necessary for, 'good' sociable interaction to take place. Firstly, similar to Simmel, the content of sociable conversation was regarded as a vehicle for the joint expression of the relationship existing between participants in talk:

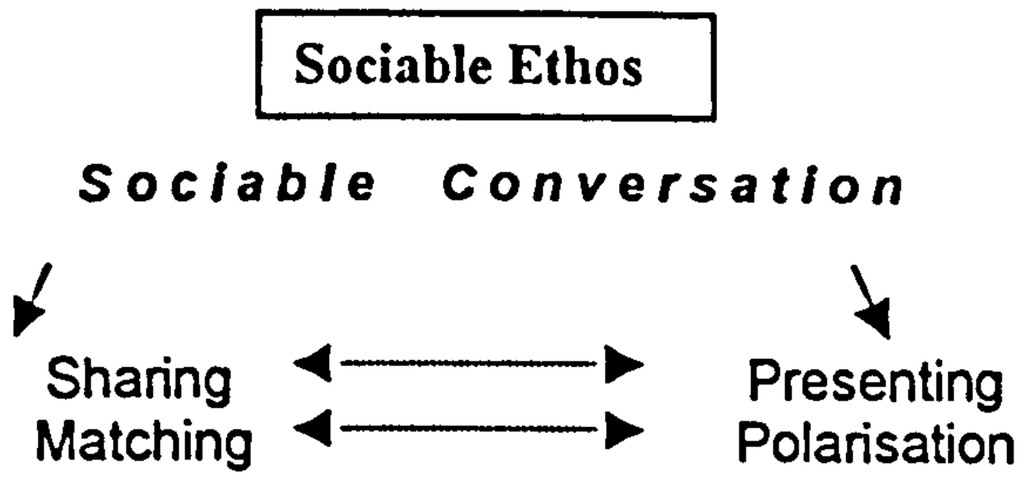
> In most sociable interaction, there are at least two conversations going on simultaneously: The substantive conversation serves as a vehicle for the development of interpersonal relationships (Riesman and Watson 1964, 290).

In terms of participant contributions to the joint activity of topic development, Watson and Potter drew on Goffman's (1959) comments on self-presentation, and Fromm's (1955) comments on expression of inner feeling to identify two central dynamics influencing the relationship between the selves of participants, namely 'presenting', and 'sharing'. The former was conceived of as '...establishing each participant as a unique and separate entity...a process in which the self-boundaries of each particpant remain intact and in which each responds from the outside to a facade offered by the other...confirming that an individual is as he believes himself to be...by presenting...to others , and obtaining appropriate responses' (Watson and Potter 1962, 250). Conversely, sharing was defined as interaction which establishes overlap between the self-systems of conversational participants. The self-boundaries of participants enegaged in talk do not separate the conversationalists from one another, but, rather, give way to a larger boundary which joins the [them] together' (ibid., 250). Thus, presenting and sharing were seen o be omni-present sociable dynamics, ones which had a direct bearing on the status of the selves at any given point in the interaction. In addition to presenting and sharing, Watson and Potter identified another set of tendencies operating as part and parcel of sociable conversation, viz, matching and polarisation.

Specifically, 'in matching, individuals assert that they are in fact alike, because they have – or say they have – similar positions, attributes, views, or experiences. Conversely, in polarisation individuals differentiate themselves from one another, exaggerating their differences (ibid., 256-257).

Watson and Potter went on to develop further the nuances of these underlying sociable dimensions along which sociable conversation is played out. However, in themselves, these fundamental dynamics of sociable conversation provided a useful appendix to Simmels more general statements (see fig. 3.2).

Fig. 3.2 Central Dynamics of Sociable Conversation



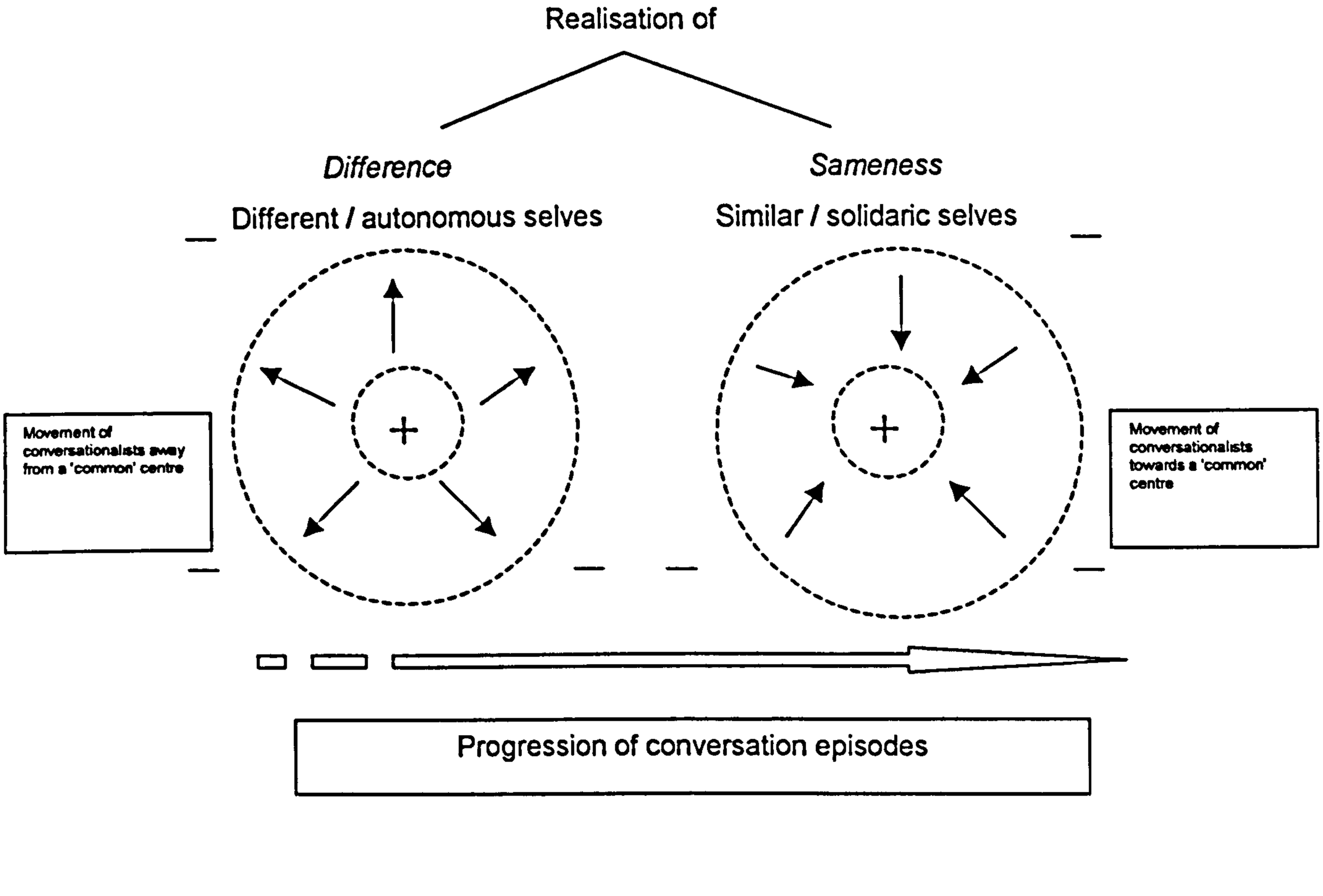
More recently, Eggins and Slade (1997) have focused on the more nebulous discourse type of casual conversation. This has not only emphasised the importance of non-goal directed talk for discourse research, but also identified certain dynamics which strongly echo those identified as characteristic of sociable conversation. In a nutshell, what this work has suggested is that, although the joint establishment and maintenance of solidarity in conversation is a fundamental concern for participants, equally as important is the exploration of difference. Successful casual conversation was posited as being characterised by a tension between. '...one the one hand, establishing solidarity through the confirmation of similarities, and on the other, asserting autonomy through the exploration of differences (Eggins and Slade 1997, 22). Although not citing work from the Watson et al, nor, surprisingly Simmel, nor paying any reference to face or facework, Eggins and Slade draw on a range of other authors who have pointed to fact that in part, conversation is motivated not only by commonality, but by the expression of difference (e.g. Burton 1980; Kress 1985).

In fact, these two opposing orientations of sameness and difference have been demonstrated to be the bases for sustaining casual conversation; In effect, the poles of an interactional motor that effectively keeps conversation running (see fig 3.2). Indeed, unlike goal oriented talk or pragmatic conversation, which commonly works towards the achievement of some goal as a recognised end, casual conversation is talk which is kept going for the sake of it (see Slade, in press). Thus, casual conversation, due to its very nature, seems to variously allow for - indeed call for - both the mobilisation of solidaric or similar conversational selves, and presentation of individual, autonomous, or different selves, what Eggins and Slade refer to as the 'shifting alignments' of conversation (ibid. 18).

Echoing comments made by Watts (1989) on the apolite nature of sociable conversation, Eggins and Slade note that these observations of casual conversation confirm earlier comments made by Burton (1978), that the 'polite collaborative consensus model' does not fit casual conversation (ibid., 47).

Based on their observations, Eggins and Slade suggest that Gricean maxims and pragmatic principles (see Chapter 1) although they cannot fully explain conversation, might be used as heuristic devices for the analysis of casual conversation, allowing maxims such as 'be provocative' or 'be consensual' to be posited (ibid. 42).

Fig. 3.3 The Interactional Motor of Casual Conversation



Other work on sociable conversation further echoes these opposing alignments taken by conversationalists. For example, drawing on Goffman's (1974) concept of 'frame', Schiffrin noted that Jewish speakers shifted suddenly from consensual to argumentative frames and back again during sociable conversation - what she termed sociable argumentation. Conversations essentially flitted unpredictably to and fro between these two opposing frames as part and parcel of sociable interaction. Finally, this work bears resemblances to conversational dynamics such as independence-involvement (e.g. Tannen 1984) and affiliative-idividuating styles (e.g. Malone 1997)[8].

What this work might be boiled down to then is the fact that sociable conversation might be characterised by, indeed normatively require, a certain symbolic 'to-ing' and 'fro-ing' of participants, evidenced in their varying conversational expression of sameness and difference. Importantly, what has been alluded to is that these styles have a relationship to the self in talk as it is perceived

at any given point in the flow of conversation. The central question is of course, how might these observations of the underlying dynamics of sociable conversation *per se* help us in establishing a model its systematic analysis for facework practices? What can be gleaned from these eclectic observations in terms of establishing a suitable framework for the analysis of facework in episodes of ongoing sociable conversation?

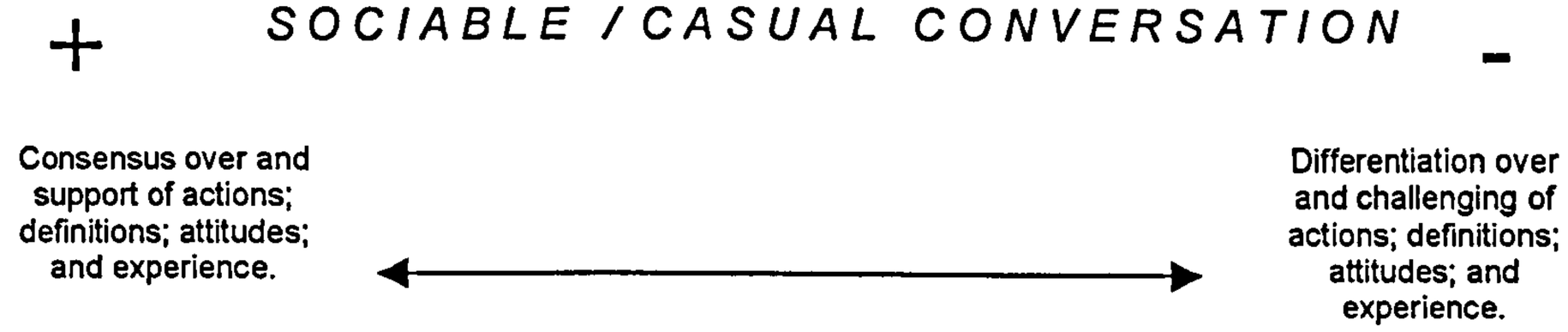
3.3 Sociable Conversation as Facework

I have said that sociable conversation is essentially apolite. For the facework researcher this causes something of a problem, namely, how can one study facework in a discourse context where communicative behaviour normatively associated with facework, such as politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987) or apologies and accounts (Goffman 1967), are normatively and routinely minimised as part and parcel of the achievement of sociability. Can, and if so how can, the observations made about the dynamics of sociable and casual conversation aid in the quest for an appropriate framework for the analysis of facework in sociable episodes?

Earlier I argued for a move from considering positive and negative facework as properties of specific utterance, to treating them more as heuristic or sensitising devices. In terms of ongoing naturally occurring conversation as a discourse type, I suggested that they could be considered as essentially omnipresent properties of the flow of conversation. How might though one take positive and negative as heuristic devices and apply them in the analysis of episodes of naturally occurring discourse? What I want to suggest here – and in the light of the preceding discussion certain readers may have already anticipated this, is that, the positive – negative paradigm advanced by Brown and Levinson can be directly mapped onto the salient propensities underlying sociable conversation. That is, in claiming sameness and difference (Eggins and Slade 1997), presenting and sharing (Watson and Potter 1962), or binding and loosening (Simmel (1949 [1911]), participants in sociable encounters are directly indexing both positive and negative face needs. Further, these collective practices are operating to ratify and support an over-arching sociable ethos.

In this sense – and of course I shall hope to demonstrate the validity of these claims in the following analytical chapters – positive and negative facework as equilibric activity can be conceptualised as a collaborative claiming, ratification and support of claims to both sameness and difference, solidarity and autonomy (see fig. 3.4).

Fig. 3.4 Positive and Negative Conversational Claims



Considered within the context of conversational episodes, these claims (and variations between them) in terms not just of their propositional content, but also in terms of their interpersonal functions would seem to function to achieve solidarity *with* and independence *from* others; i.e., provide a conversational resource for the claiming of face needs.

Having proposed a relationship between the dynamics of sociable conversation per se and both the equilibric and positive – negative paradigms of facework, I now want to consider how we might more formally present such proposition in terms of a workable framework for the analysis of facework in English and German sociable episodes. Specifically, I want to do this by drawing on three central concepts variously referred to in the preceding pages as being intrinsically bound up with facework, that is, equilibrium, the self, and the notion of alignment.

Alignment is a concept variously used in social sciences to refer to the relationship conversationalists take up to each other during focused interaction (e.g. Goffman 1981; Katriel 1986; Nofsinger 1991). Nofsinger (1991) provides perhaps the most comprehensive account of how alignment can been taken to refer to a whole host of conversational phenomena. These can include various responses to signal understanding and comprehension (e.g. 'hm', 'oh really'), through conversational repair conducted by speakers or hearers in talk to allow

orderly and meaningful conversation to proceed (see e.g. Schegloff 1992), to the prospective and retrospective aligning of action and meaning (e.g. 'Could I ask you a personal question'; 'I didn't mean to sound nasty there'). Alignment in this sense is associated with the achievement of intersubjectivity between speaker and hearer in the achievement of 'smooth' conversation.

Alignment is not restricted in use to refer to the achievement of intersubjectivity though but can also apply to what is essentially the alignment of particular selves. For example, in responding (aligning ones conversational utterance) to a speaker's introduction of something 'newsworthy' or 'interesting', speakers may align in effect a surprised or informed self (for e.g. in the use of 'oh really' or 'you don't say'). This effectively signals not only an appropriate comprehension of meaning, but also an appropriate alignment of symbolic self, thereby both ratifying the self proffered by the speaker ('interesting newsteller') and, equally as importantly, setting up the appropriate conversational environment (albeit a temporary one) for the speaker and hearer to continue to mobilise appropriate selves. This focus on the relationship between conversational action and the symbolic representation of the self been addressed more closely in symbolic interactionist circles. Here, the concept of alignment has been used variously to refer to largely verbal actions taken to align both individual lines of conduct, and that conduct with wider cultural norms. Essentially, 'aligning actions' (see Stokes and Hewitt 1976) are commonly perceived in sociological studies as actions which proscriptively seek to define or retrospectively seek to get potentially face-threatening behaviour 'back on track', to a state of non-conflict and mutual acceptance of the definitions of the situation and proffered selves (Malone 1997, 138). For instance Stokes and Hewitt (1976), although again associating alignment with the achievement of intersubjectivity, focus on negative selves that might be warded off or redefined with the use of aligning actions. Persons may for example employ disclaimers to proscriptively define upcoming information proffered about the self or others, or may employ explanations following some negatively sanctioned action. In this sense, aligning actions are synonymous with alignments of the self.

Alignment has also been employed at a wider cultural level. Katriel (1986) extends these prior conceptions of alignment to the study of specific cultural contexts. In her ethnographic study of the Israeli interactional idiom of straight talk, she identifies a two-way alignment, which aligns ensuing potentially face-

threatening talk with higher cultural norms and in doing so creates the social, cultural and conversational context for 'straight talk' to ensue. Thus, alignment is in effect, not merely a 'normalising move' to do with a breakdown of meaning or a realignment of negatively perceived selves, but also a contextualising one, which proscriptively aligns action with wider cultural norms, and sets up the context within which participants may align selves vis-à-vis one another. Alignment in this sense is analogous to a 'shift' of conversational gears (albeit an temporary one) as part and parcel of the normative realisation of conversational interaction. Katriel's work is of particular importance to the present study in that it employs the concept of alignment to account for cultural variations in communicative style.

Alignment then can generally be perceived of as an intersubjective phenomenon, which works at the levels of meaning, symbolic selves, and higher cultural norms.

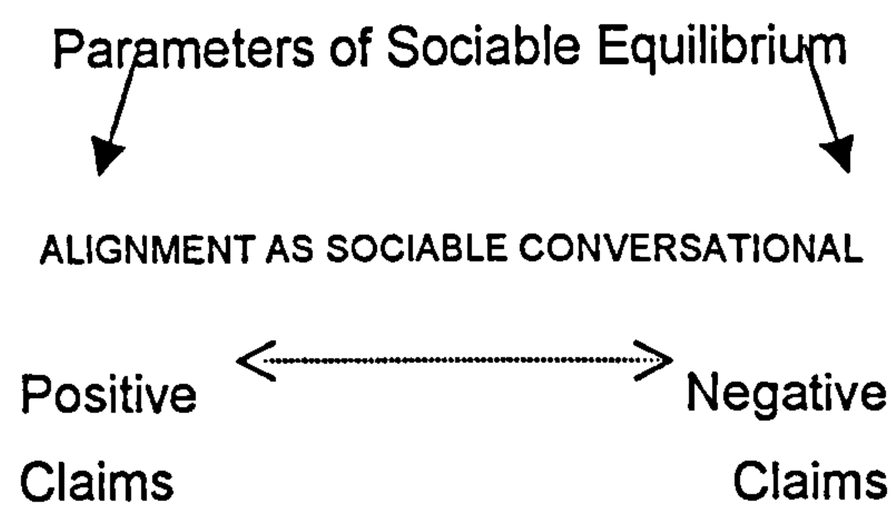
Although the body of literature addressing alignment appears rather eclectic, the import for the current discussion should be somewhat evident. That is, in the preceding discussion, although fundamental dynamics underlying sociable conversation have been identified, from which examples of conversational claims have been derived, they have been treated as acts in themselves, rather than acts as part of an ongoing collaborative activity. No note has been made as to the trajectory that these moves may lead to in actual conversation. In order for any comments on the conversational organisation in any culture to be made, one needs to consider not just this or that move in isolation, but rather, such moves as they are normatively co-ordinated or choreographed in and as the development of conversation. For example, consensus and differentiation usually involve – by definition - more than one speaker. Thus, positive and negative are not just ways of categorising specific moves in isolation (in terms for example of illocutionary force or prepositional content), but rather, as relational statuses and properties of the conversational context itself. For instance, when conversational participants engage in dissent or consensus, they can be regarded as being mutually aligned with one another. This reading of facework as alignment has important implications for the way we might set about addressing facework in sociable episodes.

As I noted above, equilibrium was a concept central to Goffman's (1967) understanding of face and facework. Since Goffman, several scholars have employed the term to refer essentially to an overarching conversational state (albeit

locally managed and constantly in danger of becoming 'disequilibric') whereby the faces of participants are mutually supported or allowed to proceed unchallenged. In terms of sociable / casual conversation, it is what we perceive as free-flowing, easy-going, spontaneous talk, in which one can immerse oneself in the conversational milieu with like-minded individuals. At its height, it approaches a type of interactional nirvana. Rather than being perceived as fixed and static state however, as Earley (1997) has noted equilibrium is best regarded as a dynamic ongoing process rather than a fixed state, contingent on the unfolding interaction and context[9]. Equilibrium in this sense, is something akin to a sociable balancing act, whereby one change in footing from one participant may require appropriate compensatory moves from the other to in effect prevent the conversational boat from rocking too much, or tipping over altogether.

If we assume that participants in sociable conversation make claims to solidarity with and autonomy from their sociable counterparts, and that these claims can lead to alignments, then, employing the concept of equilibrium as an interactional balancing act we can surmise that equilibrium will be maintained in and through both positive and negative alignments. This basic proposition is outlined in fig. 3.5.

Fig 3.5 Face, Alignment, Equilibrium



These then are the essential components for a heuristic model at its most basic[10]: Positive face conceptualised as the conversational need for conversational solidarity with others; negative face, conceptualised as the conversational need for conversational autonomy from others[11]; alignment, treated as the co-joint orientation of conversational claims to achieve both positive and negative face needs; and equilibrium, the culturally specific parameters for sociable / casual conversation.

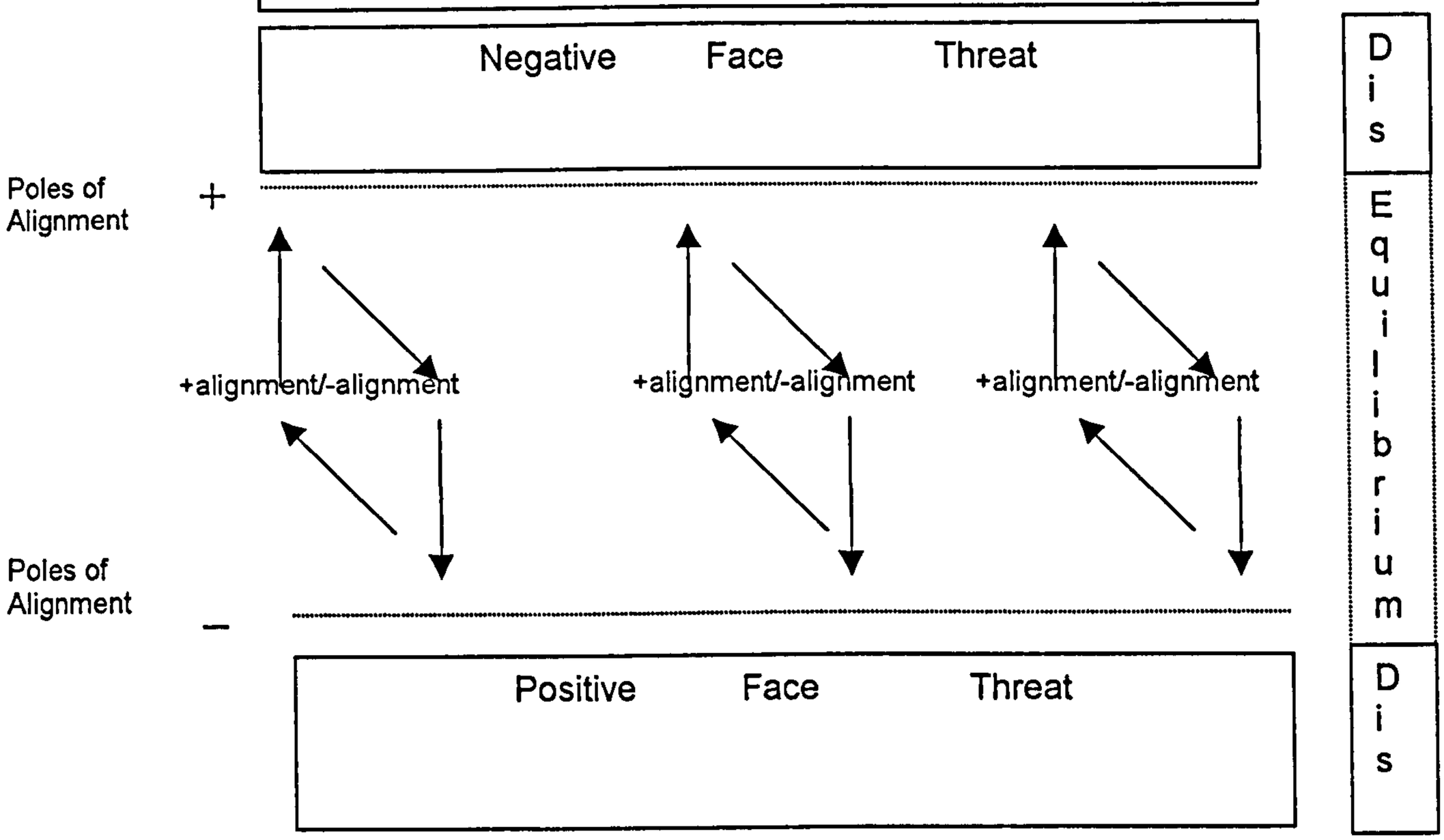
In order to complete this basic framework for the analysis of facework as alignment, I now want to briefly show how such a heuristic might relate to the concept of the self outlined above. In Chapter 1 I drew on two conceptualisations of selfhood. The first related to the self as image – 'on loan from society' as Goffman (1967) phrased it. In this sense, the self is contingent on the recognition, ratification, and support from fellow conversationalists. In terms of face, the self can be seen as indexing prevailing positive social values. Thus, if we contrive the same reading of facework as alignment, we can speculate with some degree of legitimacy that the self relies on the alignment of co-participants for its ratification and support during sociable episodes.

The second conceptualisation was the notion of the self-construal. Thus is somewhat different notion of the self, but one the less, one which, as with the self as image, is one which forms the basis for face, and towards which facework practices are directed. Although this reading was initially invoked to form the basis for East-West differences, it was suggested that the collectivist-individualist paradigm might be seen to operate in all cultures to varying degree. Thus, I would like to propose that the self-construal can also be accommodated within the framework as alignment framework. That is, during moments of positive claims, the status of the self-construal is skewed more in the direction of an individualist entity, and at moments of positive alignment, the self is skewed more in the direction of a collectivist one. In each case, the conversational manifestation might be expected to resemble talk commonly associated with individualistic and collectivist communicative styles (see tables 1.3 and 1.4).

In either case, such selves depend for their survival on the recognition and ratification by others. This ratification in itself can be conceptualised as a process of alignment. It is these properties of the self in both conceptualisations as an 'alignable' and 'align-dependent' entity that will form the basis of my own quite specific treatment here.

Thus, facework as alignment can be regarded as the positive and negative alignment of selves as both images and construals. Such alignment practices allow participants to sustain a state of sociable equilibrium. This proposed reading of facework as alignment of selves can now be formally set out (see fig. 3.6).

Fig. 3.6 Sociable Alignment as Facework[12]



There are a set of contingencies included in this model which I have not yet explicitly referred to but which seem logical and necessary extensions if the framework is to capture the range of facework contingencies captured by other more general readings. That is, what I have classed as disequilibric alignment. I shall expand on and illustrate more fully these particular contingencies in Chapter 6, where I shall explore alignments which breach the equilibric thresholds of sociability. In a nutshell though, what I shall refer to later as positive threshold breaches shall be those instances of positive alignment which essentially threaten the manifestation of differentiation between participants in sociable episodes. Conversely, negative threshold breaches shall be demonstrated to be those manifest by differentiation extending beyond that which is easily accommodated as sociable, thereby threatening the solidaric bonds between participants and thus positive face. These and the other contingencies of the facework as alignment framework shall be fully demonstrated and discussed in the analytical chapters (Chapters 6 to 8).

For fear of drifting too far away from the empirical focus of this particular study though, I want to draw this chapter to a close by considering the analytical purchase afforded by this suggested framework for the analysis facework as alignment in within sociable episodes within the two particular speech communities discussed in chapter two, viz., the Germans and the English. Work reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2 has shown that persons from different cultures regularly engage in differing conversational styles. For example, Goffman's notion of 'lip service' demonstrated how much convivial interaction in middle class American social circles was characterised by mutual support and agreement within a framework of 'working consensus'. This can be directly contrasted with work by scholars such as Katriel (1986), Schiffrin (1984), Tannen (1981b; b), and of course work conducted on German conversational style (see Chapter 2) which has demonstrated how conversation may be conducted equally as sociably within a wider framework of essentially 'working dissent'. Both cultural variations are characteristic of sociability in the broader sense. At one end of the spectrum, some cultures seem to go to great lengths to avoid any expression of selves as autonomous, while, at the other end, others seem to regularly engage in combative style argumentation where individual selves are pitted directly against each other. Such styles can be regarded as culturally safe ways to realise face concerns within a wider framework of ritual equilibrium. How then might the observations and argument outlined above be employed to explain these differing cultural orientations?

In order to fully understand the differences between English and German communicative style using the facework as alignment approach, we need to ask a fundamental set of questions. First, we might ask what is the nature of positive and negative claims in both sociable milieu? That is, in what ways do German and English participants in sociable episodes make conversational claims to sameness and difference, solidarity and autonomy. Second, how does sociable conversation manifest these claims as they are ratified and supported in the achievement of sociable equilibrium. Third, and perhaps most fundamentally, what is the nature of conversational selves mobilised in the doing of sociable conversation, particularly, how is the self as image employed as part of facework as alignment, and how can the self as construal be seen to be guiding facework practices? In addressing theses questions, I believe we might move

toward a clearer understanding of what it actually means in each sociable milieu to behave politely, engage in facework – in short, to be sociable.

3.4 Summary: Facework as Alignment

The preceding discussion has moved forward at quite a rapid pace, and apologies are made for any areas under-explicated. As I mentioned above, the full contingencies of the facework as alignment approach will be accorded more elaboration in the subsequent analytical chapters (Chapters 6 to 8). However, I can now summarise the propositions advanced in this chapter. As I mentioned at the outset of the chapter, what I have sought to identify is a suitable analytic framework for the analysis of facework in German and English sociable episodes. I began the discussion by reviewing current frameworks for the analysis of facework in discourse. This discussion was largely grounded in the work of Goffman (1967), and Brown and Levinson (1987). It was concluded that for a range of reasons, although both Goffman and Brown and Levinson's readings of facework provided a general set of conceptual and analytical frameworks neither allowed for a systematic analysis of sociable conversation. Indeed, due its apolite nature, sociable conversation was posited as problematic in terms of accessing facework practices as conceived in the majority of contemporary facework studies. Moving on, I drew on a body of literature which specifically addressed sociability and sociable conversation. From an identification of fundamental dynamics of sociable conversation, I suggested that facework might best be perceived of as alignment practices – ones which were part and parcel of the achievement of sociable conversation.

Drawing on the concepts of equilibrium alignment, and the self, I suggested that facework in sociable conversational was a matter of alignment of sociable selves. That is, selves as both images, and selves as construals were effectively posited as being both alignable and align dependant entities. It was to the normative practices whereby these entities were aligned over the course of sociable episodes that I suggested might hold the key for understanding facework in German and English sociable episodes.

3.5 Conclusion

I began this chapter by addressing the question of facework in discourse (3.1). Here I considered extant approaches to the study of facework in discourse, from those focusing on specific linguistic units of analysis, through to this suggesting a more heuristic approach. Following this, I reviewed work addressing sociable conversation (3.2). The aim of this section was to characterise the nature of sociable conversation, focusing specifically on the underlying dynamics of sociable talk itself. Next, I moved on to consider the possibility of sociable conversation as facework. Specifically, I sought to link the dynamics of sociable conversational with the fundamental propositions of extant approaches to facework, specifically those of Goffman and Brown and Levinson. Based upon these linkages, I set out a model of facework as alignment. I also suggested how this approach might allow us to understand more English German differences in communicative style as instances of facework as alignment. Finally, I provided a brief summary of the propositions set out in this chapter (3.4)

In the following chapter I shall briefly discuss my methodology for the execution of data collection within sociable settings.

Notes to Chapter 3

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[1] See also Brown and Levinson's (1987, 1-51) own comprehensive overview of some of the criticisms between the original publication of their work (1978) and the 1987 volume.
[2] These functions tend to be employed in the literature in dichotomous pairs, for example *respect-contempt* (Penman 1990; 1994) *aggravation-mitigation* (McLaughlin et al 1983), *co-operation-antagonism* (Craig et al 1986), and *honour-threat* (Shimanoff 1987).
[3] See for example Cupach and Metts' (1994) discussion of 'personal idioms' employed by intimates in the presence of others.
[4] See Spiers (1998) who coherently employs the technique of 'substruction' - a diagrammatic presentation moving from constructs and concepts at the theoretical level, down through empirical indicators at the empirical level.
[5] See Chapter 3 for more discussion of the identification of episodes as units for analysis.
[6] For example Penman's work was carried out in courtroom settings, and Woods and Kroger address letters of recommendation.
[7] I take this last notion of equality to participate from work by Wilson (1987) who sees the mutual granting of equal rights to speak as a fundamental form of positive facework underlying conversation per se (p. 30 n.1).
[8] There is a much cited analogy of human interaction which reflects these tendencies of conversation. Participants in talk can be seen to be akin to 'cuddling hedgehogs'. The creatures have a need to avoid being too far away from each other and isolated, but in coming together can come only so close as to avoid injuring each other with their spines. In other words, human interaction involves both not getting to close or too far away from one another.
[9] See Earley (1997, 120ff.) for an excellent discussion on the concept of equilibrium and how it relates to face.
[10] I will develop further this model as the analysis proceeds.
[11] I must state that I am not positing negative alignment as detachment *from*, but rather autonomy *with* others. This rendering of the concept of negative face defined as need for expression of individuality / autonomy vis-à-vis the topic / relationship with others co-present may well be more applicable to collectivist cultures as this implies not a detachment of the biological self from wider society, but a realisation of the symbolic self through and as involvement in interactional communion.
[12] What this model adds to the individualistic notion of face (i.e. the individual possessing negative and positive face needs – see 1.1), is to demonstrate how the need for solidarity and autonomy are equally 'conversational needs'. This goes some way to demonstrate how, as Goffman has previously noted, the structure of conversation and the structure of the self are intimately related.

CHAPTER
4
DOING SOCIA(B)L(E) SCIENCE

4.0 Introduction

In the previous three chapters I have drawn on a substantial and eclectic body of literature to address face and facework (Chapter 1), German-English differences in communicative style (Chapter 2), and posited a framework for addressing facework as alignment in sociable episodes (Chapter 3). In this chapter, before moving on to the analytical chapters, I want to briefly outline my general methodology for the collection and initial management and analysis of conversational data.

After formally out setting the research questions (4.1), I shall provide a brief description of the data sites from which my data are drawn. This will include details of settings and participants. I shall outline my methodology for data collection, focusing on the nature of the data employed, the recording remit, and technical aspects of data collection, as well as additional methods employed to enhance the depth of the analysis (4.2). Following this I shall provide an overview of the initial organisation and analysis of the conversational data (4.3). Issues concerning my role, relationship to participants, and related ethical issues will then be discussed (4.4). Finally, I will provide a conclusion (4.5).

In effect, this chapter relates to the pre-analytical phase of this study, that is, the fieldwork phase. In that sense it shall focus on the procedures employed to gather data from sociable gatherings, as well as focusing on the actual experiences and contingencies of working in such milieu. The title of the chapter 'doing social(b)l(e) science has been deliberately contrived to capture the full set of contingencies of this particular type of data collection ethnographic work.

4.1 Research Questions

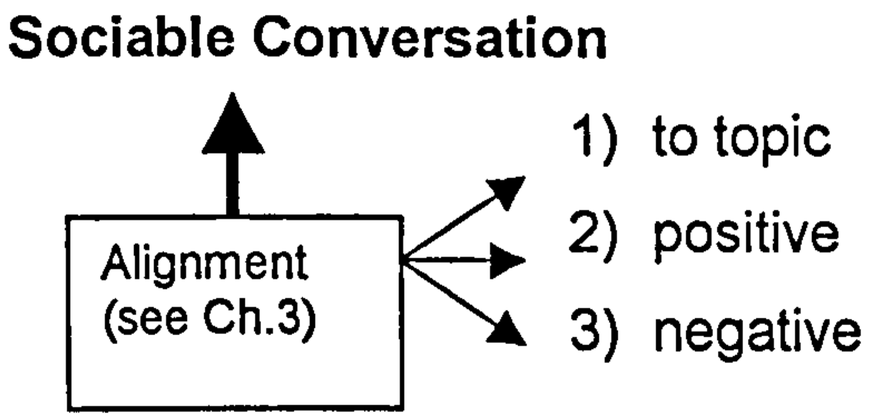
In the previous chapter I advanced a model of facework as alignment. It was proposed that sociable conversation could be conceived of as being characterised by what I termed positive and negative alignment, that is, positive alignments in and through claims to sameness, and negative alignment in claims to difference. Importantly, such claims were seen to be achieved in a and through the alignment of what I referred to as sociable selves. Based upon these propositions, I suggested certain fundamental questions which might need to be addressed if German and English differences in communicative style – specifically within sociable episodes – was to be understood as face as alignment. These were quite general questions, but are ones which related directly to the model set out above. More pertinently, they have fundamentally informed the chosen methodology which I shall outline here, and subsequent analytical stance developed in Chapters 5 to 8. I have accorded these questions a separate section heading due to their centrality to the wider concerns with methodology.

Based on my discussion and propositions set out in Chapter 3, the research questions can now be formally posited:

1. What is the nature of positive and negative claims in each culture?
2. How do participants collectively align to allow these claims to be ratified?
3. What is the nature of conversational selves mobilised in the doing of sociable conversation?
4. How are selves used as resources for alignment?

In subsequent chapters, I shall attempt to unpack these rather general questions by considering in both cultures the development of conversational topic as a collaborative sociable act and the prevalence and nature of positive and negative alignment in both cultures (see Chapters 5-8). These three areas will form the central themes around which the analytical part of this study is organised (see fig.4.1).

Fig. 4.1 Aspects of Sociable Alignment



4.2 Data Collection

As outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, recent research has highlighted the need to analyse face and facework within the context of naturally occurring ongoing talk, on the grounds that discourse must be addressed within both its conversational and situational context as it is produced by ordinary persons in everyday life to be fully understood (Straehle 1997, Watts 1989, House and Kasper 1981). Thus, naturally occurring conversation constitutes the main data source for this study. Essentially the data body consist of around 76 hours of recordings taken from sociable gatherings (see Chapter 5).

As I outlined at the beginning of Chapter 2, I have for the past 10 years or so been a regular visitor to Germany. In that time, I have built up friendships and acquaintances, as well as familial relationships with native Germans. I have consequently been involved in countless sociable gatherings. Indeed, it has been personal contact with and involvement in such gatherings that that has led me to pursue this particular thesis (see my earlier comments in Chapter 2 and the Introduction to this study). During this time I have also participated in numerous English sociable gatherings, again, with participants with whom I have similarly relational ties. My data sites are not then 'alien worlds' in either case, but ones with which I have over many years become well acquainted. The ethnographic commonplace 'research what you have access to' is one then which has had a fundamental bearing on the methodology. Similar to the types of settings exploited by previous studies of sociable conversation (e.g. Watson 1958; Watson and Potter 1962; Riesman and Watson 1964; Tannen 1984; Eggins and Slade 1997 – see Chapter 3), the type of gatherings that I am

referring to as sociable includes informal meals[1], barbecues, chats around coffee tables, and general 'get-togethers' between friends, family, and acquaintances. These gatherings commonly took place in the homes or gardens of one or other of the participants (including on two occasions my own home). In terms of their regional location, gatherings in England all took place within the Greater Manchester area, whilst German recordings were taken in the Braunschweig area (approx. 40 miles east of Hanover).

I in no way attempted to manipulate the various configurations of persons present at gatherings for research purposes. Participants were not normally selected by myself[2], but rather invited by some other host / hostess. All participants can be regarded as having familial or close friendship relations to at least one other person in each setting (full details of participants' gender, age, occupation, and relational details[3] are provided in the tables in Appendix A). Participants are in no way whatsoever posited as being representative of any socio-economic category to which they might belong (e.g. age, social class, gender, status, occupational status, educational etc). Although these variables are provided (see Appendix A), this is purely for illustrative purposes to provide the reader with some background information.

Because of this study's focus on conversational interaction, I had a number of concerns influencing the technical aspects of data collection which therefore require some brief treatment here[4]. First and foremost, it was essential that the conversational data that I recorded was as clear and audible as possible. This was essential if I was to both understand what was being said, and be able to accurately transcribe this for presentation in the thesis. Alongside this ran a potentially conflicting concern that any recording equipment I used would interfere as little as possible with the ongoing interaction – i.e., could be used inconspicuously in a range of sociable settings (e.g. on or nearby a dining table). On a purely practical level, the recording equipment needed to be portable and - due to the nature of the transcribing machines commonly available - use standard sized audio tapes. Having tried several of the standard size machines commonly in use, I found them not to provide reliable and clear recordings. Often the recordings were faint with a substantial amount of noise from the internal mike or motor. Having spent several weeks searching, I finally

acquired a suitable 'kit' for unobtrusively recording good quality conversational data in sociable settings (see table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Recording Equipment

- *Sony* BM21 (without auto reverse) with steel body and condenser mike[5]
- *Realistic* PZM (omni-directional boundary mike)[6]
- *Realistic* Button Mike[7]
- *Duracell* AA batteries (not rechargeable)[8]
- *Maxell / TDK* C90 tapes (ferric)
- *Sanyo* TRC 8080 Memo-scriber

* Manufacturer in italics

Although there were some minor technical difficulties encountered during the data collection phase, this equipment provided as inconspicuous a way as possible to gather conversational data and yielded largely high quality recordings suitable for accurate transcription.

The primary objective was to collect a large corpus of naturally occurring talk in both countries. After consultation with my supervisor, and in line with similar studies (e.g. Straehle 1997), the following target was set:

- 40-50 hours total data in each country
- Between 12-15 different gatherings
- Each gathering involving at least 3 people

The decision on quantity of data was primarily to provide a corpus of conversation which would be both substantial yet manageable. Details of the total hours of data recorded are provided in table 4.2

Table 4.2 Total Conversational Data Recorded

	English Gatherings	German Gatherings
Total Length of Recordings	28 hrs	48 hrs

I should make some reference here to the apparent incongruity between the volume of data recorded in English as compared to German settings. Although total *lengths of recordings* in the German data is 20 hours more than the English recordings, this did not result in a similar disparity in the *amount of conversation actually recorded*. The difference in recording times was largely due to the fact that, in the German gatherings, the recorder was essentially 'left on' throughout the entire gathering, whereas in English gatherings, the recorder was often turned off when conversation was replaced by some other in situ activity. Thus, in the German corpus this subsequently led to extended periods being recorded where no useable talk was recorded - for example when participants were eating, or if and when they left the table and moved for instance around the garden. That aside, the quantitative aspects of this study are secondary to the qualitative ones, and I would therefore see no real issue in the question of how long the recorder was *actually turned on*, only *how much useable data* the recordings actually yielded.

Near the start of each gathering, the tape recorder was turned on. This was then kept running for as long as practically possible. As a result, shorter gatherings were recorded almost in their entirety, whilst the longer gatherings yielded continuous conversational data of several hours in length. The majority of the recordings omitted the very beginning and ending of most of the gatherings. For these 'greeting' phases of the gatherings (see 5.1), participant observation was the main method of data collection. This type of 'blanket recording' proved useful on two main counts. First, it provided me with

essentially a conversational population from which I could later extract episodes of heightened sociable interaction. Second, it provided me with conversational context which could be drawn upon in the analytical stages. In addition, on replaying the tapes, capturing as much of the interaction as possible would give me some sense of the ebb and flow of events, some 'feel' for the gatherings beyond that which I may have derived from mere co-presence. Above all, recording in this way provided a permanent 'record' of what had been said.

In addition to the collection of conversational data, I carried what is generically referred to as participant observation. Participant observation is a rather grand title for the exercise I actually engaged during my presence in these sociable settings. This involved taking observational notes *in situ* and post gatherings. By and large however, these were limited in both quantity and quality. There was an interesting distinction to be made between this activity in English settings and that in German settings. In the former, my observations of conversational interaction seemed rather unproblematic, in that I could observe 'behind' the interaction as it were. The interaction itself involved little cognitive effort – I just 'got involved' as the others did. In the German settings things were a little different. Here, observation took the form of a type of 'practical PO' or ethno PO: My observations directly informed my actions in an attempt to 'do sociability right'. In this sense, my observations of German gatherings yielded more new and perhaps even more pertinent aspects of the milieu that I was in. Caveats aside, I contend recollections of observations do provide an overview of things that weren't recorded or selected. The results of this ethnographic technique are perhaps best illustrated in Chapter 5.

A second additional method that I employed that I am even more hesitant about posited as 'method' was the consultation with my wife, Elke. Throughout and subsequent to the data gathering phase, I seldom consulted with participants themselves regarding the nature of their comments and involvement in the interaction. However, I regularly 'checked' my observations with Elke for verification and validation. In this sense, Elke can be regarded as my 'key informant'. Finally, much of the analysis that is carried out in Chapters 5 to 7 below is frequently embedded in more anecdotal evidence from my own past experience in both settings. This does carry at least some validity, as it is

largely anecdotal evidence from which the research questions for this study have emerged. Further, I feel that any omission of my own 'extra-thesis' observations would be a waste of good data, and possibly unethical.

These additional perspectives - at least as peripheral methods - will add to the overall picture that will emerge in later chapters, providing contextual information (alongside *conversational* through the continuous recording procedure, both *situational* through my own personal knowledge of the setting, its participants, and relations between them, and *cultural* through consultation with my wife). This is in line with what is commonly termed 'Ethnography of communication' (see Hymes 1974), and has successfully been employed in previous seminal cross-cultural work (e.g. Moerman 1988)[9].

4.3 Management and Initial Analysis of Conversational Data

After recording, an initial note was made as to when and where the recording took place, the nature of the gathering (e.g. domestic birthday gathering, informal meal, general 'get-together'), who was present, any missing data (e.g. if the tape / mike was accidentally turned off for any period), and any other observational notes or contextual information not manifest in the talk itself. Each tape was given a code (G1; G2 etc. for German tapes and E1; E2 etc. for English tapes). Labels were attached to all tapes and the plastic 'record' tabs removed.

The initial analysis of the conversational data involved several stages. The first of these was essentially a combination of 'close listening' and 'ear auditing'. As soon as possible after each recording, I played back each cassette in full. As well as giving me an idea of what I had actually recorded, this initial listening allowed me to 'audit' each tape by identifying episodes of focused conversational interaction and of those, episodes that were a) of some length, b) audible, and c) clear enough to allow later transcription. Essentially I was looking for episodes where I heard some theme or topic to be collectively taken up and developed by the group; something that I assumed could have been referred to after the interaction as 'having been talked about'. Using the tape

counter on the transcriber, I noted the sections of each tape at which such episodes began and ended.

As I noted earlier (see Chapter 3), the concept of episode has been employed frequently in studies addressing ongoing discourse (e.g. Katriel 1986; Malone 1997; Tannen 1984; Watson and Potter 1962) as well as those more specifically concerned with facework (e.g. Penman 1990; Wood and Kroger 1991). The term however is quite a fuzzy one, and implies an objective and bounded period of interaction which is normally ill defined in studies applying the term. I did not employ any formal criteria as such beyond treating an episode as a period of interaction where participants were 'doing' some common conversational topic together whereby they shared a common cognitive and conversational focus of attention. In this sense, I focused on topics that *became* 'conversational', that is, topics that were picked up and developed by participants. Similar to Tannen (1984), I used instances of focused topic talk as the basis for delineating 'sociable 'episode'. In the light of the propositions set out in Chapter 3, I assumed that such a criteria for episode selection would yield instances of both negative and positive alignment.

Having audited the tapes and identified suitable conversational episodes, I gave each one a 'working title', e.g. 'Good and bad pubs', or 'Unemployment', and made brief analytical notes, noting salient aspects of talk such as how the topic was framed (e.g. in a serious or humorous manner), in how far participants were displaying solidarity of differentiation (i.e. positively or negatively aligning), and any particular images of self that were being proffered and sustained over the course of such episodes of talk (e.g. knowledgeable expert or humorous storyteller). Alongside helping me to identify a manageable 'sample frame', this process gave me an overall 'feel' for the interaction and presentational stances in both gatherings.

The next step was to playback the selected segments and roughly transcribe the talk. I was primarily concerned here with providing as accurate a representation as possible of what was actually said. Alongside verbatim transcription, I included characteristics such as noticeably increased volume and speed of speaker turns, as well as overlap, and non-lexical phenomenon

such as laughter sequences. I also included line numbering and identification of speakers. Each participant was represented in the transcripts and appendices two letters (e.g. KP). These letters are not fictitious but represent the real names of participants. A major reason for this was to avoid confusion for myself which may arise out of entirely fictitious nomenclature. However, it is hoped however that anonymity is maintained throughout[10].

These rough transcripts were then printed out and read through. Again, I focused on general conversational alignment to topic (e.g. what topics were chosen, how deeply were they being developed, were they treated seriously or lightly?) and instances of solidaric and autonomous mobilisation of selves. Finally, I selected and more precisely transcribed what I perceived as exemplar excerpts, i.e., what I thought of from my own experience as the *English being English*, and the *Germans being German*.

Two points of clarification need to be made about the nature of and importance accorded transcriptions: First, a transcript does not constitute data but rather represents it, and second, as scholars such as Tannen (in Straehle 1997, 65) have noted, the transcription process is a transformative process, taking conversation as it happens and turning it into conversation as it can be written down. Although within sociological studies, certain sets of transcription conventions are usually observed, the final 'product' as it were down differs across studies. For example, those conducting sociological work under the general rubric of 'conversation analysis' employ similar techniques of intricate transcription necessary for the practical purposes of this particular type of analysis (the sequential organisation of conversation *per se*) (see e.g. Button and Lee 1987, 9-17). Other sociologists employ less minutely detailed methods, again, largely due to their specific research interest. For example, scholars such as Blum-Kulka (1997), Malone (1997) and Tannen (1984) represent data to demonstrate, amongst other things, conversational moves as a way of mobilising selves. Others such as Goffman, equally successfully illustrate how selves are presented in talk by drawing on simply transcribed data, showing barely more than the propositional content of speaker turns.

Thus, although implicitly claiming scientific rigour, the transformation of talk into text is more arbitrary and depends on factors such as the analyst's interests. As my specific interests are similar to the latter body of works cited my method of transcription will generally follow theirs (see 'Transcription Conventions' outlined in the introductory pages of this thesis). As regards the German data, these have undergone a second transformative process, that of translation. All translations were carried out by my wife Elke, a German native speaker with an excellent command of English as a second language. I have full confidence then that the propositional content of conversational turns to be as accurately represented as possible throughout. Where linguistic phenomena occur in the German data that are not readily semantically represented in English (examples might be the German *doch*), I will attempt to make a clear note of this. To ensure external validation, transcripts drawn from the German data are presented to the general reader in both translated and original German form.

On occasion, selected episodes were omitted from the final corpus. The main reasons for this were first, the need to arrive at a corpus of a manageable size, and second my own decision to exclude data from inclusion in the thesis on what might generally be termed ethical grounds. Examples of omitted episodes included highly personal topics, ones which might lead to the identification of one or the other participant, or instances of non-dialogic talk such as extended monologue (although in this latter case a note was made of the length of monologue and participants alignments to this). These factors together with the ones outlined as part of the initial analysis procedure are outlined in table 4.3.

The procedure for data collection and initial management outlined above allowed me to collate a substantial corpus of sociable conversation from each milieu. This data provided me with the necessary empirical basis on which to conduct an analysis of facework in sociable episodes as suggested in Chapter 3, and pursue the specific research questions set out at the outset of this chapter. The analytical chapters (Chapter 6 to 8) shall draw heavily on this corpus of sociable conversation.

Table 4.3 Data: Omissions from Analysis

1. Non-audible (e.g. low volume; additional background noise)
2. Non-transcribable (e.g. highly 'schismed')
3. Incoherent conversation (in terms of joint focus)
4. Instances of mainly task-centred talk (e.g. serving food)
5. Highly personal talk (e.g. sensitive topics; divulging personal information)

Before I move on to begin my analysis – beginning with an ethnographic informed account of facework in sociable gatherings in general – I want to briefly touch on some of the contingencies of gathering such conversational data within, and whilst a bona fide participant in, sociable gatherings s in each milieu, what I have referred to elsewhere (Philburn 2003) as 'socia(b)l(e) science'

4.4 Ethical issues: Consent; Explanation, and Role Ambivalence

Alongside ensuring for example the anonymity of participants and accurately representing the conversational data, there were other ethical concerns which arose during the course of my research activities. These included for example gaining informed consent, providing an explanation for my activities to participants, conducting my studies as unobtrusively as possible, and maintaining a professional standpoint vis-à-vis my role as researcher, and a sociable standpoint vis-à-vis my role as guest.

Consent was an issue that was not wholly unproblematic during the data collection. At the beginning of recordings, I asked all the participants if it was alright for me to record the talk. I generally did not ask one individual but, attempting to be democratic, the whole group. My line was commonly along the lines of 'Would anybody mind if I made a recording?', or 'Macht es jemandem

etwas aus, wenn ich Aufnahmen machen?' [Does anybody mind if I make a recording?][11]. The first problem with this arose, paradoxically, out of the fact that on no occasion was I refused permission. I was all too aware of the effects refusal would have on my face, the face of the refuser and the interaction in general[12]. Refusal of such a request would I think be highly dispreferred at such a moment. I was aware of this and did feel some discomfort as a result of having created such an awkward situation for all participants. Secondly, I was aware that active consent could not taken for granted as applying over the course of the entire discourse. For example, was consent still to be taken as operative when the presence of tape had been forgotten about (usually only a matter of minutes after the initiation of taping)?[13]. There are old sayings in colloquial English along the lines of 'loose lips sink ships' or 'walls have ears', often invoked during wartime when persons are constantly vigilant about what they say for fear of who might be listening. Although not as dramatic a situation, in gatherings where my recorder was running quite literally the walls did have ears. Whatever was said was heard, recorded, and could be repeatedly reheard by an undefined audience. I was aware that, perhaps particularly during in-group encounters such as sociable gatherings, things 'for our ears only' might be uttered and was therefore concerned that speakers might regret having said this or that particular thing. I therefore regained consent at the end of each gathering and made it clear to all present that if they were unhappy me using the tapes, I would destroy them. In fact, I offered to physically break the tape in-situ and would have done so if objections had been raised. However no person objected to me taking the tapes at the conclusion of gatherings.

Alongside gaining consent, I felt obliged to provide some explanation of what exactly I was doing in this obscure activity. My general line was to explain that my interest was in 'conversational' and how people did it differently (or similarly in England and Germany). Further, I advised participants that, in order to fully understand and do justice to the conversations, it was essential to capture them as fully and accurately as possible, hence the recording. In general, I had to provide an honest and detailed account whilst not employing language or concepts too foreign to or intimidating for the participants. I did offer a more detailed overview of my work for any participant with a more detailed interest, but this offer was never taken up.

The obtrusiveness of my recording was also a major concern for me. Even though I had carefully selected my recording equipment, I did have some concerns as to the effect that the introduction of recording equipment would have on the interaction itself. My worst fears were that the recording equipment would bring the interaction to halt where nobody was willing to say anything at all, the presence of a tape recorder in a 'sociable episode' being perceived as quite simply unsociable. Indeed, at the moment of introducing the recorder, there was invariably a noticeable if temporary state of interactional 'anomie'. However, conversationalists appeared very quickly to accept the presence of the recorder and the fact that they were being taped. Indeed, rather than being unsociable as such, as gatherings progressed, the recorder often served as a source of amusement, particularly at points when the alarm signalled and the participants remarked with startled comments such as 'Oh what have we said' or 'Mein Gott alles ist drinne' [My God, everything (we have said) is on there][14]. Indeed, not infrequently, my work was done for me as, if I had briefly withdrawn from the milieu, participants would call me back to tend to my equipment with comments along the lines of 'Bob, your tape's beeping' or 'Robert, dieses pepton klingt schon'[Robert, the alarms already beeping]. On one occasion, events effectively paused as participants waited for the tape to be reinserted and restarted before commencing the conversation with 'So, jetz können wir weitersprechen, ne' [So, now we can continue talking, eh?]. It transpired that participants – some of whom were recorded on numerous occasions) became very quickly desensitised to the presence of the tape recorder. That said, I was aware throughout of the demands placed on participants in being recorded and for this I am truly indebted to all those who patiently collaborated in my research.

Finally, my in situ roles informed the ethical aspects of the study. Primarily, I had throughout fundamental reservations about drawing data from these gatherings in which I was intimately connected. Was it right for example to exploit my access to sociable gatherings as a family member or friend. In addition to this was my reluctance to abuse or non-fulfil my role as guest or, on occasion host. Consider the following extract (excerpt 4.1) from an early recording of an English gathering at which I was the host. The gathering was

around an hour old, and the tape had just reached the end of its first side, whereupon the machine 'beeped' audibly resulting in me quickly removing the tape. This was the only instance during the whole data gathering process where I had not told participants at the outset they would be recorded. All were however aware of my interest in recording seemingly mundane conversation and so were not wholly ignorant of my academic activities.

Excerpt 4.1 'Makin' a Recordin"

1	KJ:	What you doin' down there
2		(0.5)
3	RP:	RIGHT I'M GONNA EXPlain now
4		(0.5)
5	KJ:	Right >go on then<=
6	EP:	=hup
7		(2)
8	RP:	°(This is for)°=ERM (.) I'M ACTually (.)
9		making a recording=>you don't mind do you<
10		(1)
11	LM:	OHHHHH[HHHhNo:::
12	KJ:	[OoooooNo:::
13		(.)
14	RP:	Th[at's what
15	LM	[hahaha is tha(h)t what we(h)ve co(h)me f[o:r
16	KJ:	[I'M A GUINEA PIG=
17	LM:	=.hhhhahahahahahaha[hahaha
18	KJ:	[I'M AN EXPERIMENT=THAT'S
19		THE ONLY REASON YOU'VE GOT ME ROUND=
20	TM:	=hahahahaha[haha
21	LM:	[hahahahahaha

I experienced some chagrin at this moment, and felt rather guilty for parading as host whilst covertly occupying a secret role. I vowed never to covertly record after that point - better to lay all my cards on the table from the outset rather than get caught hiding the ace.

More generally, I experienced a certain tension between and even ambivalence to the dual roles I had in most gatherings, viz. 'sociable guest' and 'social scientist'.[15] Alongside my role as 'researcher', my primary role was that of participant. In this respect I had the same sets of obligations as the other people to be sociable. This manifested itself at several levels. For example, conversationally, I experienced a certain 'involvement tension'. On the one

hand, I did not want to engage in talk too much as I was hesitant about a) using my own contributions as conversational data. On the other, I had the feeling that if I kept too quiet the others might think that I was observing or analysing them[16]. My solution to this seemingly catch 22 situation was to try to forget that the data was important to me and just relax[17]. Indeed, as the gatherings progressed my involvement as sociable guest gradually superseded my involvement as researcher (this being helped along its way via the consumption of alcohol and the emergence of an ethos of heightened sociability). My attitude subsequently changed from one of slightly anxious researcher, concerned that tapes were inserted, machines were running, and mikes were well positioned, to one of "Oh, I've got enough data for tonight", or even "Sod it" (this in part being effected by the reduction in dexterity associated with even small amounts of alcohol, resulting in the increasing difficulty of unobtrusively changing tapes etc). Alongside this the cognitive effects of sociable milieus are such that one is aware that full attention cannot be given to the act of recording and eventually makes the decision to stop for fear of for example, recording over the same side of a tape twice (which on one occasion did actually happen). In short, one 'goes native' very quickly in sociable gatherings, and arguably perhaps, is under an ethical obligation to do so at the expense of other obligations brought in from the outside world (see Philburn 2003).

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided an account of my general methodology for gathering and conducting an initial analysis of my conversational data. In addition, I have outlined my attempts to conduct the study with ethical concerns in mind. In the next chapters I will draw upon this data to explore more closely the propositions and research questions set out in this and the previous chapter.

Notes to Chapter 4

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[1] Several of the German and a limited number of the English gatherings were centred around Raclette grills. This is essentially table top version of an electric barbecue. Between 2 and 6 people sit together cooking food in small 'pans' under the grill. I discovered this in Germany but purchased one for England. The sociable effect was much the same as in the German setting - as guests wait for their culinary creations to cook heightened levels of chat quickly develop amongst participants, with the omni-present possibility of having to check that one's food isn't burning offering a legitimate activity switch if conversation dries up.

[2] Those gatherings that were recorded in my own home consisted of persons whom I had invited. I assumed the normal role of host, and therefore selected on that basis persons who I would normally invite, irrespective of whether I was recording or not. It cannot be denied however, that the need to obtain recordings did have at some influence on my motivation in organising and attending some of the gatherings in both cultures.

[3] I have provided what I regard as the predominant relational details here (e.g. primary relationships such as *husband - wife*, *brother - sister*, or if no other relationship exists between any two participants, *friend – friend*).

[4] The actual recordings process appeared *prima facie* unproblematic at the outset of this investigation. However, the technical contingencies being able to gather data suitable for the type of analysis that I intended to carry out came to occupy a considerable amount of my time in the initial part of the data collection phase.

[5] I avoided using an 'auto-reverse' function found on most tape recorders today. As I intended to leave the tape running for several hours I did not want the same tape re-recording on side A upon coming to the end of side B. The Sony had an alarm which signified the end of a side with a beep, although this itself presented another set of problems during the recording stage (see sec. 4.4).

[6] The PZM mike was used in settings where participants were 'mobile' and were moving nearer to and further from the mike, for example, when a host(ess) would take a turn at talk with her into the kitchen to retrieve food or utensils, or in garden settings where participants were more physically mobile in general. In such instances, the boundary on the mike 'expanded' to include such talk.

[7] The button mike was used when I decided that the presence of the boundary mike (larger and more obtrusive) would interfere with the interaction so as to disrupt it.

[8] Re-chargeable batteries emit a 1.25 v. charge compared to the 1.5 v in standard non-rechargeable batteries. The lower voltage can and did on occasion cause malfunctioning of recording equipment.

[9] The relationship between and complementary uses of ethnographic and conversation analytic approaches to cultural analysis is comprehensively explored in Hopper (1990/91) to which the reader is directed for a more thorough discussion than can be afforded here.

[10] There is a problem here in that reader will know my surname, therefore my wife's surname and then possibly – by looking at participants relational details provided in parts of the thesis - be able to work out participant's identities. I am hoping that the chances of this happening, and the desire on the readers to go through this process will be so minimal as to not threaten the ethical integrity of the study.

[11] I reconstruct my general line from memory here as, by definition, permission seeking episodes took place *before* the tape recorder was running.

[12] *Requests* have perhaps received more study for their face implications than any other speech act type (see Chapter 1).

[13] Tannen (1984, 33-4) describes this as an 'observer's paradox'.

[14] As with consent seeking episodes, these utterances occurred 'off-tape', usually as the machine was still beeping to signal the end of a particular side of a cassette. They are then also reconstructed from memory.

[15] I have elsewhere referred to this dual role as one of 'doing socia(b)l(e) science' (see Philburn [2002]).

[16] An additional problem in the German settings was my uniqueness as the 'Englishman'. I felt on occasion that I did attract undue attention on the basis of my cultural membership. This usually involving, me being asked in English about issues ranging from the state of the national football team to inquiries as to whether I would prefer 'fish and chips' to the food prepared for other guests. Of course this both allowed humour to enter the conversation whilst providing an opportunity for participants to display their spoken English - invariably better than my spoken

German. However, these episodes aside, I do not feel that my presence as 'Englishman' *per se* influenced the conversational development to any great extent.

[17] Riesman and Watson (1964, 249 & 270) note that a requirement of researchers of sociable episodes is to simultaneously both *observe* and *relax* and enjoy himself / herself (again, see Philburn [2003] for a more detailed discussion on the *trajectory* of this dual role).

CHAPTER 5

ALIGNING FOR ALIGNMENT: COLLECTIVE ORIENTATION TO SOCIABLE GATHERINGS

5.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter I mentioned something of the contingencies of conducting social research in sociable gatherings – what I referred to as social(b)l(e) science. Comments made there may well also have reflected those pointed to earlier as to the nature of sociability per se (e.g. Blum-Kulka 1997; Riesman and Watson 1964; Schiffrin 1984; Simmel 1949 [1911]; Tannen 1984; Watson 1958; Watson and Potter 1962). To begin my analysis of facework as alignment then, I want to consider how participants in each sociable milieu can be demonstrated to align for sociability in general, and more specifically, align for the activity of sociable conversation.

I will first consider how participants come together to constitute and dissolve sociable gatherings, in the enactment of what are commonly termed greeting phases (see e.g. Goffman 1971; House 1982a; and Kotthoff 1994) (5.1). Following this I shall consider some characteristics of general alignment within what I will loosely refer to as main phases of gatherings, specifically in terms of how participants align to the joint activity of sociable conversation (5.2). Here I shall consider such things as the topics chosen for sociable conversational in each milieu, and how participants generally align to sociable topic development in terms, to begin with, of their general handling. (5.2). Finally I shall conclude the chapter (5.3).

In terms of the study as a whole, the chapter can be regarded as the most generalised level of analysis. Its primary function is to provide an holistic or macro-overview of English and of German interaction in terms of general participant orientations to engaging in and aligning to sociability. In the wider context of the study as a whole, and subsequent chapters in particular, the work

presented here provides a necessary analytical backdrop to later, more detailed analysis of facework as alignment within sociable episodes (see Chapters 6 to 8).

The approach to presenting and analysing the data drawn upon will be, in general terms, ethnographic in nature. That is, rather then relying on transcribed conversation, I shall draw upon largely observational data, my own knowledge of both field of inquiry, and occasionally anecdotal[1]. As with all chapters presented, the current chapter can be read in isolation as a single piece of work. However, it should be regarded as one small part of the study as a whole, and for that reason can only provide a limited picture of facework in both cultures.

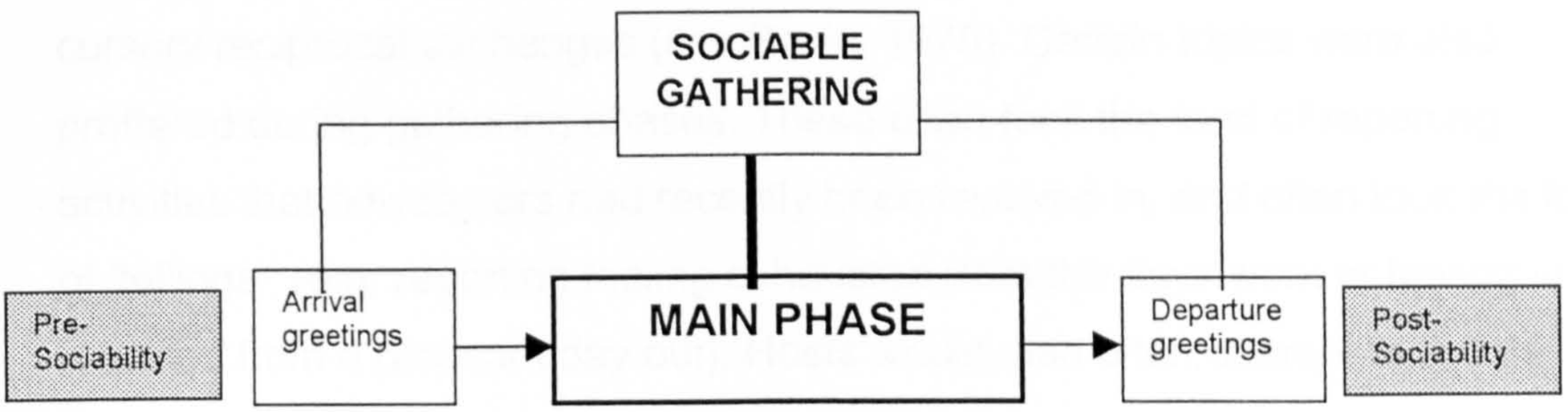
5.1 Aligning for *Sociability*

In Chapter 3 I drew on Simmel's general comments on the nature of sociability in terms of its ethos and status as a distinct social reality, marked by solidarity and the minimisation of difference in terms of sociological variables such as distance and power. Drawing on these comments, I want to discuss first of all how participants can be conceived of as aligning to this sociable reality – what I will term initially as *aligning for sociability*.

I am using the term sociable gathering to refer here to the sociable event in its entirety, that is, gatherings begin when the first guests arrive, and conclude when the last guests leave. As can be seen from appendix B, the gatherings that constitute my data-set are not standardised, in terms of for example length, location, dates, numbers of participants, gender-mixes, or relationships between participants. Their only common denominator is that they are sociable events, carried out as an end in themselves (Simmel 1949 [1911]). As I outlined in Chapter 3, sociable gatherings display their own recognisable ethos. Hence, people move out of a pre-sociable state, into and through sociable gatherings over the course of their trajectory, then back into a post-sociability state.

I have attempted to represent this movement in and out of sociability in fig. 5.1. Our social gatherings were clearly played out as distinct encounters, with beginnings – the main duration of sociability – and closures. By and large this trajectory of basic phases of sociable gatherings applied to the majority of gatherings in each sociable milieu, and to that extent, constituted the same type of situation – the same situational reality, as it were. Within each of these phases, and over the trajectory of the gatherings, participants in both cultures clearly aligned for the activity of sociability per se – in short, aligned recognisable and mutually ratified and supported sociable selves.

Fig. 5.1 Sociable Gatherings: Basic Phases



What I am referring to here as greeting phases can be taken to refer to episodes during the gathering where people either gather or depart from gatherings. In their basic format, these phases are taken up with ritual and often formulaic hello-hello / goodbye-goodbye type interchanges, what Goffman (1971) classed as 'access rituals'. Main phase refer to what might best be defined as the 'the post-arrival / pre-departure phase' of the gathering and differ both qualitatively and quantitatively from greeting phases in that they are rather more indeterminate and spontaneous in activity (i.e. what gets talked about) and length (i.e. how long these phases normatively last for). For example, main phases often included eating, drinking, conversation, and movement away from the actual focal point to become quite dispersed affairs as well as additional activities such as strolling round gardens to admire the hosts plants, tending barbecues, or helping out in the kitchen. It is indeed from these main phases that my conversational data are drawn and to which I will turn in the following

two chapters (Chapters 6 and 7). Here however I want to sketch out the collective activity of sociability within these two main phases.

Turning to my own data then, greeting phases included both arrival greetings and departure greetings. Arrival greetings consisted of the gathering and welcoming of newcomers to the gathering and usually took place at the start of proceedings (on occasion being replayed in an abridged format if additional participants entered later in the gathering. Verbal interaction normally consisted of 'ask after other' type questions from hosts (e.g. And how are you? / Und, wie geht's [So, how are you?], followed by abridged responses from newcomers, normally indicating that all was well (Not so bad / Danke, gut [Thanks, good]). These formulaic exchanges seldom developed into any extended account of how recipients really 'were', but were rather restricted to cursory reciprocal exchanges (see Sacks 1975). Certain topics were also proffered during gathering phases. These often took the form of reporting activities that newcomers had recently been involved in, and often took the form of 'tellings' (e.g. reporting feeling exhausted from the days work or having just returned from a pleasant day out). Hosts would also often attempt to initiate such tellings by asking general questions (e.g. 'So, what have you been up to' or 'So, what do you know' / Und was machst du so? [So what have you been up to?]), as well as more specific ones, drawing on topics that had previously been talked about or information that was already generally known ('How did your holiday go' / 'Und, wie wars in Tegernsee' [How was it Tegernsee]). Verbal interaction in these phases commonly focused around signalling the closeness of the relationship between participants – as supportive interchanges (Goffman 1971) or positive facework (Brown and Levinson 1987) - rather than being treated as a site for extended discussion of a given topic. In departure phases, direct reference to the immediately preceding events, and potentially future gatherings commonly formed the conversational focus. Invariably, enjoyment of the evenings events were normally expressed, augmented with compliments to the host(ess). Often offers to meet again in the near future were made, and subsequently accepted. Alongside these formulaic displays, conversational topics from the main phase did sometimes spill over as, to use one of Goffman's analogies, the conversational motors 'ran on' after the ignitions had been turned off. These were quickly snuffed out however in favour of departure

greetings, especially if joint cognitive attention turned momentarily to focus on participants engaged in this topic 'overspill' (e.g. 'Are you two still goin' on about that?' / Mein Gott, Redet Ihr immer noch...? [My God, they're still talking about...]).

In terms of their signalling of the beginning and ending of sociable gatherings, mutual ratification of participation status (Goffman 1981), and signalling of general solidarity, greeting phases in both milieus seemed remarkably similar. However, there were some marked differences in the playing out of these phase. Both arrival and departure phases in German sociable gatherings were marked by high levels of mutual attentiveness to both the gathering and each other as ratified participants (Goffman 1981). Male, female and even child participants all systematically shook hands, often quite vigorously. Eye gaze and accompanying smiles tended to be mutually fixed for several seconds, even when the verbal pleasantries had been completed. Further, this one-to-one greeting had invariably to be carried out between every participant, with a failure on the part of one participant to greet another being usually explicitly referred to ("Heinz, du hast Kurt nicht gegrüßt" [Heinz, you've not greeted Kurt]), and unhesitatingly remedied by an immediate and slightly exaggerated handshake accompanied by a mild expression of chagrin on the part of the offender. In arrival phases, German hosts, or, if busy with food, guests as proxy hosts, unhesitatingly asked guests to "Setz dich hin" [sit yourself down]. This was accompanied by a pronounced collective shuffling to signal a concerted effort to make physical space for any newcomer(s)[2]. During departure phases collective sentiment was invariably expressed as to the enjoyability of the gathering, and mentions for possible 'next meetings' were made.

In general, it seemed that greeting phases in German demanded a concerted and involved effort on the part of all participants to signal both jointly and individually their aliveness to the sociable situation and alignment to the requirements of sociability. Such phases were explicitly oriented to and constituted a 'participant delineated' and fundamental phase of the gatherings. By and large, English greeting phases were much more low key affairs, and appeared almost non-committal when compared to the German equivalents.

Hand shakes for example were infrequent, to the point of being alien[3]. In greetings, the enthusiastic "und wie gehts" [and how are you] in German appeared in English as a rather throwaway and cursory "How's it goin'...alright", often uttered as the speaker's main involvement was focused elsewhere, in some other task such as taking guests coats, attending to food in the kitchen, or chastising nearby children. Eye contact was brief and not necessarily choreographed with 'ask after other' type questions, and smiles were usually only initiated as a result of some 'quip' to "How are you questions" ("Knackered!", "Not three bad", "I was alright 'till I saw that shirt you're wearin'"). During departure phases, the 'Vielleicht können wir uns nächste Woche treffen" [Perhaps we could meet next week] had as its English equivalent "We'll have to do this again sometime". However, whereas this German initiator invariably led to a discussion of mutually available times, and more often than not a fixing of an appointment there and then (one that was taken to be as fixed as a doctors appointment and subsequently expected to be met on time), the English version was often met with "Yeah, we'll give you a call when we know what we're doin'" or something similarly not-committal. Subsequent calls were not in actuality expected (see comments in House 1996), nor usually made[4].

The main phases of the majority of gatherings from which my data are taken involved some central eating and drinking activity. Normally, this was done with participants sat together around a table that had been prepared prior to participants' arrival by the host(ess). Consequently, throughout main phases, topic talk often focused on the food presented and arranged by the host. Enquiries about one or the other aspect of the immediate environment were common. For instance, asking what 'this' or 'that' food item was, expressing interest in particular recipes or cooking techniques used, and offering compliments to the host(ess) were common in both data sets. Often, if food was not available for such solidaric focus (for instance before it was served / after it had been eaten), sociability props would receive similar attention, for example crockery, tablecloths, or the layout of the table. Failing this, environmental props such as clothing / jewellery worn by one or the other participants, furniture, or, if outside some aspect of the garden might provide a suitable joint focus of attention. This complimentary activity appeared in the main phases of gatherings in both cultures, in particular, at the beginning and end of eating /

drinking, and also at points where conversation was either a) 'drying up' (i.e. conversational topic had been exhausted and fresh contributions were proving difficult, and, although far less frequent, b) when conversational topic appeared to be getting too 'heated', and seemed to be risking running beyond the thresholds of sociability (not a common phenomenon, but one which nevertheless did occasionally occur).

Although, at least in terms of aspects of the immediate environment, both English and German main phases had similar topical foci, there were some differences in the way these were handled. For example, compared to German hosts, English hosts responded to compliments or interest in the setting with a more self-deprecating and abased manner. This took the form of for example downgrading the food, or one's own performance in preparing it to the point of having 'thrown something in a pot and stuck it in the oven for an hour'. Other props frequently received similar treatment, with compliments on prop *x* being met with almost formulaic responses of 'Oh, do you like it?', or 'It's not bad...it does for what we want it for'. German praising of the similar items seemed a much more formulaic affair. Indeed, I remember on my first occasion at German sociable gatherings being the last person to utter the phrase 'Mmm...lecker' [Mmm..Tasty]. This obligation to praise food (usually within a couple of seconds of tasting the first mouthful) seemed also to exist in English ('Oh it's nice this'), but in German, the "lecker" utterance seemed a necessary pre-requisite for the sociable second and following mouthfuls. Converse to English hosts, German recipient of such compliments largely avoided self-deprecating or abasing comments on the whole in favour of a preference towards unmitigated agreement, based largely on an evaluative stance taken towards the focus of the compliment. Thus, das Essen ist aber ganz lecker' [the food is really tasty], would be met with comments from the host such as 'Ja..ne' [Yeah..isn't it], or factual details pertaining to the ingrediential source of the tastiness. Subsequently, the food or other sociable props could provide the initiating conversational resource for further topical development in a way similar to how other more abstract conversational matters would later be handled.

In both settings, these greetings and noticings served an important duel function. First, they served to proscriptively bracket sociability, and second, by

being invariably solidaric in nature (see Goffman 1971; Brown and Levinson 1987), they functioned to index commonality, and allow for the early revealing and testing of sociable selves and lines which may be later taken (see Goffman 1967). In a way, these phases reminded me somewhat of snowstorm ornaments commonly available at Christmas time – a frantic sociable maelstrom in which participants are momentarily caught up. This feeling was exacerbated by the short lived bodily movement up to the point where seats were commonly taken and things settled down in preparation for the main phase of sociability. Indeed, there appeared to be limits on how much of this conversational work could be done in both cultures however, whilst still maintaining a semblance of sincerity. Much complimentary solidaric behaviour of this sort seemed to have a limited conversational, indeed sociable, lifespan. Conversation generally turned away from in situ conversational resources, as matters from the outside world were introduced as the basis of topic development. It is these episodes of focused conversational topic talk that I want to focus on in some detail in subsequent chapters as it is here that I feel the talk was less conditioned by the *rules of the sociable occasion*, than by the *rules of sociable conversation* (see Watson and Potter 1962).

5.2 Aligning for *Alignment*

As things settled down in both milieus, the collective focus turned to conversation – to things of common interest that could be talked about beyond ratificatory greetings or the 'here and now' environment. In short, topics of conversation were sought for sociable development. These topics were not prescribed or agended ones, but rather proffered and taken up as part of the *in situ* practices of sociability by the participants themselves. Before moving on to the in depth analysis of the conversational data I want to outline the general essence on sociable episodes in both cultures by considering what topics were commonly talked about; and how participants generally aligned to the activity of sociable topic talk as evidenced in the nature of their contributions.

I should briefly here say something more about the notion of topic. Upon consulting the literature, topic proved to be as conceptually slippery and illusive

as face and politeness. Although topic is widely recognised as a central organising feature in conversational interaction (Brown and Yule 1983), several scholars have noted that defining, identifying, and labelling topic(s) in naturally occurring conversation is far from clear cut. (Atkinson and Heritage 1984) In fact, several scholars have come to regard attempts to formally 'pin down' topic as perhaps an impossible task (Brown and Yule 1983).

There is a considerable body of work which goes some way to aiding an identification of topic in discourse, focusing on things such as topic initiators or elicitors (e.g. Schegloff and Sacks 1973; Wilson 1989), topic transitions such as switching, drifting, or shading from one topic to another (e.g. Drew and Holt 1998; Jefferson 1993; Crow 1983), and techniques for topic closings (e.g. Schegloff and Sacks 1973). In terms of what the 'content' of the topic actually is, a range of work has attempted to identify the linguistic basis for deriving topic, ranging from studies of the grammatical constituents of noun phrases, through propositional content of contiguous utterances, to more global notions of 'aboutness' (e.g. Brown and Yule 1983, Bublitz 1988; Maynard 1980, Tannen 1984). I will not attempt to enter into the debate about what topic is, or should be as a discourse notion here, but rather should mention briefly how the notion of topic afforded me some analytical purchase for my initial analysis of sociable episodes.

First, there were practical considerations. The total corpus of conversational data on which this study is based exceeds 70 hours (see table 4.2). It would not have been possible for me as a single researcher to transcribe *all* this data. Even with the memo-scriber (see table 4.1), the sample I selected from this total data for closer analysis required many hours to transcribe[5]. More generally, I would have found it impossible to maintain an overview of all the data, or make sense of it in any systematic 'sociological' way. I thus thought it more prudent to concentrate on one aspect of discourse, rather than spread myself thin as it were, over the whole data set[6]. Second, there were empirical considerations. As I noted earlier (see Chapter 2) topic talk had been demonstrated to be one of the salient ways in which German and English conversational style differed, in terms of both the general orientation to topic development, and the positive social values oriented to and images of selfhood

claimed on the part of the participants (Byrnes 1986, Straehle 1997, Watts 1989). Thus, focusing on topic would give some access to the conversational reality that I was interested in. Further, focusing on episodes of topic talk from both speech communities would, I hope, provide in effect a standardised procedure for eliciting a 'sample frame'. Topic would seem then to add both validity (topic can be taken as a valid indicator of conversational style) and reliability (topic occurs ubiquitously throughout talk and may therefore be drawn upon consistently across studies addressing other cultures) to the study as a whole. Third, there were analytical considerations. As demonstrated by scholars such as Tannen (1984) topic can provide a basis for deriving an initial unit of analysis of conversational activity, particularly for the close inspection of the type and manner of self-presentation, which, as I suggested in Chapter 3, is a primary concern here. More specifically, the way topic is drawn upon and managed has been shown to be informed by face concerns of interlocutors. The classic example of face influenced topic choice and development, cited by both Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson (1987) is that of the idea of 'safe topics' (e.g. the weather). Potentially face-threatening topics are usually avoided, or, handled in their development in a way that will avoid threatening any of the faces of the participants. Aside from the risk to face that guide conversationalists in their choice and development of topic, scholars such as Tannen have also identified topic as a site for presentation of self. Thus, conversational topic appeared to be an ideal site to examine the interplay of both presentational practices and face-concerns.

I outlined in Chapter 1 that facework could be conceived of as occurring within episodes. In Chapter 3 I further drew on the notion of episodes within sociable gatherings to arrive at the term 'sociable episodes'. The concept of episode has been employed frequently in studies addressing ongoing discourse (e.g. Katriel 1986; Malone 1997; Tannen 1984; Watson and Potter 1962) as well as those more specifically concerned with facework (e.g. Penman 1990; Wood and Kroger 1991). The term however is quite a fuzzy one, and implies an objective and bounded period of interaction which is normally ill defined in studies applying the term. I will not attempt a formal definition here beyond treating an episode as a period of interaction where participants are 'doing' some common conversational topic together whereby they share a

common cognitive and conversational focus of attention. In this sense, I will focus here on *topic that became conversational.* That is, topics that were picked up and developed by participants. Similar to Tannen then (1984), I am using instances of focused topic talk as the basis for delineating 'sociable 'episode'.

Thus, for the present investigation, the definition of a sociable episode can be taken to be *any instance of extended conversational interaction between two or more persons focusing on a common topic (theme; issue; event) which stands apart from the preceding or following talk and in which participants appear to be collectively and reciprocatively interacting.*

In representing conversational topic, I essentially had three choices. First, I could list *all* topics that were developed in *all* episodes in *both* cultures. Second, I could choose one or two gatherings from each culture as representative case studies of the whole data set. Third, I could arrive at some more summative method of representing topic. I believe the first would have been practically non-viable. Presenting such a vast array of conversational topics would have proved unmanageable for both myself discursively, and the reader textually. This would have produced essentially 'raw' data. The second choice would at best an over-generalisation, at worst misleading and invalid. This would have only worked if all the gatherings were similar enough in both their topic content and handling. Therefore, I have chosen here the third method. In doing this I have had to take the array of topics identified and try to represent them under more over-arching but still valid topic categories.

Upon listening to the data, I identified a set of very general categories within which the majority of topics elaborated and developed in sociable episode in each milieu seemed to fall. These are presented in table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Sociable Topics

Topic Category	Types of things talked about
Reminiscences	Matters specific to the group as collective, e.g., Activities / experiences from collective past.
Agonisers	Matters of general concern / interest drawn from external world, e.g., Newsworthy events, matters of local and national concern. 'Safe' topics such as the weather.
Reportables	Relaying of personal experiences, e.g., travels home and abroad / activities participants have been actively engaged in / 'new' things to tell which might be of interest to the rest of the group.
Biographicals	Matters relating to speakers, e.g., Domestic and work issues / personal matters such as wants / desires / plans etc. that speakers may divulge to the group.

I believe this particular technique of topic categorisation has not only allowed my to present the nature of the talk in each milieu, but also gain in effect a 'handle' (see Shuy 1981, cited in Straehle 1997) on the flow of events that is characteristic of sociable interaction. 'Reminiscences' often involved talking about 'the old days' in one respect or another. In the first instance, this orientation to topic development invoked shared memories and experiences of things done or experienced in the past. Such talk was often prefaced with 'Hey, do you remember when' / 'Weißt du noch damals' [Do you remember when], or, if referring to particular persons / objects 'Hey, guess who I saw today' / 'Weißt du wen ich heute gesehen habe?' [Do you know who I saw today?] followed by the invocation of a shared biographical 'figure' (Goffman 1974). Invocation of a common past was also on occasion juxtaposed against the current day lifeworld in general (e.g. 'It was different in our days" / 'Zu unserer Zeit war das noch anders' [In our days that was different]). 'Agonisers' included a range of foci, from 'safe' topics (Goffman 1967; Brown and Levinson 1987) such as the weather or a current event on which collective sentiment could be assured (e.g. the murder of a policemen), to more sensitive issues such as the state of public services, or the impact of 'foreigners'; 'Agonisers' provided topical resources for either the collective or individualised discussion of issues framed as potentially threatening, troublesome, or problematic; 'Reportables' included topics where participants brought in usually some direct personal experience from the outside

world presented as of interest to the group as a whole. These topics included for instance good and bad experiences of holidays, visits to restaurants, or public service encounters. Additional topics based around unique but newsworthy experiences could also be drawn upon as resources for pursuit of reportable talk; And finally 'Biographicals' were those topics in and through which participants presented some aspect of their personal lives to be shared with the rest of the group. For example health issues, job plans, or personal projects such as home decorating were included under this heading.

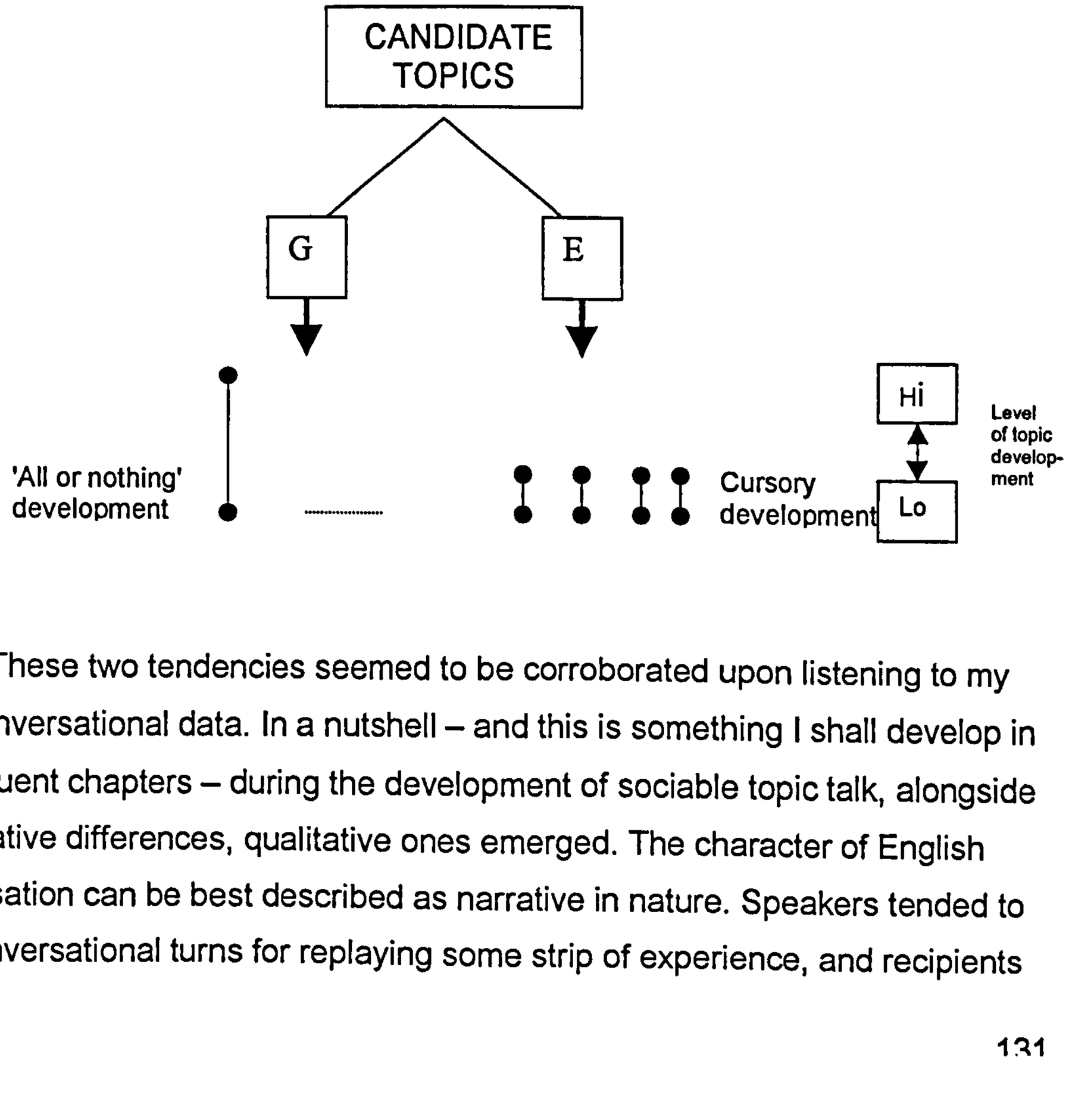
Although these topic categories can be regarded as nicely encapsulating salient and frequently drawn upon topic in both sociable milieu, differences emerged in terms of the second of the two characteristics of sociable topic development that I want to consider here, namely, how participants generally aligned to the activity of sociable conversational topic development.

As I noted at the beginning of Chapter 2, on first participating in German sociable gatherings, I was struck by, not so much what got talked about, but how it was talked about. For example, I initially observed that almost any statement or proposition could be legitimately taken up as a basis for topic development. Once taken up, the topic could then be retained as a conversational resource over quite extended periods. The nature of the discussion could be quite intense, and lead to a necessity to take a stand and open oneself up to the possibility of having it knocked down. It was the German preparedness to topicalise and talk extensively about anything in the general manner described above that caused my initial conversational assimilation problem (Cf. similar observations made by Schiffrin 1984 in Jewish sociability). During my early participation in German sociable gatherings, I once found myself listening with some disbelief, as a conversation of several tens of minutes was intensely debated arising out of a side comment made by myself of 'what should or should not be thrown on the compost heap'[7]. Conversely, candidate topics not to be taken up were frequently met with slight pauses, followed by "Hm::", then another slightly longer pause to effectively signal that topic would not be further developed. This leaves the speaker essentially -and the interaction itself - temporarily out on a conversational limb until another candidate topic worthy of discussion is proffered by somebody. In general then,

in my observations of German sociable conversation, a topic either got talked about properly, or didn't get talked about at all.

Conversely, English sociable conversation (as I knew it to be and as the data demonstrated) seemed to be characterised by a habitual cursory development of any proffered topic. Further, unlike German, it seemed to be peppered with rather isolated 'throwaway' comments similar to the compost heap statement, ones which might be instantly seized upon by German speakers as the initiating point of an extended debate but were instead accorded limited conversational discourse. In short, whereas the Germans seemed to prefer to talk – if they were going to talk - about anything extensively, the English seemed to prefer to talk about anything cursorily (see Fig 5.2).

Fig 5.2 Candidate Topic Development Preference in German and English[8]



These two tendencies seemed to be corroborated upon listening to my own conversational data. In a nutshell – and this is something I shall develop in subsequent chapters – during the development of sociable topic talk, alongside quantitative differences, qualitative ones emerged. The character of English conversation can be best described as narrative in nature. Speakers tended to use conversational turns for replaying some strip of experience, and recipients

of such narratives commonly acted as suitably interested, surprised, and entertained audiences (see Goffman 1974). English sociable topic development often centred around the affective domain, with habitual uses of humour; wise-cracks, funny anecdotes, rude / naughty play on words etc. German conversation was characterised more by discussion of topics common to all participants. Thus, the cognitive domain was one around which German conversation tended to develop, with topic talk was based more on close consideration of fact and the ability to quickly take in, process, and deduce some proposition. Emotive inner sharing seemed to be generally avoided in favour of well thought out discussion. A nice difference for this metaphor in terms of the self might be that English conversations was akin to a conversational staging of selves, whereas German appeared more akin to a conversational arena for selves (see table 5.2).

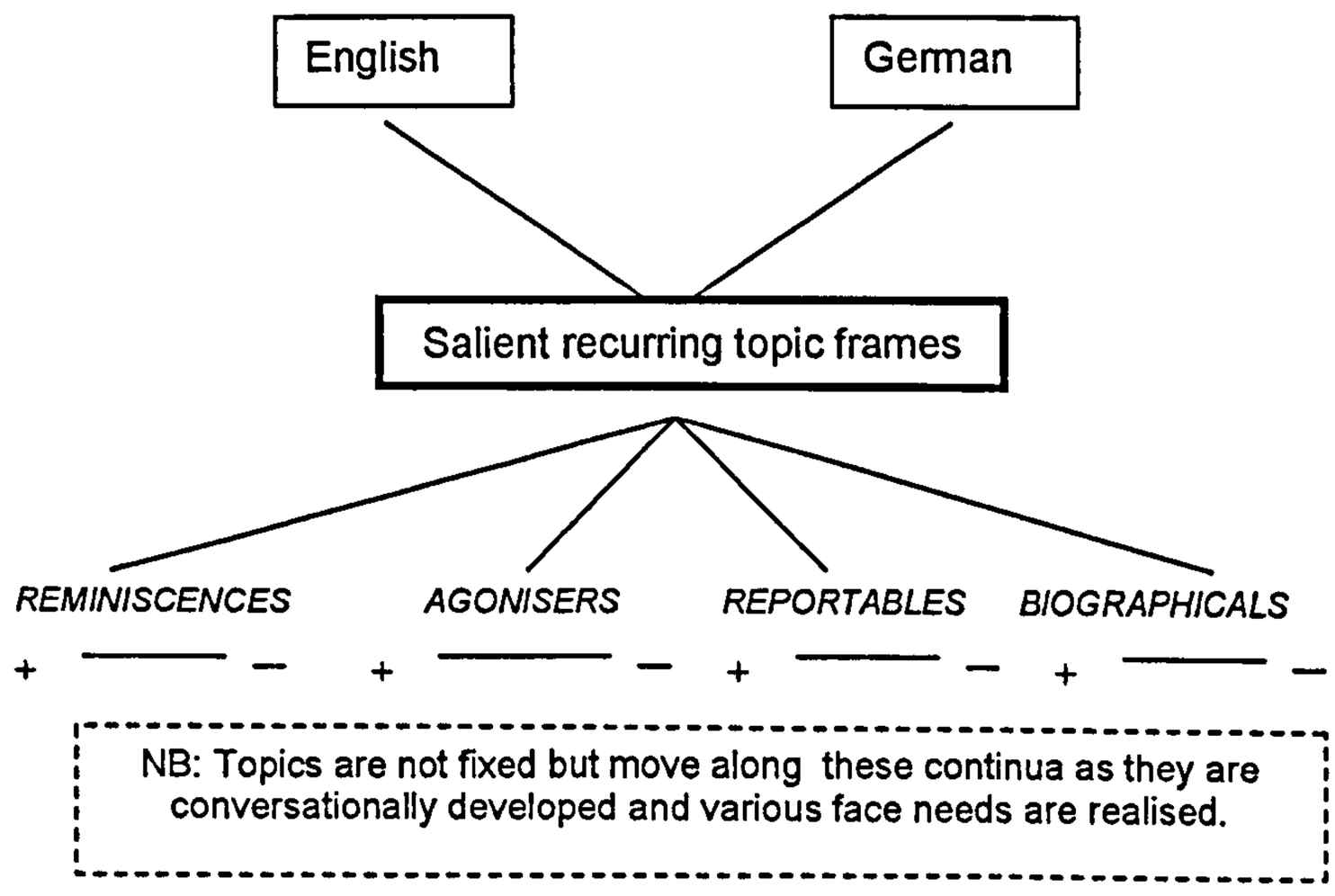
Table 5.2 Some Characteristics of Speaker / Hearer Alignments to Developing Conversational Topic

	English	German
Speakers	➢ Took up moderate turn space to proffer amusing and interesting narrative ➢ Formulated turns on basis of personal feelings towards / experience of a topic	➢ Held the floor for extensive periods to outline personal stances ➢ Formulated turns on the basis of personal knowledge, understanding, and logical reasoning
Recipients	➢ Listened with frequent back-channel markers to signal amusement and interest ➢ Intervened when points of agreement were identified (yeah yeah)	➢ Listened intently to what another person may be saying with minimum back-channel markers ➢ Intervened quickly when flaws in stance were identified (aber pass auf [but hold on a minute]

A prime function of such topic development was undoubtedly to signal commonality and solidarity between participants. Once underway however, there opened up the possibility for development of more individuated nuances of a common theme. Thus, as well as allowing an expression of commonality of selves, Reminiscences talk seemed also to facilitate the invocation of a

collective past peppered with individualised past activities; Agonisers also seemed to allow for both the expression solidarity and commonality over a common problem as well as more individualistic ones; Reportables such as travel talk appeared to allow participants the conversational space to present unique accounts whilst at the same time allowing for the expression of commonality or solidarity; and finally Biographicals allowed for a proffered individuated account to be assimilated solidarically with the biographies of other participants present. Thus, although these topic areas appear to some degree inherently differentiating, there was scope for the expression of solidarity[9]. Such sociable topics then variously allowed for the collective expression of both solidarity / communality, and autonomy / difference (see fig. 3).

Fig. 5.3 Sociable Topic Categories as Resource for Face Needs



5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I have painted quite a general picture of sociable gatherings in both cultural milieus. I began by outlining the basic trajectory of the sociable gatherings within which my research was carried and from which my conversational data (see Chapters 6 to 8) was drawn (5.1). Specifically I identified what I termed greeting phases and the main phase of sociable gatherings. Greeting phases were shown to be characterised by participants aligning essentially at two general levels: To the sociable gathering as a situational reality *sui generis*; and to each other as ratified participants in such activity. At the level of the social gathering, such alignment during greeting phases serves to essentially 'bracket' the main phase of sociability. In effect, participants, by engaging in alignment of sociable selves, mark their movement out of the 'wider world - into sociability', and vice-versa[10]. In these phases, actual conversational activity appeared in both settings to serve to delineate what was about to come, or, what was just passing as sociable, in effect 'warming up' and 'cooling off' phases. In neither of these two phases was topic development a central activity in itself, but rather as a means of establishing and dissolving physical, cognitive, relational, and of course conversational co-presence. In considering the main phases of my sociable gatherings, I demonstrated how participants in each cultural milieu actively oriented to sociable conversation. It was within main phases of sociable gatherings that I identified a more specific type of sociable activity, what I termed as aligning for alignment (5.2). I moved on to identify both what was talked about in sociable episodes in terms of topic choice, and how topics were generally handled. Focusing on topic choice, I employed a basic categorisation to demonstrate that similar topic types were drawn and developed in each culture. Differences were identified however in terms of how topics were generally handled, in terms of for instance the framing of topics (e.g. humorous or serious, objective or based in narrative), and the depth to which they were developed. Finally I suggested that each of the topic types identified appeared to allow variously for both negative and positive alignments, that is, each allowed for the claiming and ratification of sameness and difference, solidarity and individuation, over the course of sociable episodes.

In the next chapter I want to explore more closely these alignment practices. Specifically, I want to consider how what I termed earlier as positive and negative alignments are carried out in the process of conducting and sustaining sociable conversation within particular sociable episodes, and ultimately, how these alignments allow participants to achieve and sustain the sociable equilibrium that makes sociable conversation in both milieus what it is.

Notes to Chapter 5

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[1] Due to the nature of the methodology employed (see Chapter 4), recordings of the greeting phases were not systematically made. As a result, recordings of verbal interaction during these phases was in large not collected verbatim. The discussion of the these phases then is based on a mixture of participant observation notes and recollections by both myself and Elke. As greeting phases constitute a peripheral concern here, I would hope that such a method would be admissible without undermining the validity of the thesis.

[2] Hosting or 'proxy-hosting' appeared to be much more salient in German gatherings, both during greeting phases, and throughout the main phase of the gathering. It appears that German hosts displayed much more commitment to the role of host than the English who, by and large, seemed to display a much more ambivalent attitude to this role.

[3] Immediately following extended stays in Germany, upon entering English sociable gatherings, I have often experienced pulling myself back from the brink of offering a 'sociable hand'.

[4] On the question of whether or not follow up calls were actually made, I make this statement based on my own experience of both English and German milieus.

[5] Generally, I found that 1 minute of talk required *at least* 10 minutes of transcription time. Extrapolate this to around 25 hours of data that was *transcribeable*, and the task of transcribing all data is proved an impossibility.

[6] See Tannen (1984), and more recently Straehle (1997) who, in dealing with similar sized corpora of conversation, note that constructing an outline of topics in any given conversation provides a convenient way of '"...get[ting] a handle on the data" when one is confronted with massive amounts of it' (Shuy 1981, cited in Straehle 1997., p.110).

[7] Alongside these linguistic and non-lexical differences was the fact that German conversationalists also displayed this state of heightened attentiveness by non-verbal means such as direct eye contact and fixed gaze, but again with minimal gestural recognition of agreement or disagreement .

[8] See Straehle (1997) who, in presenting similar findings in comparing US-English – German conversation, refers to such tendencies as 'topic diving' and 'topic surfing'.

[9] What this implies is that some topic types *per se* are skewed towards either solidaric (i.e. 'when we were kids') or autonomous (i.e. 'what I have to report as part of my personal experience / knowledge') expression. I can not expand on this proposition here however, but future research into topics as vehicles for solidaric or individuated expression might consider the skewness of topic proposition.

[10] Of course, the distinction implied here is not a sudden reality shift from one to the other. On approaching sociable gatherings, one often feels temporarily displaced, in a sort of in between world, between what the concrete reality one has just left behind, and the sociable reality one is about to enter.

CHAPTER

6

ALIGNMENT IN ACTION: NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE SOCIABLE ALIGNMENT

6.0 Introduction

In Chapter 3 I set out a general model of facework as alignment. This was based on a reading of both Goffman's (1967) notion of ritual equilibrium in talk, and Brown and Levinson's (1987) fundamental face needs. Central to this proposed model was the notion of alignment, specifically, what I referred to as positive and negative alignments. To recap, I used the term positive alignment to refer to talk characterised by the expression of solidarity, similarity, and commonality. In and through such talk, it was suggested that participants' positive face needs were realised. Conversely, I used the term negative alignment to refer to talk characterised by the expression of individuated and unique standpoints, definitions, or experiences. In and through such talk, negative face needs could thus be realised. I argued that both types of alignments were endemic to sociable conversation. In short, I suggested that sociable conversation could be seen to operate between these two poles of alignment.

Importantly, I posited such alignments as occurring within a wider set of boundaries or thresholds, ones which guided participants in their achievement and management of general equilibrium, a notion drawn directly from Goffman's (1967) conceptualisation of ritual equilibrium. I noted that, although both positive and negative alignments were a necessary part of sociable conversation, continuing the logic of the alignment model I suggested that there may be limits or boundaries beyond which equilibric conversation became disequilibric. Such limits should apply to both positive and negative alignments. For example, I argued that too much negative alignment might individuate or differentiate a

particular speakers to the point where it was difficult for that participant – at least at that particular moment in the talk – to be unproblematically accommodated solidarically. Similarly, I argued that too much positive alignment might leave participants in a state where they felt their conversational autonomy to be threatened, finding it difficult to negatively align. However, due to the locally managed nature of sociable conversation, I suggested that participants may work to avoid such breaches or employ remedial strategies to restore equilibrium.

In this chapter I aim to demonstrate how these alignments contingencies can be seen to be equilibrically being played out in actual conversational episodes in both English and German sociable gatherings. In terms of the immediately preceding chapter (Chapter 5), the discussion and analysis shall focus on what were cast as sociable episodes, that is instances of extended conversational interaction between two or more persons focusing on a common topic (theme; issue; event) which stands apart from the preceding or following talk and in which participants appear to be collectively and reciprocatively interacting. Whereas however in the previous chapter I limited my analysis to topic choice and general alignment to topic handling, here I shall focus more closely on both positive and negative alignment practices as they were conceptualised in Chapter 3.

Although I have posited the sociable self as central to an understanding of facework as alignment, particularly in terms of cross-cultural variation (see Chapter 2), I will at this point in the study refrain from applying and developing the concept of the self per se (see Chapter 8). The aim here will be primarily to move beyond the theoretical propositions advanced in chapter three to demonstrate how alignment practices can be evidenced by considering actual conversation as it is played out within sociable episodes in both milieu. In order to do this I shall consider alignment in terms of what are manifest as conversational claims.

In order to aid in the explication of the particular approach to facework in sociable episodes employed here, I shall begin by presenting a basic notation system for marking transcript data for various alignment practices. This notation

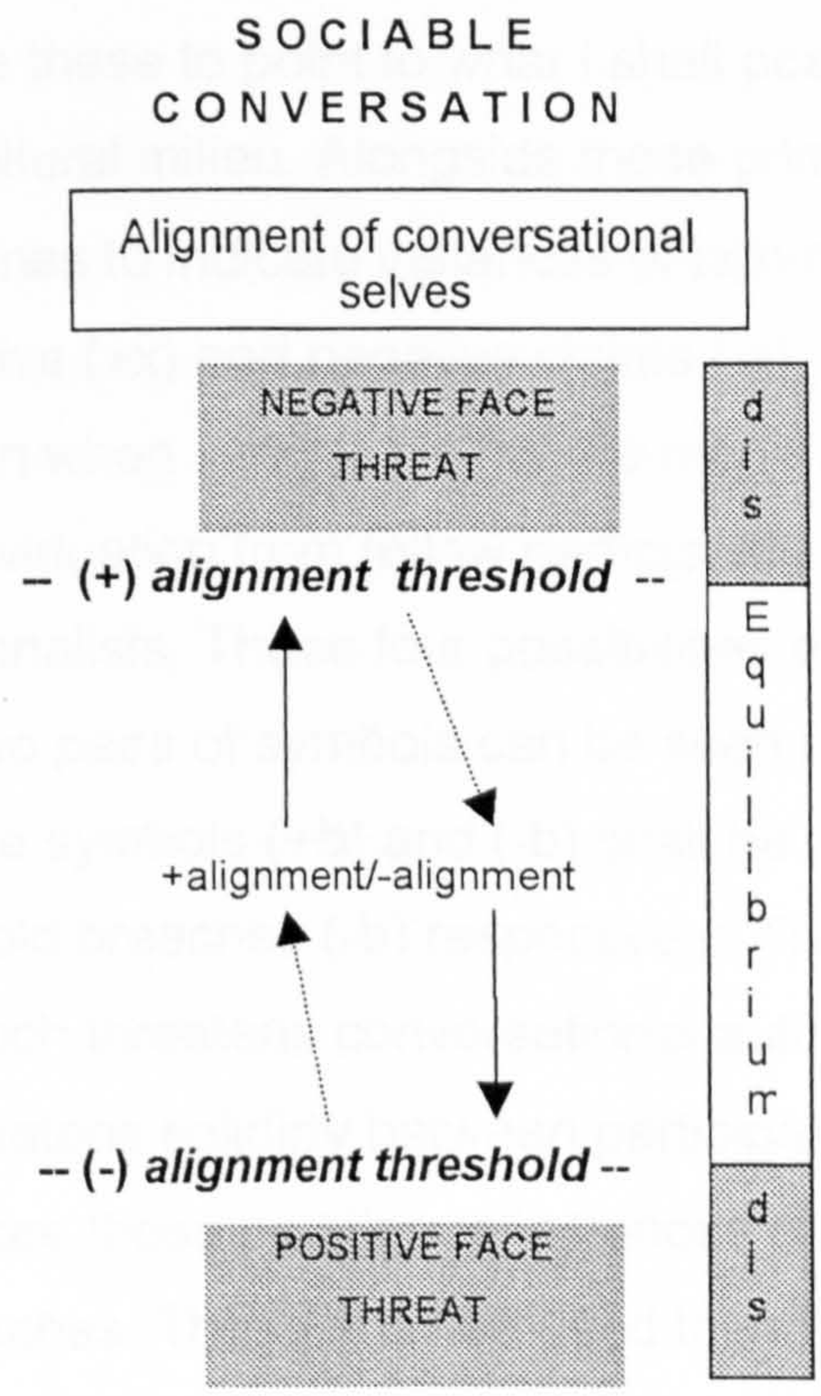
shall not be carried forward into the analysis in subsequent chapters, and should be taken here as an additional illustrative device to explicitly index alignment practices in the presented data (6.1). Following this I shall move on to demonstrate how both positive and negative alignments can be seen to occur in close proximity within a single episode of sociable conversation (6.2). The aim here will be to show that such practices occur in both English and German sociable episodes, and that neither threatens the equilibric flow of talk but rather is characteristic of its particular style. Following this I shall look specifically at data which clearly indicate how ratification and support of positive and negative claims are sustained by in both cultural milieu (6.3). I shall then move on to demonstrate how positive and negative claims are not ratified or supported (6.4). Next, I shall present instances of what I referred to as both positive and negative threshold breaches along with varying collaborative attempts to restore or maintain sociable equilibrium (6.5), before providing a summary of the findings presented in the preceding sections (6.6).

Much of what is presented in this chapter shall be recast in the following chapter. There however, I shall attempt to demonstrate how the findings presented here, in order to be truly understood, require the identification and explication of conversational selves. The work presented here therefore should be regarded not only as evidencing the validity of the model set out in chapter three, but also as pointing to conversational evidence which exposes to varying degrees how sociable selves are manifest in and through conversational claims made by participants in each milieu.

6.1 A Basic Notation System

Figure 6 represents an abridged version of the model of facework as equilibrium advanced in Chapter 3.

Fig. 6.1 General Equilibric Model of Conversation (Positive and Negative Alignment) (see Chapter 3)



As I noted in Chapter 3, what this model allows for is a range of conversation contingencies, both equilibric and disequilibric. In order to explicitly point out instances of these particular contingencies in actual sociable conversation, I will employ in this chapter a basic notation system (see table 1).

Table. 6.1 Alignment Contingencies: Basic Notation

Symbol	Meaning
(+)	Positive self claim ratified
(-)	Negative self claim ratified
(+x)	Positive self claim non-ratified
(-x)	Negative self claim non-ratified
(+b)	Positive threshold breach (potential negative face threat)
(-b)	Negative threshold breach (potential positive face threat)
(+r)	Positive threshold breach repair / remedy
(-r)	Negative threshold breach repair / remedy

These various symbols are intended to directly reflect the conversational contingencies covered by the general equilibric model. The notation consists initially of the generic symbols (+) and (-) to indicate both positive and negative alignment. I shall use these to point to what I shall posit as moments of positive alignment in each cultural milieu. Alongside these primary symbols I have included additional ones to indicate instances of non-ratification and non-support of both positive (+x) and negative claims (-x). That is, moments during sociable conversation when various claims are made on the basis of assumed solidarity with or individuation from fellow participants, but not ratified as such by fellow conversationalists. These four possibilities exist as equilibric conversation. The two pairs of symbols can be seen to essentially disequilibric alignments. Thus, the symbols (+b) and (-b) shall be used to refer to positive and negative threshold breaches (-b) respectively. The former can be evidenced in talk which threatens conversational autonomy or equilibrium, the latter, talk which threatens solidirty between participants. Finally, related to this last pair of symbols are those pointing to instances of alignment repair or remedy of such breaches. These shall be used to indicate participants attempts to remedy positive threshold breaches by instigating more negatively aligned talk (+r), and those made to remedy negative threshold breaches by adopting more solidaric, positively aligned talk (-r). These eight notation symbols represent all the contingencies suggested by the model on which my general interpretive approach is based [1].

As I noted earlier, I shall employ these symbols here to further clarify how the alignment contingencies set out in the facework alignment model may be manifest in sociable conversation. In this sense they should be regarded as sociable signposts rather than rigid categories of conversational claims. The reader should thus focus in the first instance on the textual development of the argument presented here.

I shall now move on to demonstrate alignment in my own conversational data.

6.2 Co-operative Positive and Negative Alignments

To begin with I will start with two excerpts which clearly illustrate *both* negative and positive alignments in their respective settings. Furthermore, each of these excerpts can be regarded as fairly exemplary of sociable conversation in each respective milieu (see Chapters 2 and 5). In terms of the organisation of the data here and under subsequent headings, I shall present and consider English and German conversational data separately. The aim however is not to have a series of parallel analytical sections or chapters but rather to aid the pursuit of a comparative stance. For this reason, even though the data will be treated under separate sub-headings, much of the discussion will include frequent cross-referencing of observations and findings from each data set.

In terms of the specific research questions set out in chapter four, my intent here is to identify, compare, and contrast the conversational manifestation of the alignment contingencies set out in fig 6.1. Although, as I noted in chapter three, my main analytical focus and comparative discussion shall focus on the concept of self in talk (see Chapters 7 and 8), the work here should also aid in understanding the nature of alignment practices in each culture at the level of conversational claims.

Let us begin then by turning first to positive and negative alignments as evidenced in English sociable conversation.

In the following extract TM&LM, and KJ&LJ (parental couples respectively) are chatting over dinner about a common topic – that of having children and the need sometimes to get away from them. This short excerpt demonstrates both positive and negative alignments as solidaric and individuated claims are made in the process of developing 'Time away from the Kids'.

Excerpt 6.1 'Time away from the Kids'

KJ&LJ, and TM&LM are the only participants present at the table following a meal hosted by RP&EP. It has already been established in the immediately preceding talk that both couples have children of similar ages.

LJ: I MEAN a family holiday's great in't it but I think
you need to do somethin' on yer [own as [well don't you=once at least
TM: [yeah
LM: [yeah
LJ: once a [year try to go away and that
KJ: [JUS KEEPS th-the fire goin' you know what I mean (.)[you just
LM: [yeah
want a [little bit of=
LJ: [yeah
LJ: =yeah
(0.5)
KJ: Goin' some[where ni:ce
LJ: [COS YOU DON't >really spend time on your own< do you=you think
(.)
LM: NO YOU DON't it's on a different
(.)
LJ: Yeah=
LM: =Different=
KJ: =IT'S WO::rk kids:=
LJ: =You're not (.) each [other
KJ: [Sleep Eat Work [Kids
LJ: [You're mum you're dad
LM: Yeah yeah (.) you forget what its [all about really
KJ: [Because (.)I mean (0.5) you can tell=you can tell I- er- I mean when you've been going like that for a few weeks or a few months and you can see you're [gettin
LM: [Hm
(0.5)
LJ: Ratty=
KJ: =after
(.)
LM: yeah=
KJ: =you're tired all the time then you think right (0.5) forget it (.) >this weekend we're gonna<
(.)
LJ: You're gonna be a [couple
KJ: [Bugger off to somewhere=
LM: =Yeah=
LJ: =Y[eah
KJ: [We're just gonna bugger off somewhere [whether its [a country pub (in
LM: [Yeah
LJ: [I MEAN there's
KJ: the lakes) [or wherever=
LJ: [Like there's
LJ: =There's somewhere in Castleton we want to go just for a ni::ght=
KJ: =>I MEAN ITS ONLY UP the road< [and its:=
LM: [yeah
LJ: =You now it's only up the road and we can [do it cos it's::
LM: [Hm
(0.5)
KJ: It's lovel[y
LJ: [It's like a dead dead nice pub and [(all th[at)
LM: [yeah
KJ: [BIG=big country pub in Castleton=it er:: it's

57 (.)
58 LJ: FOUR p[oster beds and=
59 KJ: [The Castle
60 KJ: =The Cas[tle pub
61 LJ: [Jacu::zzi and everythin'=
62 LM: =Yeah=
63 KJ: =Yeah=
64 RP: =Brilliant=
65 KJ: =NEXT WEEk
66 LJ: ([ )
67 KJ: [A BIG four poster bed in [an Ol:::d (1) conve[rted
68 LM: [Yeah
69 LJ: [AND IT
70 JUST makes your [realise that youre actually (someone [other than just
71 KJ: [And its only up the road [yeah
72 his mum and dad an[d really=
73 LM: [Yeah
74 LM: =That's ri:: [ght
75 LJ [(The wi::[fe)
76 LM: [WELL WE we've got an arrangement with [his erm (.)
77 TM: [yeah
78 LM: with his er with me sister-in-law Terry's e:r: >sister< and she's got one lad
79 and=
80 LJ: =yeah=
81 (.)
82 LJ: And we've got our two (.) AND THERE IS no baby sitters because my
83 parents have died and his parents aren't very well are they=
84 TM: =No::
85 (.)
86 LM: And really you you're on your own=
87 LJ: =yeah=
88 LM: =You struggle=
89 LJ: =You str[uggle (.) yeah
90 KJ: [Yeah
91 (.)
92 LJ: Yeah

KJ&LJ, and TM&LM both have two children of similar ages. The talk can be conceived of then as being centred around not merely a common topic, but a common life stage and parental experience. The concept of 'the kids' (note, not just 'any' kids) thus provides a prime conversational resource for the ratification of solidarity between these two couples. There is unmitigated consensus displayed by both pairs of participants as to the experience from a parental perspective of having children, the burden of responsibility that this can sometimes be, and importantly, a consensus about the consequences for the parents, i.e., needing to get away. The sociable conversation then helps participants to identify and establish clear and unequivocal grounds for commonality. This is a clear example of what I have referred to as positive alignment within the wider conversational context of a sociable episode.

Rather than being fixed in a state of solidarity and commonality though, even this short excerpt of conversational data displays the second of the two generic alignments I have thus far talked about, viz., negative alignment. Based on the achieved common understanding, each couple respectively feels secure enough to change to a more individuated footing (see Goffman 1981). In turn, each one does this by proffering their own more individuated attempts to achieve what has been agreed upon as a common need, i.e. getting away from the kids. KJ&LJ invoke plans to take a trip to Castleton (a local beauty spot), whilst TM&LM draw on their own baby minding arrangements. In effect there is a shift from an 'us' (*qua* sociable collective) to a 'we' (*qua* married couple) footing. This allows each couple to claim individuated experiences and nuances whilst remaining solidaric. What this short piece of conversational data reveals then is the mutual proffering, ratification and support of both solidaric and individuated claims. Both positive and negative equilibric alignment are manifest at a conversational level as unproblematic and smooth running sociable chat, further evidenced by the fact that following this particular encounter, both couples spoke favourably of having had a 'good chat' about the kids with the other.

The same face-based dynamics are also apparent in German sociable conversation. This can be demonstrated by drawing on an example of the type of conversation favoured by German participants in their doing of sociability, namely, objective discussion. In the following episode of conversation the participants are talking about 'Arbeitslosigkeit' ['Unemployment'].

Excerpt 6.2 'Arbeitslosigkeit'

1	KN:	=Ich [würde lieber drei vierhundert Mark [im Jahr Autobahngebühr
2	GB:	[So ist das [so ist das
3	KN:	zahlen (.) und dafür weniger Krankenkasse und Steuern und alles (0.5)
4		denn ich muß doch >wir müssen doch für die Arbeitslosen
5		mitbezahlen<=
6	GB:	=Na das sowieso=
7		(.)
8	KN:	Hm=
9	HB:	=Na ich denke nur mal ( ) machen würde
10		(.)
11	KN:	Hm::[:

12 HB: [Dann würde der Staat das Geld für alles mögliche verwenden und
13 nicht
14 (0.5)
15 KN: Sag ich [ja das ist es DO::CH
16 HB: [Und nicht um den armen Leuten zu helfen (.) ne=
17 KN: =Das [ist es doch=[das ist es doch wieder
18 HB: [Ne [ne
19 (0.5)
20 KN: ([ )
21 EP: [Obwohl ich meine du hast [ja heutzutage nirgendwo keine
22 HB: [hor auch
23 EP: Arbeitslosen keit die herr[scht auf der ganzen Welt ([ )
24 HB: [Darf nicht vergessen
25 KN: [Hm::
26 (0.5)
27 EP: Amerika ist nun gerade am boomen aber auch da [gibts Arbeitslosigkeit
28 KN: [hm::
29 EP: und in Großbritannien da gibt sie au[ch
30 KN: [IN HOLLAND habe ich aber Peter
31 hat sich mit einem Holländer unterhalten und gibts einen ganz geringen
32 Anteil an Arbeitslosen und der meint die wollen überhaupt nicht [arbeiten
33 HB: [auch
34 KP: Gehen ([ )=
35 HB: [Auch =auch die
36 HB: =Die Schweiz=
37 KN: =Hm
38 (.)
39 HB: Hat nur=
40 KN: =Gibts [kaum Arbeitslose=
41 HB: [wenig
42 EP: =Hm
43 (0.5)
44 HB: Ja und die Schweiz die hat =
45 KN: =Mensch

Excerpt 6.2 Translation 'Unemployment'

1 KN: I'd [rather pay three or four hundred Marks [per year motorway
2 GB: [That's the way things are [That's the way things are
3 KN: fee (.) but less health insurance and tax and what have you (0.5)
4 because I have to >we have to pay for all the unemployed<=
5 GB: =That's the case anyway=
6 (.)
7 KN: Hm=
8 HB: =Well, I just think ( ) the state would
9 (.)
10 KN: Hm::[:
11 HB: [use the money for all sorts of things and not
12 (0.5)
13 KN: That's what [I'm SA::Ying that's it
14 HB: [in order to help the poor people (.) you know=
15 KN: =That's [it = [that's it again
16 HB: [Yeah [yeah
17 (0.5)
18 KN: ([ )

19 EP: [Although I mean that [nowadays you don't have zero
20 HB: [erm also
21 unemployment [anywhere in the whole world ([ )
22 HB: [You mustn't forget
23 KN: [Hm::
24 (0.5)
25 EP: America is booming at the moment but even there you [have unemployment
26 KN: [Hm::
27 EP: and in Great Britain you have it is there as we[ll
28 KN: [IN HOLLAND I have but Peter
29 was talking to a Dutchman and there is a very small proportion of unemployed
30 and he said they don't want to [work at all ([ )=
31 HB: [Also [also=also
32 HB: =Switzerland=
33 KN: =Hm
34 (.)
35 HB: Has only=
36 KN: =Has [hardly any unemployed=
37 HB: [few
38 EP: =Hm
39 (0.5)
40 HB: Yeah and Switzerland has=
41 KN: =Man

What happens in 'Arbeitslosigkeit' is typical of German positive and negative alignment. The talk focuses on a common issue – that of unemployment. Unemployment in Germany is a common source of worry and sociable debate. In this particular episode, all participants are confirming the primacy that the issue of unemployment should be given in any discussion of the state of a nation. However, all speakers attempt to negatively align by adding something of their own individuated knowledge claims into the discussion. Indeed, it is this cumulative introduction of knowledge claims into the talk that allows for the sociable conversation 'as talk about unemployment' to proceed, much in the same way as talk about places 'we' want to get away to allows 'Time away from the Kids' to proceed.

These two brief excerpts then demonstrate that both positive and negative alignments can occur within the same conversational environment as part and parcel of sociable conversation. At a conversational level, participants achieve this in different ways. The participants in 'Time away from the Kids', employ rather personalised nuances of their own past or intended activities in acquiring time away from their respective children. This relaying of personal experience is a characteristic way to achieve negative alignment in English sociable episodes. In the 'Arbetislosigkeit', participants both positively and

negatively align in their joint discussion of a more objective topic. Negative alignment is achieved through the proffering of individuated perspectives on the discussion. Again, this is characteristic of alignment practices in German sociable conversation.

Both these short examples of alignment in sociable episodes reflect the prevailing conversation styles identified in Chapter 5. What is evidenced by identifying the shifts in alignment made as part and parcel of their playing out, is that such practices, both negative and positive, allow for the achievement and sustaining of sociable conversation in each milieu. At a conversational level though – i.e. at the level of conversational claims – alignment is realised differently in what manifests itself as English and German sociable style.

Having initially indicated how both positive and negative alignments can be sustained interactionally, I now want to consider in more detail both positive and negative conversational claims respectively.

6.3 Positive and Negative Claims: Their Ratification and Support

As I mentioned earlier (see Chapter 3), claims in talk require recognition, ratification, and support to be successfully made. This requirement applies equally to both positive and negative claims; in order to be successful, both solidaric and individuated claims needs to be recognised as such by co-present participants, and ratified through appropriate conversational alignment. I will talk more later about conversational alignment (see Chapter 8) but first I want to illustrate briefly moments were both positive and negative claims can be seen to have been ratified (Cf. 6.4).

6.3.1 Positive Claims and their Ratification and Support

The following example taken from gathering E1 (see Appendix B) nicely illustrates solidaric claims and supportive action that is exemplary of English sociable style.

Excerpt 6.3 'More Often'

Three married couples are sitting down to eat a meal hosted by JW&ZW. Conversation has been in full flow for around an hour before the food is served. In the immediately preceding talk, all participants have attested to the 'tastiness' of the food prepared by ZW.

EP: We'll have to do a Raclette sometime ((clears throat))
(1)
RP: Yeah
(.)
JW: Hm::
(2)
RP: Yeah that's [right
JW: [REALLY ENJOYed that Raclette=
ZW: =It was go::rgeous last time
(.)
RP: Did you like [it yeah
ZW: [Awe::: yeah
(0.2)
RP: We'll definitely do it again then somet[ime
JW: [Yeah[::
ZW: [IT WAS A rea:lly good [night
JW: [Yeah
(.)
RP: Yeah (.) I mean
(0.5)
ZW: It was a really good night as well [we all had a lau[gh
JW: [Yeah
RP: [Yeah
(0.5)
RP: That'd be good er:m=
JW: =(Eatin' somethin')
(.)
EP: And we've got that big table now so we can be (.) you know=
RP: =Yeah
(.)
EP: Comfortable the:re=
RP: =Yeah (1.5) Yeah=that'd be good (.) yeah (0.5) we'll do that (.) in the (.) very near future
(.)
ZW: Hm=
RP: =Er::[m
ZW: [That'd be nice that=especially comin' up to Christmas:
(.)
RP: Yeah=yeah
(0.5)
JL: What is a Raclette
((10 secs -- RP explains to JL what a 'Raclette' is))
ZW: >We'll have to do his more often you know coz I know we've not< seen you for (h)age(h)s::=

45 JW: =I know=
46 EP: =Hm ((clear throat))
47 (1)
48 JW: That's right
49 (0.5)
50 RP: Yeah definitely (0.5) we=we'll do that in the next few weeks
51 (1)
52 RP: you know=
53 ZW: =yeah
54 (.)
55 RP: We'll do that

In 'More Often', ZW&JW, and RP&EP – married couples respectively - invoke a past sociable gathering, specifically, what is recalled is a 'Raclette' evening held at the home of RP&EP some weeks earlier (the current hosts being JW&ZW). Once invoked, this common past event is accorded strong evaluative treatment. Both couples speak warmly about the occasion attest to and the enjoyment they had. In addition to and apparently predicated on this past shared experience, suggestions for a similar future gathering are made, again treated with similar positive attestations. This positive alignment achieves a level of unmitigated solidarity between the two couples, to the point where JL intervenes for a necessary clarification as to what exactly a Raclette evening is (which she incidentally also attests to the potential sociability of after RP's brief explanation). One might speculate that the solidarity being developed between these two couples is so intense that it in effect 'freezes out' JL and her partner AL (i.e. in achieving solidarity between ZW&JW, and RP&EP, this alignment threatens solidarity with others co-present).

Neither disagreement, differing opinions, nor individual nuances of experience (e.g. "well the thing I liked about it was x", "Oh well I enjoyed the y more actually") are expressed during this phase of alignment. This is of course not to say that negative alignment is precluded. In fact, as I have intimated to already and shall illustrate below, more individuated nuances may well become necessary if the unmitigated agreement were to go on for too long. In effect though, what this data illustrates is a moment within an English sociable episode marked by heightened ethos of consensual solidarity.

In the following German excerpt, similar levels of solidaric alignment are apparent albeit again, not within a retrospective framework, but a more objective and discursive one.

Excerpt 6.4 'Russies und Polskies'

All particpant have poriented themselves to the common threat that foreign workers pose to the fabric of German society. The theme of the conversational has now turned to Russian and polish workers in particular.

1	SH:	Ja bei uns ist das doch auch=wenn du da in den Wald kommst
2		(0.5)
3	HB:	Kurt
4		(.)
5	SH:	Und nachmittags
6		(1)
7	PB:	( )=
8	SH:	=Ob das nun Polnisch ist oder Russisch das weiss (ich [nicht)
9	GB:	[Hm:::=hm::::
10		(0.5)
11	SH:	Unde e::r (1) >Das sind alles so welche in unserem< Alter=
12	GB:	=Ja [(ja)
13	SH:	[Die zu Rentenzeiten rübergekommen sind
14		(.)
15	KH:	Auch ältere [noch
16	GB:	[Weißt du wir hatten da so ein [hübsches Blumenstübchen ne
17	HB:	[Auch wenn die älteren nie eine
18		Mark eingezahlt haben in die Rentenversicherung ne ([ )
19	SH:	[Die früher mal
20		'nen deutschen Schäferhund hatten=
21	GB:	=Ja genau so=
22	HB:	=HAhaha[hahaha
23	GB:	[Genau so
24		((10 seconds talk on food))
25	KH:	Was haben sie gestern im Füllhorst? (.) einen geschnappt (1) e::r=einen
26		Kurden (.) mit [zwei Kilo (1) Heroin >hast du das gelesen<
27	GB:	[Hm
28		(.)
29	GB:	Richtig ([ )
30	SH:	[Ich hab's gelesen=ja::
31		(0.5)
32	KH:	Zwei Kilo Heroin=
33	GB:	=Hm[:::
34	KH:	[>Haben sie gestern erwischt<=
35	GB:	=Hm::::
36		(0.5)
37	IB:	In Füllhorst=
38	SH:	=IN FULLhorst=ja:: ([ )
39	IB:	[Das ist ja schon fast bei ([ )
40	SH:	[Bei Füllhorst da
41		weißte wo der=wo der Juwelierladen da ist ne
42		(.)
43	IB:	Da wo wir unsere=unsere Ringe gekauft [haben
44	SH:	[JA::
45		(1)
46	GB:	Das kann man wohl sagen

Excerpt 6.4 Translation 'Russians and Poles'

SH: Yeah that's the same=when you go into the woods
(0.5)
HB: Kurt
(.)
SH: And in the afternoon
(1)
PB: ( )=
SH: =Whether that is Polish or Russian (I [don't know)
GB: [Hm:::=hm::::
(0.5)
SH: And e::r (1) >They're all people at our< age=
GB: =Yeah [(yeah)
SH: [Who came over when they were old age pensioners
(.)
KH: And even older [ones
GB: [You know, we had a really [nice flowershop there you know
HB: [And even if they never paid a
single Deutschmark into the pension insurance eh ([ )
SH: [Who once had a
German sheppard dog=
GB: =Yeah, exactly=
HB: =HAhaha[hahaha
GB: [Exactly
((10 seconds talk on food))
KH: What did they find in Füllhorst (.) they caught one (1) e::r=a Kurd (.)
with [two kilo of (1) heroin >did you read that<
GB: [Hm
(.)
GB: That's right ([ )
SH: [I read it=yeah::
(0.5)
KH: Two kilo of heroin=
GB: =Hm:[::
KH: [>Caught him yesterday<=
GB: =Hm::::
(0.5)
IB: In Füllhorst=
SH: =IM FULLhorst=yeah:: ([ )
IB: [That's almost near ([ )
SH: [Near Füllhorst there
you know where=where the jeweller's shop is you know
(.)
IB: The place where we [bought our our rings
SH: [YEAH::
(1)
GB: I can tell you

In this particular episode, again, all participants are creating a shared definition and evaluation, in this instance, of 'Russies and Polskies' ['Russians and Poles'], and expressing similar evaluations of these particular classes of people. Within a wider conversational context which essentially focuses on the

detrimental effects foreigners are having on Germany's crime rates, this excerpt evidences a moments of heightened solidarity between participants - as if all were speaking as one. In terms of the topic chosen for this period of positive alignment, again, the theme of some real external threat to the sociable collective and what they posit themselves as representing (in this case law abiding German citizens) is a salient one drawn upon in German agonistic discussion. By its very nature then, it seems to allow for the joint proffering of positive conversational claims and subsequent positive alignment.

Both these instances of positive alignment generally reflect then the prevailing styles of sociable conversation in each milieu. In the former, participants re-invoke some past event, one located in a collective past, for the basis of solidarity. Claims made about this particular topic similarly define and evaluate the occasion. In the latter, participants also discuss some topic of central concern to all. Again, definitional and evaluative claims are made which attest similarly to the central topic. What both the excerpts commonly illustrate is moments in the course of ongoing episodes of sociable conversation where solidarity is being claimed, ratified, and supported over a series of conversational claims. In both sociable milieus, similar orientations are being made, as participants signal and ratify their commonality and solidarity in and through their sociable alignments to the topic itself and one another.

6.3.2 Negative Claims and their Ratification and Support

As with positive claims, negative claims - that is, claims were participants express some aspect of individuation - equally require ratification and support from fellow participants as part and parcel of sociable conversation. Indeed, due to the salience of negative claims as essentially individuated phenomena – that is, based around the person or, as in the case of married couples what might be called the 'intimate team' - there may be even greater demands on the other participants to support negative claims more markedly, so that they 'stand out' more.

In the English data, there are several ways in which participants collectively proffer, ratify, and support negative claims. Unsurprisingly, often

these appeared most often in my data to be embedded in some form of narrative. Within a narrative, a whole host of individuated claims becomes possible. A good example of this occurs in the following excerpt, 'Tommy Fields'. Here, KP&LP (husband and wife) provide a highly dramatised replaying of an unique event that they experienced in a local pub. The story is full of invoked figures, often grotesque, with KP&LP posited as the protagonists around which a highly dramatised scene unfolds.

Excerpt 6.5 'Tommy Fields'

Over the preceding few minutes, RP&EP have been talking about their 'dramatic' experiences on the Reeperbahn (Hamburg's red light district).

1	RP:	We went to some rough joints in Hamburg, big style (0.5) Hm but at least
2		you had it (0.5) you felt safe didn't you
3		(.)
4	EP:	That's right yeah it was=
5	LP:	=You've never been to the Tommy Fields in Oldham
6	KP:	Ohhhhh[h
7	RP:	[Well no I know I don't wanna go there [Kens told me about it
8	LP:	[Ohhh: God::
9		(1)
10	KP:	Terrible [that
11	LP:	[That is the the (1) THE=
12	RP:	=Yeah=
13	LP:	=most worst (0.5) sc- I mean=
14	KP:	=Scary=
15	LP:	=I can look after meself and [I'm generally extremely confident (
16	EP:	[Yeah
17	LP:	[ )
18	KP:	[I mean when I say it was scary I'm not bein'=
19	LP:	=in a pub)=
20	KP:	=Scary place to be=
21	LP:	But, it's one of those, it's [like the hills have eyes they was [a::ll
22	RP:	[yeah
23	KP:	[I was less=I
24		was less scared, no word of a lie
25		(.)
26	LP:	You walk in and everybody stops [talkin' instantly
27	KP:	[I was less scared in the middle of the
28		main st[and
29	EP:	[Awe:::::
30		(.)
31	LP:	Stops dri[nkin'
32	KP:	[At City=
33	LP:	=And they've all got like b[ald heads and sticks, everybody=
34	KP:	[(when United)
35	EP:	=Awe hahahahha[ha
36	LP:	[h)And hob nail boots [on
37	RP:	[Yeah=
38	LP:	=And they stop instantly=the whole pub [goes dead quiet and they look at
39	KP:	[yeah
40	LP:	yo[u

41 EP: [Bloody hell fire
42 (.)
43 LP: And this is in the afternoon and it was packed out wan't it=
44 EP: =My::: God[::::
45 LP: [They all had big coshes even like women .hhh [it was terrifyin'
46 KP: [You know
47 (when) it's like () honestly I'm not jokin'=
48 LP: =I had a Rum and coke [I said you drink it I wanna go
49 KP: [the pub (.) it was a Wednesday afternoon or
50 somet [(most of the) pubs are dead quiet we thought we'll nip in there
51 EP: [yeah
52 KP: and have a spot of a spot to eat [( )
53 LP: [We thought we'd have lunch didn't we=
54 KP: =spot of spot of lunch in the pub with nice
55 (0.5)
56 RP: How you do
57 (0.5)
58 KP: Yea::h have lager shandy and we'll sit down (0.5) we walked in the door
59 and it were fuckin' heavin'=
60 LP: =And it just went (zinc)=
61 KP: =There must have been about hu[ndred and fifty people in the pub
62 LP: [It was dead noisy, we walked in (0.5)
63 everybody stoped ta[lkin'
64 EP: [Oh:: my:: G[o::d
65 LP: [And then every single person looked at us
66 (1) as [we walked in
67 KP: [We just thought (0.5) EVERYbody in there=there wasn't one person
68 in there >and I mean< that was the scary thing was (0.5) there wasn't one
69 person in there () who didn't have a fuckin' head about that fat=
70 EP: =haHAHA[HA:::::::
71 LP: [And a walkin' stick even young lads of twenty had big bleedin'
72 cosh walkin' sticks
73 (.)
74 RP: HAHAha[ha:
75 KP: [Sixty year old blokes=
76 LP: =There were=
77 KP: =There were sixty year old blokes in the[re
78 LP: [It's not it's not an [exageration
79 RP: [HAHAhaha
80 KP: And their heads were about that fuckin' [(fat)
81 LP: [all with [Donkey jackets and
82 RP: [HAHAHA
83 jeans an[d hob nail boots and bloody sticks
84 KP: [They've all got skinheads, heads like that, fuckin' teeth missin'
85 and they're (0.5) and they're all shoulders out here () I lo[oked like fuckin'
86 EP: [haHAHAHA:::
87 Mr Punny[verse ri:ght
88 RP: [HAHA
89 LP: ([ )
90 KP: [I mean I've got a bit of weight on me (0.5) and [I walked in and I
91 LP: [It was that bad
92 KP: looked round and there must've been about 120 of 'em=
93 LP: =But nobody spoke
94 (.)
95 KP: There wasn't one [pers- there wasn't one normal lookin' person in there
96 LP: [Everybody instantly stopped speakin'
97 (.)
98 RP: Right=
99 KP: =And every person I saw in there (0.5) was bigger than any cunt I've ever
100 seen before in my life=
101 EP: =haha=HAHAHAhahaha[haha
102 LP: [It was sca:::ry=it was scary
103 (0.5)

104 KP: I mean you see two or three you think look at them they look hard them
105 three over there (0.5) wouldn't mess with them=
106 RP: =Yeah=
107 KP: =The enti::re pub, there wasn't one normal person in there=
108 EP: =Bloody [Hell
109 KP: [I mean I use the word normal to mean me[self
110 RP: [Fuckin' hell::=
111 KP: =there wasn't one normal pe::rson

In replaying this one-off event, KP&LP take a conversational stance which is endemic to English sociable chat, namely, replaying some event in and through entertaining narrative. The account is peppered with exaggeration, moments of dramatic tension, and comic relief to create a world that did indeed constitute some unique reality (see Goffman 1974). What this excerpt evidences is one of the primary ways in which English participants proffer negative conversational claims. That is, in the dramatic replaying of direct and individuated experience in this way, KP&LP adopt a footing which posits them not only as participants privy to some unique experience, but also – at that moment in the episode – as participants adopting a unique conversational footing, i.e., that of narrating. In order to ratify this alignment, RP&EP reciprocate in and through their own set of conversational claims. Conversationally this is manifest in their laughter, expressions of aghast and back channels, which ratify and support the alignments taken by KP&LP. In this particular strip of conversational activity then, negative claims are proffered, ratified, and supported in and through appropriate conversational alignment taken up by both sets of participants (see Chapter 9 for a further discussion of the notion of 'appropriateness' of alignment).

It is interesting to note that uniqueness claims based on propositions around a central topic of discussion seem not so useful in English sociable conversation. Commonly, even the most contradictory statement leads to a rapid searching for resolution of potential conflict and mitigation of positions. Contradictory statements are usually agreed with (to varying degrees) rather than actively countered. If for example disagreements with assessments occur, they are usually highly mitigated (thereby decreasing the distance between speaker and recipient) or solidarity is quickly sought. Conversely, taking a

standpoint which is somehow differentiated from those proffered by others co-present seems to be a prime way for German participants in sociable episodes to make and have supported negative conversational claims. When similar minded Germans come together (or more accurately when similar 'conversational selves' are mobilised – see Chapters 7 and 8), the result is what has been termed 'Wettkampf' (Kotthoff 1991). At such moments, Germans interactants 'agree to disagree' as it were. Conflictual standpoints of 'real' argumentation are 'keyed' (Goffman 1974) in the playing out of a sociable pursuit.

Such Wettkampf encounters were not as endemic in my own German conversations as the literature suggested, but they did provide a primary and salient routinised way in which negative alignment was normatively conducted in the same way that narrative functions in English. The following example of focused topic talk – about something as innocuous as the length of queues in Aldi – demonstrates nicely this use of conversational topic as a resource for individuated claims and negative alignment

Excerpt 6.6 'Schlange bei Aldi'

The immediately preceding talk has been about similar experiences of having to queue in mutually known supermarkets

1	HB:	Bei Aldi habe ich mich oft drüber geärgert ich >sage mir was soll das<
2		bevor (.) die Schlange nicht zehn Meter lang ist (0.5) denn=denn kommt
3		keine zweite Person an die Kasse=und wenn wieder auf fünf=drei=vier=
4		fünf Meter abgebaut ist (.) dann geht die e:r (.) zweite schon wieder weg=
5	EP:	=hm::=
6	HB:	=Ja
7		(.)
8	KN:	Ja >aber wenn [die DA WAS SOLL DEnn die machen< wenn die nur mit
9	HB:	[Ich sach die RAUBT einem doch nur
10		drei [Personen da stehen
11	HB:	[DIE RAUbt einem doch nur die Zeit (.) das ist [doch
12	KN:	[JA:::=
13	HB:	=Das fördert doch nicht den ihren Umsatz und [und
14	KN:	[Ja::
15		(.)
16	HB:	E:r=denn ich sage ja nicht=>na gut wenn ich mehr Zeit habe< dann
17		kaufe ich mehr das ist doch Quatsch:: ne (.) >nur daß die Leute mehr
18		stehen und verä[rgert sind<=
19	GB:	[ja:::
20	KN:	=>Aber die haben zu wenig Leute< [das ist
21	HB:	[Und irgendwann sind sie=ja ja: ist mir
22		kla:r ja:: [:
23	GB:	[Ganz knapp [kalkuliert=

```
24        HB:                                  [E::rm
25        HB:   =E:r [diese (.) eh die haben (.) die haben wenig Leute (.) ja (0.5) und (1.5)
26        GB:          [Arbeitskräfte sind alles
27        HB:   aber im Endeffekt >sag ich mal ist das< e:rm (2) kaufen die Leute ja
28              deswegen nicht nicht mehr oder nicht weniger wenn sie da lange in der
29              Schlange warten müssen=
30        KN:   =Ja ab[er
31        HB:            [Und gut die kaufen höchstens weniger wenn das Material noch
32              nicht da ist und die an die Kasse müssen aber (1.5) was soll das ne=
33        KN:   =Ja >aber die Leute die nach Aldi< oder Penny gehen die Leute so oder so
34              >sagen wir ist billiger da stehst du halt< das du dafür sparst gegenüber von
35              der HL ode::r Minimal=da stehst du dann mal lieber zehn Minuten an das
36              ist dann [okay
37        GB:            [Ja aber ich sage dir das ist gar nicht so wild also die haben sich
38              im Prinzip alle so bißchen angeglichen an die Preise von Aldi (1) das ist
39              nicht mehr so wie [früher
40        HB:                      [Ja:: UND und e:r was diese Freundlichkeit betrifft ja
41              (0.5) ich habe das Gefühl die Verkäuferinnen die reißen sich heute so
42              zusammen ja daß [wäre das SCHLIMMste Wenn sich jetzt einer beschwert
43        KN:                     [Die haben Angst
44        HB:   und sagt was ist mit der (0.5) Frau [los die ranzt mich an weil ich ja das und
45        KN:                                       [ (          )
46        HB:   das gefragt habe und so weiter (0.5) ja=und das will heute keiner das
47              Risiko eingehen >ja daß er vielleicht vom Chef< (.) einen drauf kriegt=und
48              wenn das ein paarmal passiert ist [dann haben die ganz schnell ne andere
49        KN:                                       [Sind die draußen
50              ne (1) die das gerne macht ne (1 )deswegen sind die heute so ne
```

Excerpt 6.6 Translation 'Queues at Aldi'

```
 1        HB:   At Aldi I was often annoyed and >I think to myself what's all that about<
 2              before (.) the queue isn't ten meters long (0.5) then=then no second
 3              person is called to open another till=and when the queue has been
 4              reduced to five=three=four meters (.) then the e:r (.) second person is
 5              already going away you=
 6        EP:   =hm::=
 7        HB:   =Ja
 8                    (.)
 9        KN:   Yeah >but when [they  WHAT ARE THEY SUPPOSED to do then< when
10        HB:                  [I think it only STEALS your
11              they're only there with three [people.
12        HB:                                [IT ONLY STEALS your  time (.) That's [only
13        KN:                                                                      [YEAH:::=
14        HB:   =That 's not going to increase their turnover and [and
15        KN:                                                     [Yeah::
16                    (.)
17        HB:   E:r=and because I don't say=>fair enough if I have more time< I'm going to
18              buy more that's nonsense:: isn't it (.) only that the people have to stand
19              there longer and get ann[oyed=
20        GB:                           [yeah
21        KN:   =>But they have too few people< [that's
22        HB:                                   [And at some stage they are=Yeah yeah:
23              I am aware of that yea::[:h
24        GB:                           [Closely calc[ulated=
25        HB:                                        [E::rm
26        HB:   =E::r  [these (.) they have (.) they have few staff (.) yeah (0.5) and (1.5)
27        GB:          [Staff is everything
```

28 HB: but at the end of the day >I say it is< e:rm (2) the people don't buy more or
29 less when they have to wait in the queue=
30 KN: =Yeah [but
31 HB: [And fair enough they possibly buy less if the material isn't there yet
32 and when they have to go open another till but (1.5) what is it for=
33 KN: =Yeah >but the people who go to Aldi or Penny< the people go anyway
34 >they say it's cheaper so you're standing there< that you're saving
35 compared with HL o::r Minimal=then you're rather be ihn a queue for ten
36 minutes that's [okay.
37 GB: [Yeah but I tell you, it's not so drastic at all, because they all
38 have adapted a bit to the prices of Aldi (1) that's not as it used to [be
39 HB: [Yeah::
40 AND and e:r as far as friendliness is concerned (0.5) I've got the
41 impression that the shop assistants that they are really pulling themselves
42 together nowadays you know that would be the [WORST If someone
43 KN: [They are afraid
44 HB: complains and says what's going on with this (0.5) woman she's having a
45 go at me because I asked her this or that and so on (0.5) you know=and
46 nobody wants to take this risk nowadays you know that >they get a
47 roasting off the boss< and if that happens several times [then they very
48 KN: [Are they outside
49 HB: quickly find another shop assistant, who enjoys her job, you know that's
50 why they are like this nowadays you know

'Schlange bei Aldi' evidences again the typical manner in which issues of common interest are discussed in German sociable episodes. Participants orient to the problem of having to queue when shopping at Aldi. Rather than framing this talk as a narrative however, participants orient more to an objective discussion of the issue. This collaborative objective discussion provides a routine way in which German speakers can proffer individuated conversational claims, and have these ratified in and through the alignments taken up by others co-present. In this particular excerpt, HB, KN, and GB essentially negatively align by proffering their own viewpoints as to how queuing at Aldi should be defined, and how the behaviour of Aldi staff should be evaluated. HB is clearly defending his position of defining and evaluating the Aldi practices quite negatively, whilst KN and GB retort with claims which effectively provide some justification for the staff not acting to remedy the queue situation. HB's initial recounting of having experienced first hand the 'ten metre long queues' at Aldi is not aligned to as a narrative claim then, but rather as a propositional one, to which other participants can align by proffering counter-claims. What results then is typical of German discursive style routinely played out as part of sociable episodes.

Although both 'Tommy Fields' and 'Schlange bei Aldi' have demonstrated instances of negative alignments. Comparatively speaking, these two excerpts index important differences between English and German conversationalists. Whereas propositions in objective discussion seem not so fruitful for negative alignment in English, narrative (the favoured format for negative alignment in English) seems equally unfertile conversational ground for German negative alignment. In English, attempts to claim highly individuated stances in objective discussion are routinely framed as non-serious, or resolved rapidly in an attempt to assimilate the negative alignment under the umbrella of solidarity. In German, attempts to claim uniqueness via narrative are often negated, as interlocutors quickly invoke similar experiences (see 4.2), in effect taking the wind of uniqueness out of the sails of relayed narrative. I will discuss cross-cultural differences in greater detail in Chapters 7 and 8.

Thus, prevailing sociable styles can be seen to a reliable conversational resource for both negative and positive clams, and for the collective alignment in the ratification and support of these claims.

Having demonstrated how both negative and positive conversational claims are proffered and ratified in and through alignment practices, I now want to consider instances of talk where such claims are refused ratification, but refused equilibrically. That is instances of sociable conversation were one or the other participant makes a conversational claim which assumes either solidarity with or autonomy from the preceding or anticipated claims of co-participants but which, in and through subsequent claims, is not aligned in a way that ratifies that assumption.

Although I shall focus predominantly on alignment which does ratify and support both positive and negative claims, and the images of selfhood indexed therein, as I intimated to above, the purpose of this particular chapter is to evidence the full range of contingencies which the facework as alignment approach to sociable episodes allows for. I shall more explicitly point to areas for further research beyond the empirical focus here in Chapter 9. Importantly, in addressing the full set of contingencies of the facework as alignment

approach, I hope to further illuminate the bases for English – German differences in sociable style.

6.4 Positive and Negative Claims: Their Non-Ratification

The preceding examples have evidenced supportive conversational facework in each milieu in respect of positive and negative claims. I have employed the concept of alignment to describe the work done by participants to support these proffered claims. The conversational data illustrate quite clearly the ratification and support typical of sociable conversation in each respective cultural milieu. I have also alluded to certain obvious cross-cultural differences in terms of the conversational styles drawn upon for supportive alignments.

However, ratification and support of solidaric or individuated, negative or positive claims is not predetermined nor guaranteed but rather contingent on the participants' turn by turn, move by move, claim by claim practices and for that reason does not always occur. Although normative conversation in both cultures can be seen to follow a general conversational maxim which might read 'support proffered solidaric and individuated claims', such a maxim is often breached at various and indeterminate junctures in the routine playing out of actual sociable conversation. Both positive and negative claims are susceptible to having their claimed solidarity or individuation non-ratified and non-supported. Here I want to briefly then draw on instances of non-ratification of both proffered positive and negative conversational claims in each respective culture, beginning again with the English. Importantly, I shall demonstrate here how such routine non-ratification of both solidaric and individuated claims can be achieved within the equilibric boundaries of sociable conversation (Cf. 6.5).

6.4.1 Non-Ratification of Positive Claims

A frequent and prime site for the non-ratification and non-support of positive claims occurs in conversational environments where a claim (definition, evaluation, viewpoint, or experience) is being made by one participant on the

basis of assumed solidarity and, sequentially following this[2], a fellow participant calls into question, queries, or negates that claim for its assumed solidarity. The solidaric basis for the claim is then recast and transformed into a more non-solidaric and individuated one. The following two excerpts evidence this phenomenon.

In 'Other Cultures', a proffered solidaric claim is rejected and countered with a more individuated one.

Excerpt 6.7 'Other Cultures'

Following a more general discussion of RP's research project, the participants have been talking about 'The English' and their cultural characteristics. TM has just teased RP about the usefulness of his study. LM then picks up on this tease as a prime example of what the English (or 'We' qua gathered participants) are like as compared to 'other cultures':

LM: That that's our downfall
(0.5)
RP: Well perhaps (.) perhaps
(.)
LM: Like what he's just done with you really=
RP: =Perhaps (.) perh[aps
LM: [yeah=
TM: =>But you get used to it don't you<=
KJ: =NO BUT I mea[:n=
RP: [Yeah
(.)
TM: HAHAHAHA(h)have you hear(hahahaha[hahahaha)
KJ: [TO BE HONest what I F[Ound
LM: [NOW
other cultures wouldn't do that cause that would be the height of ignorance (th[at)
RP: [Well
(.)
KJ: NO THAT'S NOT TRUe that=I don't think that's true certainly not with the German[s=I mean I've worked [with Germans [for e:::r=
LM: [NO [WELL [WELL
LM: =Lets look in England the Southerners wouldn't find that funny really would they
(.)
LJ: No:=
KJ: =>Yeah but then again< (.) you know=
LJ: =Southe[rners
LM: [You know and [that's (within this isl[and)
KJ: [Southerners are
LJ: [a totally different race [aren't
LM: [yeah
LJ: they the southerners=
LM: =THAT SENSE [OF HUmour then they wouldn't find funny would they=
KJ: [No but I mean
LJ: =No
(0.5)

37 KJ: I never had any day to day (.)[interaction with people of other (0.5) er
38 LM: [Pardon ((to child))
39 nationality before I went in the RAF=
40 (.)
41 TM: =Yeah=
42 KJ: =And for six years my er boss was either an Italian or a German (0.5) Air
43 Force (like colonel) and er I don't know whether its because they've got
44 more anglicised as the longer they've been there but no I never found any
45 er (0.5) certainly when you er when you've found that they erm (1) A new
46 member of the German or the Italian staff came across that they were (0.5)
47 standoffish maybe at the beginning but it after then a few months then NO
48 (1)
49 RP: Well I think I think I don't know (.) I=
50 TM: =I think I think what you'll find is in humour there's a big difference in it (1)
51 from er English to other countries
52 (1.5)
53 RP: Does anybody else want anymore bread

In this particular episode, which is drawn from talk focusing on the English way of conversing, in line 1, LM makes a rather general statement about 'our problem', that is, the English speakers' problem. In making this claim - one made in the presence of and directed at other English nationals - LM is obviously assuming solidarity in her definition and evaluation of what it means to be an English conversationalist. This can be seen as a claim which, under normal circumstances, would have led to positive alignment, with all participants 'having a go' at or downgrading themselves and the English in general. However, in line 19 KJ unmitigatingly rejects the solidaric claim expressed by LM with his claim of 'No, that's not true that . What happens here is that KJ in effect increases the propositional distance between himself and LM, and thereby not only negates LM's proffered positive claim, but also initiates a move from positive alignment to a more negative alignment. The is evidenced in the ensuing talk which develops along a more negatively aligned route as conversational solidarity is temporarily reduced down in favour of something conversationally akin to German Wettkampf (albeit in a rather abridged and mitigated form).

We know in English the chagrin one can feel when a solidarity claim is rebuked as being either incorrect or being based on a false assumption. Indeed, this is one of the reason why we tend to inductively 'test out' the claims that we may safely make in the early phases of social encounters (see Goffman 1967). The being generally 'taken aback' at moments of non-ratification and non-

support of proffered positive clams is evidenced in LM's successive 'well's' immediately following KM's contradiction which temporarily destabilises her as a fully functioning conversational participant (something which might well be conceived of as a temporary state of 'alignment shock').

As I argued above however, the consequences for the sociable equilibrium of this non-ratification of positive alignment are not detrimental in that sociability continues past his point in the gathering, and includes subsequent periods of both positive and negative alignment with the sociable ethos remaining – conversationally at least – intact. What 'Other Cultures' clearly demonstrates is that non-ratification of proffered claims can be achieved as part and parcel of the routine playing out of sociable conversation.

In German sociable conversation, as one would expect, non-ratification of solidaric claims also occurs. Strangely - and this can be perhaps attributed to preferred conversational style in general - non-ratification of proffered solidaric claims appears a more routinised affair. As a result German conversationalists seem better equipped (at least conversationally) to deal with it. Due to the predominance of objective discussion as part and parcel of German conversational style, non-ratification of a solidaric self usually involves a rejection of a proposition made by any given participant and often leads onto what is manifest conversationally as disagreement. Sequentially speaking – and this is essential to understanding why German sociable conversation 'pans out' the way it does compared to its English counterpart - converse to English sociable conversation, rather than collectively and collaboratively pursuing solidarity, non-ratification of positive claims usually marks the beginning of extended disagreement episodes and a period of extended or enhanced negative alignment. A nice example of German non-ratification and non-support of a positive claim occurs in the following episode.

Excerpt 6.8 'beim Einkaufen'

The immediately preceding talk has been about similar experiences of having to queue in mutually known supermarkets

1 HB: Bei Aldi habe ich mich oft drüber geärgert ich >sage mir was soll das<

bevor (.) die Schlange nicht zehn Meter lang ist (0.5) denn=denn kommt
keine zweite Person an die Kasse=und wenn wieder auf fünf=drei=vier=
fünf Meter abgebaut ist (.) dann geht die e:r (.) zweite schon wieder weg=
EP: hm::=
HB: =Ja
(.)
KN: Ja >aber wenn [die DA WAS SOLL DEnn die machen< wenn die nur mit
HB: [Ich sach die RAUBT einem doch nur
drei [Personen da stehen
HB: [DIE RAUbt einem doch nur die Zeit (.) das ist [doch
KN: [JA:::=
HB: =Das fördert doch nicht den ihren Umsatz und [und
KN: [Ja::
(.)
HB: E:r=denn ich sage ja nicht=>na gut wenn ich mehr Zeit habe< dann
kaufe ich mehr das ist doch Quatsch:: ne (.) >nur daß die Leute mehr
stehen und verä[rgert sind<=
GB: [ja:::
KN: =>Aber die haben zu wenig Leute<

Excerpt 6.8 Translation 'at the shops'

HB: At Aldi I was often annoyed and >I think to myself what's all that about<
before (.) the queue isn't ten meters long (0.5) then=then no second
person is called to open another till=and when the queue has been
reduced to five=three=four meters (.) then the e:r (.) second person is
already going away you=
EP: =hm::=
HB: =Ja
(.)
KN: Yeah >but when [they WHAT ARE THEY SUPPOSED to do then< when
HB: [I think it only STEALS your
they're only there with three [people.
HB: [IT ONLY STEALS your time (.) That's [only
KN: [YEAH:::=
HB: =That 's not going to increase their turnover and [and
KN: [Yeah::
(.)
HB: E:r=and because I don't say=>fair enough if I have more time< I'm going to
buy more that's nonsense:: isn't it (.) only that the people have to stand
there longer and get ann[oyed=
GB: [yeah
KN: =>But they have too few people<

In this particular episode, the participants are focusing on the common problem of having to queue in supermarkets whilst buying their groceries. The talk has proceeded along a highly solidaric (i.e. positively aligned) path, as all participants have attested to the problem of long queues in German shops and supermarkets. However, rather suddenly in the talk, KN at line 9, effectively

refuses to ratify the claim made in the previous line by HB who turns his focus to Aldi. Rather than continue to propagate the positive alignment by also attesting to the size of the queues at Aldi, KN makes a more individuated claims, thereby refusing to ratify the positive claim made by HB. What results is a shifting in alignment between participants as the talk takes on amore discursive footing (I shall further discus this particular episode for its negative alignment qualities below).

In both these examples, solidaric claims have been made, and subsequently non-ratified and non-supported. This has variously resulted in some degree of negative alignment as assumed solidarity has been superseded by manifest individuation. There are of course inherent risk associated with such non-ratification and non-support of proffered positive claims, not least because sociability is reliant on an assumed underlying solidarity. However, what I have demonstrated in the preceding data is even at such moments, participants are able to re-align and do so in a manner which can remain equilibric, i.e. allow the episode to progress as evidently sociable (C.f. 6.5).

As I noted above, non-ratification and non-support can be demonstrated to apply equally to proffered individuated claims as it does to solidaric ones. Now I what to turn data from two further episodes to evidence this as part and parcel of the achievement of equilibric sociability.

6.4.2 Non-Ratification of Negative Claims

Where the general maxim for the ratification and support of positive claims is taken here to be the conversational norm, but may be routinely breached, a similar set of possibilities exists in respect of negative claims. As I stated earlier, negative claims are essentially individuated in nature. Although individuated claims are frequently made by participants in conversation and routinely ratified and supported, there are moments during the playing out of sociable conversation where such claims - based on assumed individuation of claimed definition, evaluation, viewpoint, or experience - are not ratified and not supported. At such moments, the participant making that particular claim is denied the conversational resources necessary for negative alignment. Again,

bot non-ratification and non-support of negative claims is evident in the conversational data from both cultures' sociabilities, as the following episodes illustrate.

Again, as with non-ratification of solidaric claims, non-ratification of individuated claims is achieved as part and parcel of recognisable sociable style in both cultures.

I illustrated above how a prime and routine way for English participants to proffer negative claims was in the replaying of unique experience. In order for this to be successful, appropriate conversational action needs to be taken on the part of both the current speaker and the recipients: The speaker tells the tale and the recipients 'allow' the tale to be told by appropriately aligning. However, this need not always be the case. In this narrative environment, examples of non-ratification of uniqueness claims in English can be seen to occur for example in moments where a participant is not permitted to produce or complete a narrative, tell a story, or relay some experience ('cutting someone out' or 'cutting someone short' as the English idioms run).

This may indeed be perceived as rude in some contexts. More specifically, if for example humorous claims are being made (a salient aspect of English narrative delivery – see Chapters 5 and 8), non-ratification and non-support might be to stop the speaker telling a joke on the grounds that one had 'heard that joke before', or alternatively come in with the punch line oneself, thereby robbing the speaker of his / her comic zenith. Not laughing at the joke may have a similar non-ratificatory and non-supportive effect. In terms of the substantive basis of conversational clams, when for example an individual in English makes a uniqueness claim such as that made by KP&LP in Tommy Fields (see excerpt 6.5), it is not expected (or appropriate) that recipients will 'take the floor' away from the current speaker; fail to display appropriate expressive response; or respond with an account of identical or even more dramatic experience. To do so would be to seriously undermine the uniqueness claimed by that speaker and again run the risk of appearing impolite (see Chapter 9). Any English person will recognise the feelings of non-ratification when proffering what we claim as unique experiences, only to be responded to

with a 'that's nothing special' type response' effectively smothering the flames of our uniqueness under the blanket of commonality.

A nice example of a non-ratification and non-support of a negative claim can be see to occur in the episode I have entitled 'Chris's Lad'.

Excerpt 6.9 'Chris's Lad'

KPs[3] and PN (both late middle aged working class males) have been talking about the cassette recorder and my research activities.

1	KPs:	He got so high a ma::rk (1.5) at Salford University=they said (.) we'll
2		pay for him to go in for that and [we'll give you a teachin' post here=
3	PN:	[Yeah
4	PN:	=Yeah
5		(.)
6	KPs:	And then pay for your doctorate (1) for you're::=course (.) and it's up
7		li:ke (.) >this year<
8		(1)
9	PN:	CHRIS'S LAD's goin't Oxford you know (1) Chris Tudor (0.5) Dancin'
10		(0.5)
11	KPs:	Oh Yeah
12		(1)
13	PN:	He's passed for Oxford
14		(0.5)
15	KPs:	Oh::
16		((Drinks handed out aside, KP turns to drinks))
17	KPs:	Cheers Peter

In this episode of sociable chat, KP proffers a negative claim by extolling the virtues of his son (myself) as being intelligent and employed at a university. Both KP and PN are working class, and neither have been to or have had relatives attending university (nor have any of the other co-present participants). Based on this shared informational state, KP then can be relatively certain that my status as 'academic researcher' will form a safe basis for uniqueness claim, if only by association (see Chapter 7). However, PN responds in a manner that does not unproblematically ratify and support this negative claim. Instead, PN rather effectively claims similarity, indeed effectively goes further by 'topping' Salford (an urban lower ranking university) with Oxford (perhaps the highest status university in the land). KP (somewhat crest-fallen) subsequently drops the claim and initiates a joint focus of attention away from the conversation and towards the drinks. Again, one might perceive this as being inappropriate or

even impolite, but as I shall argue below (see Chapter 7), the basis for this perception of inappropriateness is not simply linguistic (i.e. the words uttered), but symbolic (i.e. the stance taken).

Another example of non-ratification and non-support of a negative claim occurs I the following episode, 'Nice Woman'.

Excerpt 6.10 'Nice Woman'

The preceding conversation has been about a local doctor recently convicted of killing several of his patients, one of who it transpires was known to the participants co-present

EP: The first time I heard it they showed a woman on TV and I act=I actually
recognised her (0.5) she was ((coughs)) working for age concern [opposite
JL: [that's my
EP: the su:rgery::
(.)
JL: That's my mother's friend that
(.)
EP: Oh no=
RP: =>Yeah she was a really nice wom[an
EP: [she was really ni:ce yeah=
RP: =yeah=
EP: =We couldn't [believe it
JL: [me mother was in Spain with her two years ago (2) with Age
Conce:[rn=on this holiday with Age Concern coz me mothers (0.5) other
RP: [YEAH
friend works for Age Conce[rn in Hyde
EP: [hm::
(.)
RP: yeah
(0.5)
JL: And er she's the [one whose daughter
JW: [have you FINISHED with that Elke ((Host taking plate))=
EP: =Yeah (.) it was [excellent
JL: [She's the one whose er her (.) her daughter's a solicitor
and its her that's set the the ball () ball rollin'=
EP: =[°hm°
RP: =[Hm
(1.5)
JL: It's terrible though in't it=
EP: =yea::h
(0.5)
RP: We were really shocked coz she was a really nice woman
(.)
EP: Yea:h

'Nice Woman' provides a typical example of English sociable conversation where a negative claim is made, again on the basis of

uniquerness, specifically by knowing personally the victim of a serial killer. Both RP&EP and JL attempt to make and have supported such claims on the basis of having some unique relationship with the victim. However, the negative alignment required to ratify these indivuated claims is problematic, as what is being claimed as uniqueness turns out to be a more communal experience. Rather than have these claims ratified and aligned to in a way that signals there uniqueness and allows that particular claimant to continue along a more indivuated trajectoy, both sets of particpants effectively repeatedly proffer without suitable reciprocal alignment. However, again, the particpants manage to travesrese this piotentialy disequilibric moment in a sociable way, by expressing simultaneously adding their own nuances on a common theme.

Both these examples demonstrate then how the proferring of individuated claims aligned to in a manner that does not fully ratify or support. Of course, such not ratificatory aligfnments can also be evidenced by the considering German sociable conversation.

In German sociable conversation, non-ratification of negative claims also occurs. Due to the German predilection for individuated standpoints though, this is less frequent in objective discussion sequences as by definition, individuated standpoints are required to make such talk happen and are therefore normatively supported. As, for instance, was evidenced in the English-German comparative literature reviewed in Chapter 2, during argumentation sequences, if a German speaker suddenly agrees with a proposition, the speaker who is conceded to (i.e. positively aligned to) may well feel somewhat bemused or even offended (see Kotthoff 1991). In short, when a negative claim is made in German sociable conversation, co-participants are brought under some conversational obligation to support this by negatively aligning to it, as are the recipients of negative narrative claims in English conversation.

Instances of non-ratification of an attempt to initiate negative alignment do however occur. The following excerpt provides some evidence of this.

Excerpt 6.11 'Driving in England'

The immediately preceding discussion has been about driving in other cultures. There has been some debate about how easy or difficult this is with varying opinions being proffered. KH turns to EP (whom has been silent to tat point and whom KH knows does have driving licence and lives in England).

KH: >Die Elke fährt doch aber auch=wie bist denn Du damit fertiggeworden (
)<
(1.5)
EP: Ich bin nur einmal gefahren und dann nie wieder
(0.5)
KH: Tatsächlich=ist das so schwierig
(.)
EP: Nö=aber ich hab keine Lust
(2)
SH: Ach sie fängt dann schon ([ )
IB: [((LOUD COUGH))
(1)
KH: Fährst dann noch nichtmal=ne
(0.5)
EP: Nö: (1.5) >Ich fahre mit=dem Bus<
(2)
KH: Wegen des Linksverkehrs jetzt (.) oder weshalb=
EP: =NEI:::N=ich habe einfach keine Lust mit dem Auto [zu fahren
KH: [Ach so

Excerpt 6.11 Translation 'Driving in England'

KH: >But Elke drives as well=how did you cope with that (
)<
(1.5)
EP: I've only driven once and not again
(0.5)
KH: Really=is that so difficult
(.)
EP: No=I just don't feel like it
(2)
SH: Oh she already begins ([ )
IB: [((LOUD COUGH))
KH: So you don't even drive=do you
(0.5)
EP: No: (1.5) >I take the bus<
(2)
KH: Because of the left-hand drive (.) or what=
EP: =NO:::=I just don't feel like [driving
KH: [Oh right

What happens in this piece of talk is that KH makes repeated attempts to examine EP's reasons or rational for not driving in England, and attempts to initiate some objective discussion which can be assessed for its pros and cons.

In this sense, KH's stance is 'negatively dialogistic' in nature (a conversational phenomenon I observed frequently in my German gatherings), attempting to initiate negative alignment. EP however – to use an English idiom – 'wants none of it' or alternatively 'refuses to play ball' and makes this manifest by refusing to negatively align (at least not in the sociable conversational sense) with KH. Thus, in his instance, no sociable Wettkampf develops and the topic is quickly dropped as a resource for such alignment.

Another example of non-ratification of an individuated claim can be seen in the following excerpt, 'Ja uns auch'.

Excerpt 6.12 'Ja uns auch' [Yeah us as well]

The previous talk has seen all participants agreeing wholeheartedly about how over-demanding and unreasonable east Germans are ('Ossies') on holiday.

1	HB:	Ja:: (.) wir haben eigentlich <u>auch</u> nette Leute kennengelernt=
2	KN:	=Ja WIR au[::ch
3	HB:	[Da in dem einen Hotel (0.5) er voriges Jahr in Valentino ne
4		(0.5) eh da hatte man manchmal den Eindruck die Hälfte bißchen=die
5		Hälfte der Leute waren davon erm (0.5) Ossis °ne°=
6	KN:	=Mm
7		(1.5)
8	HB:	er=aber wie gesagt wir haben mehrere kennengelernt und die meisten
9		nette Leute ne
10		(0.5)
11	KN:	Ja manche sind auch wieder ganz anspruchslos=
12	HB:	=ja: (0.5) ne

Excerpt 6.12 Translation 'Yeah us as well'

1	HB:	Yeah:: (.) but we <u>also</u> met nice people=
2	KN:	=Yeah US as [well
3	HB:	[In that one hotel (0.5) last year in Valentino eh (0.5) er there
4		sometimes you got the impression that half a bit=half the people there
5		were erm (0.5) Ossis °didn't you°=
6	KN:	=Mm
7		(1.5)
8	HB:	er=but as I said we have met several people and most of them friendly
9		people eh
10		(0.5)
11	KN:	Yeah some of them don't have high demands at all=
12	HB:	=Yeah: (0.5) eh

What happens in this particular excerpt is that, during a conversation in which all participants have been defining and evaluating negatively 'Ossies' ['East Germans'], HB shifts footing and makes a claim which runs contra to that proffered by KN and previously himself by specifically attesting to the existence of 'nice' Ossies. This is an attempt to distance himself from the unmitigated collective derogatory treatment up to that point directed as 'Ossies' (East Germsn, as opposed to 'Wessies' – West Germans), and in effect from his interlocutor KN. Rather than ratify this negative alignment by countering its propositional content, KN instead also changes footing by claiming solidarity with this new definitional and evaluative stance.

Both these sets of data illustrate then the common conversational phenomenon then of non-ratification of proffered negative claims in and through alignment practices. Again, there are marked differences in terms of how this phenomenon manifests itself at the level of sociable style. The English data reflect the preference in English sociable conversation to align negatively by drawing on individuated aspects of experience. The German data reflect the preference for proffering individuated standpoints, definition, or evaluations of a common topic. Just as both sets of claims can be ratified, so they can be non-ratified. Thus, rather than English sociable conversation being unending narrative, and German being unending agonism, participants' ability to align allows then to either develop or abort such conversational practices.

The episodes drawn upon in the preceding pages have been used then to illustrate both positive and negative conversational claims in both cultures and point to how such claims can be ratified and supported, or alternatively non-ratified and non-supported, in the collective achievement of each sociable episode. The common denominator advanced in my reading of these data is that all have been manageable instances of sociable equilibrium, that is, talk in and through which the sociable ethos is sustained.

However, as illustrated by the facework as politeness model advanced in Chapter 3, sociable conversation is prone to disequilibrium, that is, talk which threatens the ethos of sociability. Again, such disequilibric phenomena can be

demonstrated to be conversational contingencies allowed for by the model. It is theses aspects of sociable episodes - what I shall refer to as positive and negative threshold breaches – that I want to briefly address.

6.5 On the Boundaries of (Conversational) Politeness: Negative and Positive Threshold Breaches

I suggested in Chapter 3 that sociable interaction is synonymous with equilibric interaction. It is interaction where participants work hard to foster an ethos of recognisable sociability and facilitate the claiming of both positive and negative through conversational claims. At the very least, participants in sociable episodes are expected to take part in making sure that sociability remains on a even keel. In this sense, the preceding examples have been instances of what I would refer to as equilibric alignments, as none have posed a potential or actual threat to the underlying ethos of sociability.

Now, just as this equilibrium can be sustained by the symbolic acts of those co-present, so it can be threatened. Let me take metaphorical liberties by identifying two alignment extremes:

(+x): During a sociable episode, a sociable argument escalates to the point where it breaks out into a 'wild west' style brawl.[1]

(-x): During another sociable episode, agreement is reached to the point where it develops into a farcical state of solidarity.

These are exaggerated examples of course, but they do point to extremes on the solidarity-individuation dimension that underlies sociable conversation. Fortunately, these types of events seldom occur. In fact, moments of what I shall refer to as positive or negative threshold breaches are the exception to much of the talk that goes on. However, I shall attempt to identify some instances here.

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[1] There is an interesting scene from the Woody Allen movie *Zelig* where an example of this is used to comic effect.

To reiterate, positive threshold breaches occur at moments when positive alignment threatens the fabric of sociability. At these points, negative faces may be threatened. Conversely, negative threshold breaches occur at moments where negative alignment has 'done to far' or become too intense. In such moments, positive face can be threatened. Threshold breaches in sociability normally consist of two elements: The breach itself (actual or potential) itself; and attempts made by fellow participants to repair or remedy the breach in the hope of restoring sociable equilibrium. I noted above that a positive threshold breach would be characterised by for instance, participants becoming too solidaric in their conversational claims, to the point where conversational autonomy was threatened. In English for example, this might manifest as the talk topic crying up, as participants found it difficult to add some new and individuated definitive or evaluative dimension to a topic. A negative threshold breach would be characterised by excess individuation, beyond the point were participants found it hard to incorporate individuated claims as 'sociable'. Under such conditions, positive face threat would occur as the solidarity between participants would be brought into question.

I will not spend too much time addressing threshold breaches here. Indeed, in the following analytical chapters I shall focus almost exclusively on 'equilibric' rather than virtual or actual disequilibric conversation. However, in order to fully illustrate the model set out above, I shall conclude this chapter by pointing to instances of actual or potential threshold breaches in both cultural milieu, as evidenced in the conversational data and as drawn from my own observations. This last aspect of the model is one that I shall suggest in Chapter 9 subsequent studies may focus on.

6.5.1 Disequilibric Negative Alignment (Positive Threshold Breaches)

As narrative is the preferred form of discourse in English sociable interaction, it is here that sociable equilibrium can be threatened via potential or actual disequilibric alignment. There appear to be two main ways in which this can occur. First, the speaker can 'go on too much' in his / her uniqueness claim. Such asymmetrical claiming of conversational goods (i.e. the turn at talk, or more precisely the 'turn allocation system [see Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson

1974]) and 'hogging' of the floor in effect precludes the chance for others participants to proffer uniqueness claims and deprives them of the conversational resources to claim a fundamental face need. Second, the semantic content of the narrative can be such that it is 'too unique', too distanced, or too alienated from the prevailing positive social values recognised by those co-present and ones acting as a basis for solidarity. An example of this second form of disequilibric alignment can be seen in the following episode.

Excerpt 6.13 'Stealing Bikes'

RP&EP, KP&LP have been reminiscing about 'naughty things that they had done as children. In this general thematic context, LP now proffers here own unique nuance on the common theme by invoking here childhood activities of stealing motorcycles.

1	RP:	We used to do knock a door run and stuff (didn't we)
2		(0.5)
3	KP:	Hm
4		(.)
5	RP:	Garden sneakin' and [that
6	LP:	[YOU USED to go climbin' over peoples gardens
7		didn't yo[u and st[uff like that
8	KP:	[Yea:h [we we=we was (into) garden sneakin' and knock-a-door
9		run we [did that a lot
10	LP:	[DID ANYBODY ( ) Knock-a-door [run
11	KP:	[Hedge hoppin' was what
12		we did a lot weren't it
13		(1)
14	RP:	Wreckin' peoples hedges (0.5) can you imagine if kids did that to your own
15		hed[ges
16	LP:	[jumpin' through=you go fuck[in' mental [wouldn't you
17	EP:	[hm
18	KP:	[You used to jump onto the
19		hedge and climb along it didn't you=
20	RP:	=YEAH
21		(0.5)
22	KP:	And you'd be fuckin' stuck in't middle of it=
23	RP:	=(hh)ye(h)a(h)h hahaha yeah
24		(1.5)
25	LP:	I used to steal motorbikes (1) quite often
26		(2)
27	LP:	I don't [know why:=
28	KP:	[We did
29	KP:	=We did hedge hoppin'on't=
30	LP:	=jus u(h)sed to do [it ( )
31	KP:	[ON'T END of our street=at e::r (.) t- (.) Cunliffes=
32	RP:	=hm=
33	KP:	=They had a good hedge for it didn't they=
34	RP:	=That's right yea[h
35	KP:	[And then there was the ones on (0.5) Ch=Chester Street
36		was it Chester Ste-
37		(1)
38	RP:	Chester Street yeah
39		(0.5)
40	KP:	Was it called Ch[ester Street

41 LP: [IN FACT THERE WAs quite a gang of us [who used to go
42 KP: [Next door to
43 LP: rou::::nd=
44 KP: Mattie's
45 KP: =There was on there weren't they (0.5) mice on the pies women=they had (
46 [ )
47 RP: [AW[E:: YEAH::::
48 LP: [Sneakin' out of our [houses (.) at like one o'clock in the mornin'=
49 KP: [( )
50 RP: =It was a really good one that=
51 LP: =When our parents had gone to [bed
52 RP: [God it were some years ago that weren't it

((20 second schism as LP loudly continues her tale of 'stealing motorbikes' and KP/RP continue on the hedge-hoppin' theme))

In this particular moment of talk, LM proffers her own account of childhood 'naughtiness'. This is done within a wider narrative 'round' (Tannen 1984) in which all participants proffer individuated variations on a common theme, that is, naughty things done as children. What happens in this excerpt is that LM essentially 'goes too far'. She goes beyond the boundaries of what is 'acceptable' and importantly, what can be accommodated within the current sociability. In and through her negative clam, she in effect posits herself beyond the thresholds of solidarity. What is claimed as the basis for uniqueness is no longer naughtiness (positively recognised and valued), but something more deviant, i.e., theft *per se*.

From this identification of threshold breach, we can look again to the episode for evidence of the second of the elements noted above, i.e. the repair or remedy. Two main ways of handling possible negative alignment threshold breaches in English conversation appear to be as follows: Quickly seek solidarity (mitigate counter-propositions or expression of difference by proffering similar but mitigated versions of the problematic claim); or use humour to re-frame the claim as non-serious and therefore non-disequilibric. A good example of this latter strategy is in the frequent use of teases which frequently follow some overly individuated claim. Teases in this sense function as an effective form of social control on overly individuated selves (see Drew 1987) and in effect prevent 'runaway' individuation. The following excerpt provides a good example of the first strategy for handling potential threshold breaches, that is, in the use of similar but mitigated versions of a potentially disequilibric one.

Excerpt 6.14 'Nickin' Jim's Bike'

LP: [Sneakin' out of our houses (.) at like one o'clock in the mornin'=
KP: ( )
RP: =It was a really good one that=
LP: =When our parents had gone to [bed
RP: [God it were some years ago that weren't it

((20 second schism as LP loudly continues her tale of 'stealing mototrbikes' and KP/RP continue on the hedge-hoppin' theme))

KP: Yeah we used to [nick e:::r (.) we used (1) to nick dustcaps
EP: [Yeah
(0.5)
LP: Dustcaps
(.)
KP: Dustcaps yeah (0.5) remember dustcaps off ca[rs
RP: [Yea::h=that's right=
KP: =Whistlin' with 'em like that
(0.5)
RP: Yeah=yeah
(.)
KP: You used to put 'em in your fingers there and that and jus-
(0.5)
LP: I REMEMBER THE FI::RST motorbike I ever stole was (1) <u>not</u> on me own obviously (.) >we used to climb out of ou::r< <u>bed</u>rooms or:: (.) leave our houses at one o'clock in the mornin'=>a big gang of us meet up< (1) and we go Moo:rfield (.) f- for some <u>rea:</u>son everybody on Moorfield had a motorbike (.) or it so=so it seemed (0.5) and <u>pi</u>nch a motorbike and then go down the Tame valley ridin' motorbi(h)kes ha[haha
EP: [Bloody hell fire=
LP: =(H)at li(h)ke tw(h)o o'clock in the mo:rnin you [know
EP: [My God=
LP: =Really <u>sen</u>seless things to do (.) yeah
(1.5)
EP: Hm=
KP: =I remember nickin' Jed's motorbike once
(0.5)
RP: Did you=
KP: =Yeah
(0.5)
RP: When was that=I don't remember that=
KP: =>Oh it was< yea:rs ago (0.5) >he was he was< stayin' at e::r (1) Andy's when [he was
RP: [Was this (.) >when he was down from Scotland on his own sort of thing< (.) yeah
(.)
KP: He must have been=he was livin=he was livin with Claire=
RP: =Yeah=
KP: =At Andy's
(.)
RP: Yeah (right)
(0.5)
KP: And e::r (0.5) we nicked=his motorbike were <u>shit</u> weren't it=he used to start it up with a screwdriver (0.5) and me and Andy nicked it and we went on't pa::rk with it

What happens here is that KP proffers a similar but more acceptable version of LP's. The bike stolen by KP and friend in the first instance belonged to a friend. Second, was only taken as a joke – it was not *serious theft* but rather *fabricated theft* (Cf. Goffman 1974). What this and the preceding uniqueness claims are based on is petty theft (dust caps rather than the whole vehicle) or pseudo theft ('temporarily' stealing Jim's bike only to return it later that night without him being any the wiser). This in effect accommodates the stealing of motorbikes as an acceptable activity within the boundaries of positive social values; i.e. it keys the action of stealing motorbikes from theft (potentially non-equilibric) to one of 'childhood naughtiness' (already established grounds for solidarity). This remedial works by KP and RP (who ratifies the claim by audientially aligning – see Chapter 7) works to restore a momentarily threatened sociable equilibrium.

As German conversationalists display a preference for the use of objective discussion or agonism for the claiming of uniqueness (see 3.2), it is here that positive threshold breaches tend to occur, largely as a result of incommensurably uniqueness. This manifests itself in agonism becoming 'too heated', talk where participants have irresolvably 'locked horns', or one participant being conversationally 'beaten into the ground', to the point where he / she can no longer defend him / herself and the talk grinds to a halt. For example, in the following German example, HB and KH have been talking extensively about cars over several minutes preceding the point at which we enter. The talk has become progressively schismed as each participants strengthens his own standpoint and seeks to weaken the others. Talk has in effect been drifting away from a sociable argument to a 'real' one (Cf Schiffrin 1984).

Excerpt 6.15 'Wo ist denn Peter?'

KH and HB have been talking for several minutes on the topic of taking cars abroad. The talk has become increasingly schismed, as both KH and HB draw on largely factual evidence go support their propositions. Alongside this, the volume and pace of the talk has been increasing

1 KH: Es ist schon vorgekommen daß (0.5) einige Ausländer

Wagen gekauft ha[ben Polen
HB: [Hm
(0.5)
HB: Hm=
KH: =Und an der Grenze sind Unfälle passiert der wurde zur Kasse gebeten,
die Versicherung (.) <mußte noch bezahlen>=
HB: =Hm::=hm:::
(.)
KH: >Weil der gar nicht angemeldet war<=DAS ISt
(.)
HB: Wenn [der=WENN DER
KH: [Das Beste ist das Sicherste ist wenn du ([ )
HB: [Wenn der >nach Polen
geht ist natürlich Schlechter=weil du da meistens da kannst du< .hhh=
KH: =Das sicherste ist [wenn du den Wagen verkaufst wenn du den Wagen
HB: [kannst du da bei denen kannst du da nichts machen
KH: Abmeldest (1) >und wenn der den kaufen will=dann soll der sich neue
Nummernschilder holen=dann ist für dich hundertprozentig [erledigt< (1)
HB: [Hm
sonst kannst du zur Kasse gebeten werden=
HB: =E::R Paß Auf=paß auf=ICH er=ich halte das für möglich ich=>habe es
auch jahrelang gemacht früher=und zwar< .hhh (0.5) gab das e::r=
>haben wir extra so ne kleinen< Ka:rten (.) da stand extra drinne ja ich
e::r (.) ich habe (0.5) als Besitzer des Wagens soundso den eh das
Fahrzeug an (1) e::r den=und=den verkauft an an das Datum und
Uhrzeit und alles war schon vorgedruckt (0.5) alles ausgefüllt
Briefmarke drauf und hingeschickt (1) und eh da hatte ich (2) weiß ich
nicht ganz vier fünf Stück davon=und wollten wir irgenwann neue holen
dann haben die gesagt das ist nicht erforderlich (.) die brauchten die
brauchten das nicht zu wissen.
(0.5)
KH: ( )
HB: DAS KOMMT AUTOMATISCH die Rückmeldung vom anderen
Straßenverkehrsamt (0.5) Ich sage ja das ist natürlich so Fälle (.) da
kann es vorkommen ne=
KH: =>Stell doch den Krach mal ab man versteht das ja Nicht< (1) wo ist
denn Peter

((K leaves for Garden to look for Peter – topic ends with no resolution))

Excerpt 6.15 Translation 'Where's Peter?'

KH: It has happened that (0.5) some foreigners bought cars Poles
HB: Hm
(0.5)
HB: Hm=
KH: =And at the border accidents happend he was charged the insurance (.)
<still had to pay>=
HB: =Hm::=hm::
(.)
KH: >Because he wasn't registered<=THAT Is
(.)
HB: If [he=IF HE
KH: [The best is the safest is if you ([ )
HB: [If he >goes to Poland of course
Worse=because most of the time you can you< .hhh=
KH: =The safest is [if you sell the car if you sell the car if you take it off
HB: [then you can't then you can't do anything

17 KH: the road (1) >and if he wants to buy it=he'll have to get new registration
18 plates then the matter is a hundred per cent [sorted< out for you otherwise
19 HB: [Hm
20 KH: you can be charged=
21 HB: =E::R LISTEN=LISten I er=I think that's possible and I=>used to do it like
22 this over years that is there were< .hhh (0.5) ther we e::r =>there we had
23 especially little< cards (.) in which it said I e::r (.) I have (0.5) as the owner
24 of the car such and such then eh have sold the vehicle to such=and=such
25 a person date time and everything (0.5) it was all pre-printed I filled
26 everything put a stamp on and sent it off (1) and eh I had (2) I'm not quite
27 sure four of these and at some stage wanted to get new ones and then
28 they said (.) that's not required they didn't need this
29 (0.5)
30 KH: ([ )
31 [THAT COMES AUTOMATICALLY the feedback from the other
32 road traffic authority (0.5) as I say there are of course such cases (.) where
33 it can happen you know=
34 KH: =>Just turn that noise of you can't hear anything< (1) where's Peter gone
35 to

((K leaves for Garden to look for Peter – topic ends with no (+) repair))

Whereas in English this type of negative threshold breach (and hence positive face-threat) seldom occurs (the English archetypal equivalent being somebody 'going on too much' – a phenomenon which conversely is rarely perceived in German conversation), the German preference for extended debate and argumentation makes it particularly susceptible to such negative threshold breaches. Further, if and when such points of argumentation do occur in English, as I have already mentioned, participants commonly use humour to re-frame the event as non-serious. In terms of the second element of threshold breaches – repair and remedy – German participants seem less well equipped to deal with this. In the above excerpt, KH simply withdraws to avoid any possible positive face threat (by standing up and walking off into the garden to look for Peter - Cf. Goffman 1967). Whether this repair or not may be debatable, but upon KH's return several minutes later, a more congenial and solidaric atmosphere did resume. What is clear is that German 'Wettkampf' can extend for many minutes and prima facie appear unsociable. It therefore has to extend far beyond the limits of what is perceived as 'sociable' argumentation in English sociable episodes before positive threshold breaches occur.

6.5.2 Disequilibric Positive Alignment (Negative Threshold Breaches)

Positive threshold breaches (whereby negative faces are threatened) are more difficult to capture, yet do occur. A positive threshold breach would occur when solidarity had extended to or beyond the point where the possibility for individuated claims becomes subsumed under all encompassing commonality ands solidarity (a graphic example culturally being staunch communist states). What happens is that the window of opportunity for drawing on the current conversational topic for the mobilisation of individuated selves rapidly shrinks; self expression diminishes in favour of a more conversationally stagnant collective expression.

What we know in English as the conversation 'drying up', or as a gathering 'dying a death' are good idiomatic expressions which index such instances of negative threshold breaches. Compared to German, English conversation seems to be able to tolerate relatively little silence or conversational inactivity. Thus, at points in sociable episodes where conversations do seem to 'dry up', participants usually work quickly to identify new topical resources. Endemic at such points in English at conversation are what are variously referred to as topic initiators (see e.g. Schegloff and Sacks 1973; Wilson 1989) such as 'Oh, I know what I wanted to ask you', or 'Hey, did you see that programme on Telly last night?', with 'hey' and 'oh' sparking back to life sociability like a spark to a tinderbox and effectively allowing participants to re-align themselves, often in a more negatively aligned manner. If a new narrative is not found, attention may be focused elsewhere. An excellent resource for this is co-present children. In my own gatherings I observed that on more than one occasion in my English data when conversation had effectively dried up (brought to such a point by a total and extended agreement on an issue or exhausting of a replayed common past), participants often turned to children to either chastise ("Nicholas, stop playin' with your food") or show disproportionate attention ("Oh::: what have you made there). This not infrequently led to a joint and somewhat exaggerated interest being displayed by the other participants in the temporarily negatively altercasted child. This new point of interest could then in itself could provide a 'common' focus from

which a new set of individuated claims could be drawn ('Oh, do you know what he did last week...).

In the following example, the conversation reaches such a point.

Excerpt 6.16 He He...Hm

The participants are moving out of a laughter sequence in which all have unmitigatingly expressed their amusement.

1	MB:	(h)awe:::
2		(.)
3	LM:	Awe:::
4		(5)
5	LM:	hm
6		(0.8)
7	MB:	hm=hm
8		(0.2)
9	RP:	Gorgeous this Lyn

What happens here is that, recognising a possible positive threshold breach, RP diverts attention to the food in much the same way that a new topic might be introduced. As well as changing the conversational focus, this move importantly altercasts LM (see Malone 1997) into – at least as far as this conversational environment is concerned - the unique role of host and 'cooker of good foods'. This in effect initiates a period of negative alignment. LM goes on in this piece of interaction to ratify this altercasted self by relaying to the rest of the participants qua guests the ingredients etc. Such moments of threshold breach are not wholly resolved, even by such remedial and re-alignment action but effectively send alignment ripples over the ensuing turns at talk until the waters settle into a more equilibric state. This is evidenced a few moments later on in this episode as all participants express unequivocal praise about the tastiness of the food.

Excerpt 6.17 Gorgeous

1	(MB):	Hm
2		(0.8)
3	LM:	Hm=
4	RP:	=Gorgeous this
5		(.)
6	LM:	=It's alright in't it=
7	MB:	=Hm:
8	MB:	=(It is)

This joint declaration of how 'nice' the food is does eventually come to an end as one of the male participants makes a 'farting' sound with his chair leading to immediate humorous mocking of that individual from all the other participants (again, thereby altercasting and adding some element of negative alignment to the proceedings). The food is not referred to after that point apart from at the end of the meal.

What this evidences than is the threat overly solidaric claims can pose the equilibric nature of sociable conversation in English sociable episodes. As with the preceding contingencies, this final set of sociable phenomenon is equally applicable to German sociable conversation, albeit realised conversationally differently.

Interestingly, although much of the literature suggests that German conversation veers away from overly solidaric development, there seems to be more of a tolerance for potential solidarity threshold breaches. Often in German conversation, participants can agree themselves to conversational death almost, to the point where no more agreement is possible if the semblance of sincerity - somewhat of a pre-requisite for sociability - is to be maintained. At such points, German conversation often stalls, albeit temporarily, as participants cease contributing conversationally in favour of a period of extended silence. The only contributions in such encounters are often 'hmms', acting as echoes of a previously ratified state of heightened solidarity. At such moments, participants are effectively mortified, unable to move conversationally under immobilising weight of sameness. Of course, as with English strategies for dealing with overly solidaric moments in talk, new conversational resources for

individuation can be found. For instance in the following, the food is used as a resource for moving to a negative alignment phase.

Excerpt 6.18 'Excellent'

1	UB:	Blätterteigröllchen und (.) wo es so grünlich durchschimmert da ist Spinat
2		und Schafs[käse drin und in den anderen ist nur [Schafskäse und
3	HB:	[Hm:
4	GB:	[Hm::
5	UB:	das ist sowas Ähnliches das ist glaube ich nur ein anderer Tei::g=
6	GB:	=Hm::[::
7	HB:	[Ach So
8		(0.5)
9	GB:	=[Hm:::
10	HB:	=[Hm:::
11		(0.5)
12	HB:	Hm=hm:
13		(.)
14	HB:	Das wirk[lich nietlich
15	GB:	[Das hört sich alles ganz ganz toll an

Excerpt 6.18 Translation 'Excellent'

1	UB:	Puff pastry rolls and (.) where you can see the green colour shining
2		through that's spinach with feta [cheese in it (.) and in the others there's
3	HB:	[Hm:
4	UB:	only [feta cheese and this is something similar I think that's only a
5	GB:	[Hm::
6	UB:	a different type of dou:gh=
7	GB:	=Hm::[::
8	HB:	[Oh right
9		(0.5)
10	GB:	=[Hm:::
11	HB:	=[Hm:::
12		(0.5)
13	HB:	Hm=Hm
14		(.)
15	HB:	That's rea[lly cute
16	GB:	[All this sounds really excellent

This may seem prima facie solidaric, but what such a move allows – particularly following a potential solidarity threshold breach – is the individual 'choosing' of food ('Kase darf ich nicht aber salat probiere ich mal' ['I daren't eat cheese but I'll try a bit of salad']).

Again, drawing on favoured conversational style, if a participant making some claim in some objective discussion finds that no counter-proposition is

forthcoming, he / she may alter footing to either counter his / her own standpoint and, as a potential side effect add some nuance which may initiate some element of negative alignment in the up to that point solidaric partners. In terms of remedial work, German speakers interestingly often ask after others in order to reinstate some element of negative alignment (e.g. 'Und was ist deine Meinung' ['And what's your opinion?']). Prima facie this would seem to be initiating a narrative type episode, but what it often leads to is a quick contradiction of the invoked response. In this sense another's opinion is forced out as suitable conversational resource for negative alignment (see my discussion of the German 'examinatory self' in Chapter 7).

6.6 Alignment Contingencies: Summary

What I have done in this chapter is to move on from the general observations of alignment within sociable gatherings outlined in chapter 5 to more closely examine sociable conversational occurring within what I referred to in chapter 5 as the main phase of sociability – or more precisely, sociable episodes where participants develop some common topic, theme, or issue.

I have moved beyond considering sociable conversation in each culture under the general heading of 'style' (see Chapter 2), to consider more specifically how sociable conversation can be analysed for its alignment properties. In drawing on the model of facework as alignment outlined in chapter 3, I have outlined the range of alignment contingencies, including both equilibric alignment, and what I referred to disequilibric ones.

Importantly, aside from illustrating these alignment contingencies per se, I have demonstrated how German and English sociable conversation displays salient differences in terms of the nature of claims made by participants during each of these various alignment phases. In short, alignment in English sociable episodes seems to reflect the preference for narrative and personalisation of topics. German alignment seems to be characterised by the claiming of both solidarity and individuated in and thorough more objective discussion. These findings corroborate much of what was said in Chapter 2 in terms of German

and English differences in conversational style in general (e.g. Byrnes 1986, Straehle 1997, Watts 1989).

What the findings presented above have also pointed to is the positive social values (Goffman 1967) which were earlier argued to guide participants in each culture (Byrnes 1986, Friday 1994, Straehle 1997, Watts 1989) in their conversational behaviour, and ones which were linked to images of selfhood (see Chapter 3). It is these images of selfhood – what I have already referred to as sociable selves – and their role in both positive and negative alignment which I want to move on to explore more closely in the following chapter.

6.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided evidence of how the model of equilibrium suggested in Chapter 3 might be evidenced to be conversationally played out in English and German vernacular cultures. I have included conversational excerpts from my particular gatherings primarily as illustrative data to furnish the application of the heuristic model of conversational facework. These data illustrate the operation of positive and negative dynamics in both conversational milieus in terms of their co-present occurrence, ratification and non-ratification, and the potential for disequilibrium by conversational moves which may breach either positive or negative thresholds of sociability. Alongside the application of these concepts, I have sought to weave into the discussion a comparative dimension, by highlighting cultural differences between German and English sociability. Comparatively, a picture of the English and German sociability should be coming more clearly into focus, and for those already acquainted, begin to reinforce and be validated by what they will have experienced themselves of facework in each culture.

I have by and large employed the term 'claims' (Cf. Goffman 1971) throughout this chapter, to refer to the positive and negative symbolic stances proffered by participants in and through their conversational moves. However, as I intimated earlier, as ritual equilibrium is played out primarily, not through the expression of conversational moves but by the mobilisation of *conversational selves*, it is the nature of the selves mobilised in each conversational milieu that I want to concentrate on more specifically next.

Notes to Chapter 6

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[1] The only instance of the application of a similar notation to naturally occurring conversation is in Pomerantz's (1984) study of agreeing and disagreeing with assessments in English. There however they are used to refer purely to favourable (+) or unfavourable (-) assessments.
[2] I use the term sequentially following to be distinguished from 'next turn'. A sequential placement of a response can of course occur several turns on but still be treated by participants as sequentially following some prior turn.
[3] KPs is here to be differentiated from KP, a different individual (see Appendix A).

CHAPTER

7

GERMAN AND ENGLISH SOCIABLE SELVES

7.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter I attempted to do two things. First I aimed to demonstrate how the alignment model presented in Chapter 3 could be applied to naturally occurring ongoing conversational data. Second, I attempted to draw out some of the salient differences between English and German sociable conversation in terms of its general alignment features. Throughout the discussion I employed the term 'claim' to refer to conversational stances taken up by participants in various sociable episodes in each milieu. Both sets of participants were shown to make what I argued were positive and negative conversational claims in the conversational achievement sociable interaction. It was argued that such claims commonly received ratification and support from co-participants in each culture in and through the alignments they could be seen to have taken vis-à-vis such claims. The question of alignment was then extended to illustrate the various conversational contingencies provided for in the model presented in Chapter 3. Thus, alongside equilibric ratification and support of conversational claims (what I have argued throughout is the working conversational norm in sociable gatherings) instances of non-ratification and non-support of positive and negative clams were briefly touched on, as well as what I identified as actual disequilibric claims and alignments and the subsequent repair and remedial work done by co-participants in talk..

I now want to focus more specifically a concept introduced in Chapter 3 - one that will allow us to move from a linguistic reading on alignment practices to a more sociological one – namely, the concept of the 'self'.

As I noted in Chapters 3 and 5, my disciplinary grounding for this

study is a sociological one, and it has been one of my aims throughout to account for facework not from a linguistic, psychological, or discourse studies perspective, but from a sociological one. For this reason, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, my primary interest is not in which particular linguistic strategies are employed in the doing of positive or negative alignment as facework, or what self-perceptions or affective states may be influencing the individual and his / her behaviour, but rather in how the self as a social phenomenon is mobilised and aligned in and as sociable conversation. In short, a major aim has been to gain some sort of conceptual and analytical handle on the self as a fundamental component in the playing out of what manifests itself as equilibric sociability. This chapter then will be devoted to the identification and explication of the self. Specifically , I shall attempt to identify, capture, and illustrate those 'sociable selves' that are routinely mobilised as part and parcel of facework as alignment in sociable episodes.

I shall begin by considering the Goffman (1967, 1969, 1971) informed concept of the self that is employed in this study (7.1). Here I shall focus particularly on the analytical purchase afforded by the 'duel' reading of the self, as both sociable 'players' and 'images'. Following this I shall identify certain sociable selves routinely mobilised in sociable episodes by English and German participants in their respective milieus (7.2). The aim here will be to present a selection of salient sociable selves which allow participants to engage in the alignment practices demonstrated in the previous chapter. In order to evidence these selves as they are mobilised by participants as part and parcel of their sociability, I shall again present instances of conversational interaction drawn from sociable episodes in both milieu, considering in turn selves commonly mobilised for both positive (7.3) and negative (7.4) alignments. I shall then discuss the findings presented, with particular reference to the relationship between sociable selves in each culture and their prevailing sociable styles and positive social values. Finally I shall conclude the chapter (7.5).

Whereas the previous chapter sought to evidence the sociable contingencies identified by the facework as alignment framework advanced in Chapter 3, this chapter seeks to draw and evidence the central sociological concept guiding this study – that of the 'self'. I shall make reference to

collaborative alignment practices throughout this chapter, but the analytical focus shall be on the identification and demonstration of what are in effect the symbolic resources with which participants in each culture play out sociability. In terms of the study as a whole, the findings presented in this chapter will be essential to the analysis of sociable conversation presented in the following and final analytical chapter.

7.1 Conversational Claims and the 'Self'

Before I go on to demonstrate how the concept of the self may be drawn upon to systematically address the sociological bases for cultural differences in sociable conversation, I need briefly to clarify exactly what is meant by the concept as it will be employed here. There are two main conceptualisations of the self informing this study, largely due to their direct relationship to the concept of face. The first is that developed in the writings of Goffman (1967; 1969; 1971; 1974; 1981), often referred to as a 'symbolic internationalists' reading of the self (see Malone 1997). The second is that posited as a basis for cultural variation in the conceptualisation of face and subsequent facework practices (see e.g. Morisaki and Gudykunst 1994; Scollon and Scollon 1995), referred to earlier as a self-construal conceptualisation (see Chapter 1). These two readings of the self are not only intrinsically connected to the concept of face, but equally fundamental to any cross-cultural approach to the study of facework. Further, as I shall illustrate more clearly in the following chapter, these two *prima facie* unrelated conceptualisations can be seen to compliment each other in the analysis of facework across two different cultures.

I shall develop the notion of the self-construal as one relevant to the analysis of ongoing conversational facework at the beginning of the following chapter (Chapter 8). Now however, I want to concentrate on the concept specifically developed by Erving Goffman.

The concept of the self was central to Goffman's writings. It was a concept however which consisted of a range of different presentational properties and interactional facets. The self could be conceived of as a

performer, *a player*, *an image*, *a figure*, *a deity* or *idol*, a bounded set of *territories* or *preserves*, and something which could be treated with varying degrees of *respect*, *considerateness* , *ritual license*, and *symbolic distance* (see Lemert and Branaman [1997], and Malone [1997] for excellent overviews). For example, in Goffman's seminal focus on the self-presentational aspects of everyday life (Goffman 1969), the self was conceived of as consisting of two 'basic parts': Both a performer - 'a harried fabricator of impressions involved in the...task of staging a performance', and as a character - 'a figure, typically a fine one, whose spirit, strength, and other sterling qualities the performance was designed to evoke' (1969, 222). Similar metaphors were carried forward into *On Face-Work* (Goffman 1967) where the self was further conceived of under a 'double definition': As both a 'player in a ritual game', and 'an image pieced together from the expressive implications of the flow of events' (Goffman 1967, 31). These metaphorical representations capture what Goffman famously referred to as the 'dual mandate' (1967) of the self - presenting and presented, player and played entity.

Goffman took this conceptualisation of the self and placed it in the main focus of his life's work – the social situation (see Goffman 1963). Goffman's continuing emphasis on the social situation prescribed a consideration of selves as essentially situated entities, that is, situationally normative, recognisable and, of fundamental importance, of a nature which could be supported by co-present others. From formal roles (the brain surgeon) to more informal statuses (the party guests), selves could be regarded as operating within a range situated contexts. Because of the potential multiplicity of situational selves, persons were best conceived of as normatively committing *particular types of selves*, participating not as total persons but rather 'in terms of special capacities or statuses...in terms of a special self' (Goffman 1967, 52). In this sense, the self was not regarded by Goffman as an atomistic individuated entity, but intrinsically connected with both the selves of others, and the situation at large. Thus, selves presented for situated audiences required both recognition and ratification on the grounds in order to be successfully realised.

An added dimension to the self was posited in Goffman's work on informal conversation (see e.g. Goffman 1974). Here, Goffman

demonstrated that, in and through for example narrative, the self could be invoked as a replayed figure, as some image of self not 'here and now' but essentially 'there and then'. Further, by for example invoking a self belonging to some past reality, that self – or aspect of self - can become castigated, or cast off, or split away from (see Goffman 1967). Thus, the conversational self as image opens up a range of possibilities of how the person as player or performer can present or treat the person as image or character. Finally of course, as I noted in Chapter 1, the accommodative nature of situated interaction was fundamental to both the presentation and treatment of the self as player and as image. Of primary importance in Goffman's world was that the situation be preserved. In terms of facework specifically, I have of course referred to this throughout as the state of ritual equilibrium. Selves presenting and presented then should be of a normatively appropriate nature and of one which could be both 'carried off' by any particular participant and supported by those co-present. This mutual state of affairs was fundamental to the centrality of the self to ritual equilibrium.

In the following chapter I shall enter into the discussion and further analysis the second conceptualisation of the self fundamental to the approach taken in this study, one drawn from the notion of the self as construal, drawn upon in the discussion of cross-cultural variations in the concept of the self as a basis for differences in facework (see Chapter 1) – what I shall term the self as conversational construal (see Chapter 8). Here however I shall base my discussion and analysis around Goffman's conceptualisation, grounded in the 'duel mandate' (Goffman 1967) of the self as sociable 'player' and as sociable 'image'.

A seminal notion intrinsically connected to the concept of face, and by definition related to the self as player and image not mentioned above is that of positive social values. I am treating this briefly under a different heading due to its marked influence by cultural factors as opposed to the above conceptualisations which should be read as essentially universal in nature.

To recap, in Chapter 2 I outlined a set of positive social values that various extant studies had identified as being associated with German and

English cultures respectively. In a nutshell, the Germans, it was suggested valued such things as being able to display one's knowledge in any given discussion, proffer a well thought out standpoint, necessarily defend conversational claims, closely monitor fellow interlocutors conversational contributions for possible errors, and in general conduct oneself with a certain demeanour. The English in their conversational orientation were posited as being guided by a different set of values, such as being able to treat fellow interlocutor with certain ritual care, avoid conflict, and display a degree of deferential support in their verbal interactions. Goffman' s notion of face was of course based in the idea of prevailing positive social values, recognised and oriented to by persons in their self-presentations and perceptions of others similar presentations (see Goffman 1967).

One would expect then that prevailing positive social values would inform the conversational practices of participants in both cultures considered here. Specifically, one would expect the conversational selves as players and images to reflect such prevailing cultural values.

7.2 Solidaric Selves and Idiomatic Identities: Positive and Negative Selves as Conversational Players and Images

I stated in the previous chapter that conversation could be conceived of as operating along the lines of negative and positive conversational *claims*, these being made in and through predominant conversational styles. However, underlying this proffering and alignment at the level of conversation claims lay one at a more symbolic level, involving not the expression of claims, but the mobilisation of selves. Upon considering the conversational data, it became apparent that certain types of selves as conversational players and images were routinely and recurrently mobilised during sociable episodes in both cultures. Participants in talk were presenting and enacting *recognisably sociable selves.*

These symbolic practices appeared to me not incidental or secondary, but fundamental and primary to the joint enactment of sociability as an alignment issue. Although such symbolic things did appear to be happening, the difficulty from my own perspective as researcher lay in formally capturing, presenting and analysing of these selves within the heuristic framework outlined above. In order to incorporate the idea of the symbolic self into the analysis I turned to representing the nature of these selves in terms of what might generally be referred to as their presentational qualities and characteristics.

In order to do this I decided upon employing linguistic categories that I thought best referred to what participants were *doing* in their conversational contributions. Thus, verbs (both passive and active) as categories provided a convenient form of representation. The validity of these labels as descriptors will hopefully be evidenced in the following data excerpts. The result is what I present below as a basic typology of English and German sociable selves (see table 7.1). These are not *a priori* categories which I have brought to the analysis from existing studies or conceptual schema, indeed the absence of 'selves' as a concept in extant studies of German – English differences somewhat precluded this. They are rather ones which have emerged from the conversational data and observational data. They represent what I have observed to be archetypal selves routinely proffered in English and German sociable conversation.

Table 7.1 English and German 'Sociable Selves'

	Negative	***Positive***
English	The Narrating / Narrated Self The 'In the Know' Self The Affected Self The Abased Self	The Gossiping Self The Griping Self The Re-invoking / Re-invoked Self
German	The Examining Self The Knowledgeable Self The Affirmative Self The Demeaned Self	The Confirmative Self The Agonised Self The Pre-invoking / Pre-invoked Self

I will shortly illustrate how each of these types of selves might be manifest in actual conversation. First though, some caveats are necessary. The categories of selves employed here are in the first instance, and in line with the general approach taken throughout, heuristic ones. Their primary function is to highlight some of the basic symbolic standpoints employed in the routine achievement of sociable conversation in each respective culture. In this sense, they are not indexed by the participants themselves in and through language use. Participants do not announce for example their mobilisation of a humorous self, or point out explicitly that some other participant is proffering an abased self (although this of course is not precluded). In this sense the categories I am employing here may be more akin to what Zimmerman (1998) has recently termed 'discourse identities'. Second, the categories are not meant to be totally inclusive of all possible selves proffered or normatively available in English and German sociable settings. Rather, they should be regarded to some extent as exemplars whose analytical function is to illustrate predominant and culturally preferred ways of doing sociability in each respective culture. Finally of course, although I would claim confidence in the neutrality of the general heuristic framework drawn upon so far, there may be some ethnocentric bias to the nomenclature employed here, largely due to the fact that English linguistic categories have been used to represent both English and German conversational selves. Caveats aside though, I feel this representation of the self in talk as an entity predicated on conversational behaviour affords at least some analytical purchase on the data and is in line with the general approach taken in this study.

In the following discussion, the relationship between the sociable selves identified and illustrated here and the conversational styles framed in the previous chapter as alignment will become quite apparent. Any such inferred or read relationship here will be more formally consolidated in the following and final analytical chapter where I shall turn explicitly to the mobilisation and alignment not of conversational claims (as in Chapter 6), but of what then will be a developed conceptualisation of the conversational selves. I shall begin then as in the previous chapter with the English data, starting with negative selves.

7.3 Negative Selves

7.3.1 The English

As has been implied throughout the discussion in Chapter 6, the *narrating self* is perhaps the most salient conversational self mobilised during sociable episodes. In English, the narrating self operates at two levels: The self as narrator, capable of producing an entertaining and engaging account of some past experience; and the self as narrated entity, produced as a figure (see Goffman 1974) in some particular replayed reality. During the mobilisation of the narrating */ narrated self*, tales are told of past selves as protagonists in some accountable drama (see 6.3.2). The narrating self is conversationally manifest by being able to 'tell a good story' (i.e., one that is interesting, humorous, dramatic) as well as presenting an image of self with whom fellow participants can in some way identify and empathise with (see Goffman 1974). A prime example of this occurs in KP&LP's dramatic replaying of their trip to the 'Tommy Fields' (see 6.3.2), as also in the following excerpt. In both the episodes 'Tommy Fields' and 'Crippled Dick', narrating and narrated selves are mobilised simultaneously to create vivid accounts of past events in which the speakers have been involved.

Excerpt 7.1 'Crippled Dick'

The general theme of the preceding talk has been about various pubs that participants have been to.

1	LM:	Have you ever been to the Railway Station in Stalybridge (and had)
2	RP	((LOUD
3		COUGH))=
4	LJ:	=Awe:[::
5	LM:	[Have you had any Crippled Dick=
6	RP:	=((LOUD [COUGH))
7	KJ:	[(Stalybridge)=
8	LJ:	=Its like goin' back in ti::me that [place
9	LM:	[Well they had this drink on called Crippled
10		Dick
11		(.)
12	EP:	Right
13		(0.5)
14	LM:	Right (0.5) Crippled Dick (.) and it had a graphic dra:wing
15		(0.5)
16	RP:	[(what sort of dra[win')
17	LJ:	[(Really)

18 KJ: [(Graphic drawin')=
19 LM: =Of a man (.) >with a crippled dick<=
20 LJ: =hahaha[haha
21 RP: [HA[HAhaha
22 KJ: [HAHAHAHAHA:[::haha
23 LM: [Honest to God right (.) right me and Sheena
24 we went [down
25 EP: [HEhehehe=
26 LM: =(haha) [its true this true
27 EP: [HeHAHAHA
28 (.)
29 LM: And we went down and I we were THAT SCA::[:red
30 TM: [HAhahahaha
31 (1)
32 EP: HEHEha[ha
33 LM: [And we were that sca::red og havin' (.) a full strength (1) we said
34 >can we have a 'crippled dick' shandy< (.) now
35 that'[s ( )
36 KJ: [HAH[AHAHAHAHA...
37 EP: [HA[HAHAHAHA...
38 RP: [HAHAHAHA...
39 LJ: HEHEHEHE...

((SEVERAL SECONDS INTENSE & LOUD LAUGHTER))

There is, as evidenced in Crippled Dick, much artistic and expressive license accorded in the telling of such narratives, much more so than would be allowed in German accounts. This in itself is indicative of the aversion from objectivism that characterises English sociable conversation. As is evident in the preceding excerpt, part and parcel of being able to successfully mobilise a narrating / narrated self in English conversation (i.e. one that fellow-participants will find it easy to ratify and support) is to be able to tell a story or recall an even in an amusing way. This reflects a salient positive social value operating in English sociable conversation, one which can also be claimed by telling a joke, make a quick quip or wise-crack. Indeed even the most serious issues or topics can be framed as humorous. This is evidenced in the following excerpt where JW invokes a 'fabricated narrative'[1] for the purpose of presenting a humorous narrating self.

Excerpt 7.2 'Doin' Foreigners'

Shortly before this gathering, a local doctor had been arrested on suspicion of murdering several of his patients. It would later transpire that the doctor in question would achieve the status of being the world's most notorious serial killer.

1 JW: A bloke were tellin' me about that doctors
2 (0.5)
3 RP: Oh here we go
4 (0.5)
5 JW: Yeah (.) apparently he's been doin foreigners at weekends hahahaha
6 (.)
7 RP: Ha=You(h)'re horrible
8 (.)
9 ZW: That's lousy that

Interestingly, and again this may well reflect the predominant styles highlighted and illustrated in previous chapters, these types of joking selves proffered in the course of 'serious' topic development rarely occurred in my German data, but were common in the English conversations (indeed, it appears that such newsworthy events often provides ripe conversational resource for sociable presentations).

Working reciprocatively with narrating / narrated selves are audiential selves, or, in staying with the current typification, what might be termed *narratee selves*. In the face of presented narrating selves, fellow sociabilists are expected to display their receptiveness to the ongoing presentation by showing that they have 'been stirred' in an appropriate way and to an appropriate degree (see Goffman 1974). narratee selves commonly display interest, amusement, aghast, all in the right places, and often to the point of losing control, being overwhelmed by the contingencies of the unfolding reality. The mobilisation of narratee selves is apparent in the recipient actions in both 'Crippled Dick' (intense amusement throughout) and 'Doin' Foreigners' (suitable recipient 'comic shock'). Again, there are salient cross-cultural differences between English audiential selves and their German equivalents. Symbolically, German audiential selves tend to be more measured, controlled entities, and perhaps most markedly, evaluative entities.

The *in-the-know self* is a second symbolic entity often posited in English sociable conversation. This is somewhat different from what I shall shortly refer to as the *knowledgeable self* in German (see 7.3.2), in that the in-the-know self seems to be normatively based in some uniquely experienced event, or some other world to which conversational recipients are not (assumed to be) privy, rather than merely knowledge of a certain topic *per se*. For example, frequently in English sociable conversation, participants will recount some personal experience as a basis on which to prima facie inform or 'enlighten' their co-participants. Fellow conversationalists will be told (and in and through their recipient actions will be expected to display they have been told) something they didn't know, were under a misguided impression about, or were generally 'in the dark about'. Such in-the-know selves are often based in narrative but can also be mobilised during more objective discussion on a given topic. To give some concrete examples, a prime conversational environment for the successful mobilisation of in-the-know selves is that where some pending or possible contact with other worlds or experiences is being conveyed by one or the other of the co-present participants. Participants may seize such presentational opportunities to 'offer good advice' or 'give tips' based on their own [still currently unique] experience. Conversationally, recommendations to 'go there', 'see that', 'try this', or conversely 'don't' do any of the above may be proffered. Such in-the-know selves are an important symbolic resource in English sociable conversation for the proffering of a negative self. An nice example of an in-the-know self at conversational work takes place in the following episode.

Excerpt 7.3 'The Masons'

The preceding talk in general has focused on religions, instigated by a discussion of Islamic versus Western influence of religion on everyday life

1	KP:	It's like the Masons:: you know the masons=they don't (0.5) they don't call
2		the bible the bible they (.) at every meeting they have=they've always got a
3		bible opened=
4	RP:	=Right
5		(.)
6	KP:	A (.) standard bible (it's)
7		(1)
8	LP:	Everythin's supposed to be [done by
9	KP:	[But they don't (.) they don't call it the

10 bible=they they call it they (.) the [book
11 LP: [The great archi[tect
12 KP: [The book of the great architect
13 (.)
14 RP: Ri::ght=
15 KP: =Because (.) the reason (they've said) that is (.) is that (0.5) Mason's allow
16 anybody into (.) the Masonic lodge you know into the=
17 LP: =Any religion
18 (0.5)
19 KP: Any religion as long as you're (0.5) you [know you've got to believe in
20 RP: [Right
21 KP: a God
22 (.)
23 RP: Yeah
24 (.)
25 KP: An::d you've gotta be >you be good and all that bit<=
26 LP: =Yeah you've got to believe [in God
27 KP: [BUT THEY'LL they'll[=allow
28 LP: [( )
29 (.)
30 KP: They'll allow Catholics in or Church of England and they'll let and they'll
31 allow=
32 LP: =Muslims=
33 KP: =Muslims or ANYone in (.) so=
34 RP: =Right=
35 KP: =You don't (.) because they don't <u>ha</u>ve the bible
36 (0.5)
37 RP: Right
38 (.)
39 KP: They don't (0.5) (abide by it) 'cos hey think it's not fair on them so=
40 RP: =right=
41 KP: They have (.) they have=it's a bible but they call it the <u>book</u> of the <u>great</u>
42 <u>arc</u>hitect (.) because they believe that they've got (.) .everyone's got the
43 same God< like their God is the [same as our God (.) so on
44 RP: [Yeah
45 (.)
46 RP: Yeah

Both KP and his wife LP (see Appendix A) have had some personal experience of freemasonry, compared to RP&EP who have had no direct contact at all. RP&EP are thus essentially 'experienced out' of this symbolic world. Thus, In the Know selves are both proffered (on the basis of KP's and LP's uniqueness of experience) and treated (in and through RP&EP's alignment as essentially 'enlighteable' targets for KP) as sustainable individuated entities over this particular alignment phase.

There appear to be a range of possible conversational resources which allow English sociabilists to mobilise In the Know selves. Uniquely experienced events that can be reported back to the gathered participants seem to provide a popular resource (including eclectic phenomenon from having seen TV

documentaries to having witnessed road traffic accidents). An interesting resource for such presentations is what I would refer to as 'uniqueness by association'. For example knowing personally a famous person (from pop star to murder victim – see 'Nice Lady' in 6.3.2) are popular resources drawn upon for the mobilisation of In the Know selves. This latter type of self – one based in uniqueness by association – seems rarely mobilised as part of German sociability.

In terms of the consequences for interpersonal alignments, an interesting aspect of In the Know Selves is that, converse to the German Knowledgeable Self (7.3.2), In the Know selves, due to their basis in unique experience, appear difficult to contradict in conversation, at least on factual grounds. Rather, participants normatively align by taking on board and display that one has been taking on board what has been proffered. Finally, it seems that a cardinal conversational sin in English sociable conversation is to 'usurp' an In the Know knowledge claim, unless one wants to risk – or is fully intending to – knock one's interlocutor off his or her presentational perch (see for example 'Chris's Lad' in 6.4.2).

As part and parcel of the routine playing out of English sociable conversation, participants are also accorded the courtesy of proffering selves that allow them express some aspect of their affective states. This might include for example the signalling of strong emotions such as amusement, anger, or disdain. What is quite striking about the mobilisation of Affected Selves (and again, Cf. German) is that feelings expressed in and through their mobilisation are invariably directed, not at others co-present, but at some other(s) or event(s) in the outside world (Cf German). This can be evidenced in the following excerpt where TM makes his feelings unequivocally clear as he mobilises an *affective self* to express his considerable disgust following his experience of a trip to Paris.

Excerpt 7.4 'Paris'

In the immediately preceding talk, RP&EP have been talking about their trip to Berlin. From this a more general discussion of European cities has developed.

TM: I don't know P- with Paris there's somet about it=it's disgustin' (it [really
LM: [(it is)
TM: is)
(.)
LM: I was not [impressed=
TM: [It's not
TM: They pr=they say its the most romantic place=its crap that (.) its ab[solute
LJ: [yeah
crap=
LM: =WELL IT'S THE [SA::ME with [Venice
TM: [It's terrible
LJ: [I'VE ALWAYS WANTED to go=
TM: =its te[rrible
LM: [They get on your nerv[es with it=
RP: [yeah
KJ: =Hm=
RP: =I have (.) I've always wanted [to go
LM: [>Where they go with the Gondo[las<
LJ: [Yeah I
have=
LM: =Elke what's that [place called oh er=
RP: [Yeah
KJ: =Venice
(.)
LM: Venice (.) Venice
(.)
RP: Yeah
(.)
LM: They say most=its no:t
(.)
TM: THE HOTEL WE were in (.) even the rats [wear overalls it were that bad
LM: [(God aren't you glad I'm visitin'
you all)=
TM: =Honest [it were that bad=
KJ: [hahaha
KJ: =haha
(.)
TM: Terrible it was

As might already have been inferred from the reading of English conversational data addressed in Chapter 6, another and perhaps more ubiquitous affected self mobilised in English talk is one through which heightened amusement can be conveyed. A nice example of this occurs in the following episode where KPs struggle to 'keep a straight face' are conveyed.

Excerpt 7.5 'String Vest'

Following the discussion of an unrelated topic, KP initiates a topic change at line 1.

KP: Eeh we had a laugh last night (0.5) we had a=we had a:: (.) a new bloke come in (.) a new bloke come in last night (1) initiation (0.5) and he he's retired he's like (2) I don't know he must be (1) six- seventy=getting' on for seventy

(.)

PN: Yeah

(1)

KP: And e::r (1) he's only about my height but he's got a bit=bit of a (.) he's got a tub on him like >you know what I mean< (0.5) so like on an initiation (.) >I mean I won't tell you what we do but< (1) you have to undo your shi:rt (1.5) anyway he [come's in

PN: [Does it involve a (solder)

(0.5)

KP: He comes in=

PN: =haha

(.)

KP: He's got this <bleedin' string vest o(h)n>HAHAHAHAHAHAHAhaha=

PN: =Haha[ha

KP: [Like bleedin' Rab C Nesbitt comin' in (.) HAHA[HAHA

PN: [Hehehe=

KP: =And everybody's like that (1) tryna keep the fa:ces straight (0.5) you know (.) and I'm (.) I'm like I'm (1) I'm sat like here=and Will's sat at't top end o't [(table)

PN: [Yeah

(0.5)

KP: And Will's tryna (.) talk to me and givin't questions and answers and all that=and I'(h)m li(h)ke tha(h)t me

(0.5)

PN: Hehaha[ha

KP: [And Will's face went redder and redder and redder and he started missin' (0.5) fuckin' his lines up and everythin' HA[hahaha=

PN: [Did he

PN: =Hahaha[ha

KP: [Oh::: dea::r me (0.5) bloody hell

(.)

PN: Ha (.) He'll get some of that won't he when he gets in with 'em=

KN: =OH (1) I SAID to't lads after when we were=when we were havin' us meal (1) >I said there's one thing=I said he'll not make< (.) bleedin' masters chair him ha[ha

PN: [Hahahahaha[ha

KP: [I said he'll be lucky if he makes bleedin' junior deac[on

PN: [hahahaha (0.5) hahahaha

As far as recipient responses to mobilised affected selves, there seems to be a normative obligation – once an affected self is heard to have been mobilised – to allow or even prompt the said speaker to temporarily expressively 'flood out'. The conversational art here seems not to be to 'look on' at the outflowing (as one might if some person in a public place were to

suddenly 'freak out'), but to mobilise a self which is receptive to the affective nature of the speaker claim. Such alignment of selves may lead to what is known in English as joint gossiping whereby the negative self becomes transformed into a more positively charged entity (see 7.4.1).

These emotive bases for negative alignment commonly drawn upon by affected selves – disgust, heightened amusement, contempt – are common in English sociable conversation. They occur far less frequently in my German data set, where such emotive talk seems to be conversationally capped, lest I would argue it signal a loss of control or demeanour on the part of the speaker as player or image. Indeed, there was one particular participant in my German cohort who regularly – and by German norms quite unusually - proffered affected selves in conversational episodes. This person, although often supported temporarily in her sudden outburst of amusement or disgust, often led to collusive 'knowing looks' on the part of other participants, who appeared at these moments to be working hard to avoid the conversation becoming for example 'too silly'.

The final English negative sociable self that I have identified in table 7.1 is what I have termed the *abased self.* In English sociable conversation, participants regularly mobilise abased selves. What I am referring to here is what plays itself out conversationally as the routine (both in situ and as invoked figures) downplaying, diminishing, casting negatively, or positing as morally questionable the self as player or image, albeit temporarily and for the duration of any particular period of alignment. For example, English speakers will frequently invoke some abased figure in a narrative. A recurrent example of an abased self is one embedded as the central figure in tales of getting drunk, being embarrassed over some gaffe or faux pas, or engaging in some morally questionable or regrettable activity (see Goffman 1967). In the following excerpt, JL&AL proffer abased selves in provide an account of being drunk on the way to Stockport one night.

Excerpt 7.6 'Up a Hill'

The sociable gathering is in its early stages and this particular episode is centred around reports of what each of the participants / couples have been 'up to'.

JL: ALAN HAD had a drink when we was goin' (2) .hhhh and we got the taxi (.) to go to Stockport=well I've never been before=>we got in the taxi and the taxi driver said to him< (0.5) where is it (.) >he said up an hill<
(0.5)
AL: HAHA[HA
RP: [Up an hill
(.)
ZW: °Up a hill°=
JL: =Up a hill (.) you know up the hill
(.)
RP: Yeah=
JL: =>So the taxi driver said that don't< (.) tell me a lot ([ )
AL: [I TOLD HIM
NEAR THE MARket
(.)
JL: He said NEA:R the MARket (.) but you kept sayin' (1) Up the hill (1) on the hill (1) and that's <u>all</u> you got out of you (1) he said well I'll take you were I think it is
(1)
AL: Yeah
(0.5)
JL: Right=Do you remember
(1)
AL: Yeah YEAH YEAH=HAHAHAhaha
(0.5)
RP: This was <u>GO</u>ING to the pub was it
(.)
AL: I remember it so:: we::ll
(0.5)
JL: And comin' back was WORse

As well as the self abased as image in narrative, Abased Selves are also often mobilised *in situ*. This is perhaps best evidenced in the English tendency to eschew compliments, self-deprecate (see Jefferson 1978), or posit oneself as non-competent or non-knowledgeable one or the other areas – what is referred to in English as 'hiding one's light under a bushel' as opposed to 'blowing one's own horn'. Thus, expressions of narratee memorisation, sudden enlightenment, or manifest incompetence may be used in the face of another's presentation. An example of this recipient abasement can be seen in the following episode where Kev's new PC enjoys the focus of conversational attention.

Excerpt 7.7 'Kev's New PC'

In this episode, KP has been reporting back to the other participants his purchase of a new PC, which he has be familiarising himself with, with varying degrees of success.

KP: I've been messin' about on it=I got on the internet and that and played around on the internet
(.)
RP: Right
(0.5)
KP: E::r (1) not exactly su::re (0.5) what's goin' on with it but=
RP: =It takes some getting' used to Ken (2) It's er (1) and the thing with the internet is (1) well it's a (.) a vast amount of information (1) no-ones got control of it or anythin'=it's just=
EP: =Hm
(.)
RP: This great big th[ing
EP: [Your's is a 450 yeah (.) megahertz
(1)
KP: E::r (1) 400 I think

((5 secs EP extolling virtues of fast PCs))

KP: Yeah 64 Megabyte=56k modem whatever that is
(1.5)
RP: >It's a good machine<=and it's a good price as well actually
(.)
EP: Yea::h
(0.5)
RP: I mean (1) when you said you got it from Comet=I thought Oh God he'll have paid about a grand for that (1) but er:m (0.5) >how much did you get it for<
(0.5)
KP: Was it 699
(.)
LP: Yeah=
RP: =That's a good price (1) for 6.4 gig hard disc (1) 64 megabyte RAM (1) P400 (.) with a mo:dem
(0.5)
KP: Yeah
(.)
RP: And your speakers and everythin'=it's a good price [that
EP: [Yeah
(.)
RP: It really is (1) I mean (1) in the past [Comet have ripped people off
KP: [It's got all the software and that with it has'nt it
(.)
RP: Yeah=
KP: =Pieces of Software
(.)
RP: So (.) you gotta a good price there (1) It's a nice machine as well
(1)
LP: I just sit there and me timewa(H)stin' HAHA[HAHA
KP: [I had a play on it you know

RP&EP's mobilisation of an in-the-know self (see above) based on past personal experience of having tried and tested several PC's and PC outlets is aligned to and supported by KP's mobilisation of an appropriately abased self. Thus, KP's conversational claims attest to the fact that he 'messes about' on his computer and uses it for 'timewastin' as well as more generally being 'not exactly sure what's going on with it'. This display of non-competence and morally questionable use of time is in direct contrast to, and importantly supports by aligning to the In the Know selves proffered by RP&EP (see Chapter 8 for a more focused discussion of alignment of selves). Further conversational evidence which indexes the Affected Self can be found in utterances such as 'you're jokin', 'Well, I wouldn't have thought that', and 'Oh I thought x', as well as the English tendency to ask 'silly questions' and play dumb in the support of another.

As might be expected from the discussion in Chapter 6 and literature reviewed in Chapter 2 (e.g. Straehle 1997), this form of abased or diminished self occurs significantly less frequently in German conversation.

Above I have identified a range of salient sociable selves routinely mobilised in English sociable conversation as part and parcel of negative alignment. Now I want to turn to consider salient sociable selves routinely mobilised in the German achievement of negative alignment.

7.3.2 The Germans

Perhaps the most salient word that disrupted my own taken-for-granted sense of conversational ease during my experiences of German sociable conversation was "Warum?", [Why?] or alternatively "Warum nicht?" [Why not?]. This often came in quick response to a claim made quite unthinkingly by myself, without much prior formulation other than was necessary for a 'throw-in' or 'throwaway' type comment. I soon came to realise that "Warum" in German is more than just an interrogative statement but is in fact illustrative of the perhaps the most salient self regularly mobilised in German – the *examining self.*

During the mobilisation of examining selves, German sociabilists commonly respond to a prior comment in a way that, in the first instance allows that particular speaker to display that he / she has been listening quite intently to the content of that prior claim. Not infrequently this is signalled conversationally by the preface 'Aber pass auf' ['Hold on a minute']. Examining selves allows participants to display that they have not only been listening, but gone on to think clearly and precisely about the nature of the prior claim and subsequently identify any problems or flaws therein. Once mobilised examining selves can be rapidly aligned to a given recipient to give the talk an almost interrogatory feel. An example of this can be seen in the following episode also drawn upon in the previous chapter.

Excerpt 7.8 'Fahren in England'

The immediately preceding discussion has been about driving in other cultures. There has been some debate about how easy or difficult this is with varying opinions being proffered. KH turns to EP (whom has been silent to tat point and whom KH knows does have driving licence and lives in England).

1	KH:	>Die Elke fährt doch aber auch=wie bist denn Du damit fertiggeworden (
2		)<
3		(1.5)
4	EP:	Ich bin nur einmal gefahren und dann nie wieder
5		(0.5)
6	KH:	Tatsächlich=ist das so schwierig
7		(.)
8	EP:	Nö=aber ich hab keine Lust
9		(2)
10	SH:	Ach sie fängt dann schon ([ )
11	IB:	[((LOUD COUGH))
12		(1)
13	KH:	Fährst dann noch nichtmal=ne
14		(0.5)
15	EP:	Nö: (1.5) >Ich fahre mit=dem Bus<
16		(2)
17	KH:	Wegen des Linksverkehrs jetzt (.) oder weshalb=
18	EP:	=NEI:::N=ich habe einfach keine Lust mit dem Auto [zu fahren
19	KH:	[Ach so
20		(2.5)
21	HB:	Selbst zu fahren eigentlich nur ne
22		(0.5)
23	GB:	Hm:::=
24	HB:	=Mitfahren tust Du ja auch oft ne

Excerpt 7.8 Translation 'Driving in England'

1	KH:	>But Elke drives as well=how did you cope with that (
2		)<
3		(1.5)
4	EP:	I've only driven once and not again
5		(0.5)
6	KH:	Really=is that so <u>diff</u>icult
7		(.)
8	EP:	No=I just don't <u>fee</u>l like it
9		(2)
10	SH:	Oh she already begins ([ )
11	IB:	[((LOUD COUGH))
12	KH:	So you don't even drive=do you
13	EP:	No: (1.5) >I take the bus<
14		(2)
15	KH:	Because of the left-hand drive (.) or what=
16	EP:	=NO:::=I just don't feel like [driving
17	KH:	[Oh right

The clarity with which something has been expressed often attracts examining selves. Expressions such as 'moment mal' ['hold on a minute'] (another formulaic German precursor to the imminent mobilisation of an examining self) may be followed by claims such as 'das verstehe ich nicht' ['I don't understand this'] or 'was meinst du eigentlich?' ['what do you actually mean?'].

Such conversational treatment can of course leave the uninitiated floundering, having – to continue the analogy above – to pick up what was conversationally thrown away and legitimate or clarify. Conversationally, German participants in sociable conversation are better equipped to deal with such selves and commonly mobilise markedly *demeaned selves* (see below). In this sense, whereas English conversation - by virtue of the available selves - can tolerate speakers not knowing what they're talking about but still being supported as if they do, German conversation – largely by virtue of the ubiquity of the examining self - will quickly expose such fabrication.

Examining selves then are mobilised against the behaviour (quite often at a personal level), beliefs or opinions expressed by a fellow participant, in terms of their propositional content and / or clarity with which they are

expressed. In this sense they are symbolically opposite to English conversation, where proffered selves are rarely examined or challenged but rather are allowed to be played out relatively unhindered.

The *demeaned self* is again a rather broad conceptualisation, but one which nonetheless points to a salient symbolic resource frequently mobilised in the playing out of German sociable episodes. Interestingly, the demeaned self allows for the identification of one of the most salient ways in which German and English speakers differ in terms of their sociable styles. Similar to the English use of the abased self (see 7.3.1), German conversationalists frequently mobilise demeaned selves both in response to others in situ and – albeit less frequently due to the lower frequency of narrative - as a replayed figure in replayed events and experiences. In general, whereas the abased self of English sociable conversation is in effect deference oriented, the demeaned self is, by definition demeanour oriented (see Goffman 1967). In terms of alignment vis-à-vis other selves mobilised in situ, whereas the abased self in English essentially stoops down to the individuated self being presented, in German, the demeaned self rises up to meet head on (or rather face on) any co-present self. Conversationally this leads to the *prima facie* combative style of German agonism that has been described in previous chapters (see Chapter 2), as opposed to the accommodative style characteristic of English sociable conversation (see Chapter 6).

One frequent conversational environment where German speakers mobilise demeaned selves is those where some 'attack' has been made, not infrequently do the sudden mobilisation and alignment of an examining self (see above). In such instances, as I noted above, the recipient often conversationally adopts a defensive posture. Indeed, this constant readiness to 'defend with demeanour' one's position seems not only an endemic part of participation in German sociable episodes but almost a basic involvement obligation (Goffman 1963) (Cf. Watts 1989; Straehle 1997). The following episode illustrates the defensive demeaned self rising up to challenge a mobilised examining self.

Excerpt 7.9 "Second-Hand' Shop'

KN has probed SN as to her reasons for not being able to meet up the following day. KN subsequently attempts to re-arrange SN's personal schedule based on a suggested course of action.

KN: Ach ja du kommst ja morgen a:bend=ne
(1)
SD: Ja ich hab 'n grosses Problem=ich brauch Micha's Beteiligung
mit uns nach Braunschweig zu [gehen
KN: [NA=JA mit'm Second Hand das hat ja auch
Zei:t ([ )
SD: [Ja die sind aber nicht immer zusammen da:=das ist doch [das
KN: [ACH DANN
rufst du halt noch mal an
(2)
SD: Wie beim Second Hand [Laden
KN: [Ja:: dann kommst du halt ein andermal machst einen
anderen [Termin aus
SD: [NEIN=ja=NEIN DAS PROBlem ist dass die beide nicht immer
zusammen da [sind
KN: [JA DANN FRAGste wann sie noch zusammen da sind oder so::
(1)
SD: Ja aber die Sachen stehn ja da rum die wollen die ja auch loswer[den und
KN: [Hm
SD: deshalb irgendwie muss ich das morgen abend hinkriegen (1) mal sehen

Excerpt 7.9 Translation "Second-Hand' Shop'

KN: Oh yeah you're coming tomorrow e:vening=aren't you
(1)
SD: Yeah I have a big problem=I need Micha's support
to go to Brauns[chweig
KN: [OH=YEAH with second hand that' got
Ti:me ([ )
SD: [Yeah but they're not always together=[that's it
KN: [OH THEN you just phone
again
(2)
SD: Like at the second hand [shop
KN: [yea::h and then you go round some other time
and make an [appointment
SD: [NO=yeah=NO THE PROBlem ist that the two aren't always
toge[ther
KN: [YEAH THAN ASk them when they are still together there or so::
(1)
SD: Yeah but the stuff is standing around there and they want to get [rid of it
KN: [Hm
SD: That's why I have to manage tomorrow evening (1) we'll see

This rising up to 'meet and defeat' a mobilised examining self is typical of German conversational style. Indeed, several German colleagues I have spoken to over the years have admitted an omni-present readiness to defend during participation in sociable episodes. Of course, issuing counter-propositions in English also occurs. However, when this does occur, rather than proffering a Demeaned Self, English speakers tend to take up a more abased posture (see 7.3.1), manifest in typical conversational responses along the lines of 'yeah, suppose I cold do that', in effect diminishing rather than amplifying a challenged position (see Chapter 8 for more discussion of diminishing and amplification of the self).

A third salient self regularly proffered in German is the *affirmative self*. Again, this conceptualisation covers a range of conversational behaviours, but essentially refers to the self which aligns positively with wider or higher authority, and posits the speaker as a person of social and moral integrity. Again, salient words from the German language – and ones which strike quite violently on the ears of the newly arrived Englishman – point to the affirmative self, none more so than the modal verb 'mussen' ('must'). The affirmative self can be directed at both the speaker (e.g. Ich muss das machen [I have to do that]), or alternatively – and perhaps more frequently – at some other co-present participant (e.g. 'du muss das machen' [you (informal) must do that]). In terms of this second type of conversational realisation, German sociable conversation often displays direct and unmitigated direction of a fellow interlocutor by an affirmative self. 'Du muss das einfach machen' ['you simply have to do that'] allows a speaker to align to a co-present participant negatively by, in the first instance attempting to push or pull him or her in one direction based on the speakers own reading of any given situation. An example of the affirmative self at work can be seen in the following two episodes.

Excerpt 7.10 'Was muss Mann machen?'

KH: >Die haben ja auch mal gesagt< (1) daß die wenn du jetzt von
Regenburg's 'nen Wagen kaufst (.) daß die Vertragshändler hier die
Wagen nicht (0.5) reparieren wo[llen (0.5) Das MUSSsen sie (0.5) >da
HB: [Ja
KH: sind sie zu verpflichtet=das ist ein Volkswagen< (0.5) und die sind
verpflichtet die Dinger auch zu reparieren (1) die zu warten (1.5) Das ist
e::r
(1.5)
HB: Ja=[ja
KH: [Nene=laß dich nicht bange machen=
HB: =Jaja das ist Bangemachen das ist mir klar .hhh ([ )
KH: [>Aber die haben
nämlich verschiedene ( ) daß die jetzt sagen< .hhh (.) der Wagen
geht nach Dänemark [der kriegt das nicht rein der [kriegt das
HB: [Hm [Hm
KH: nicht rein das (Wades)-Modell kriegen sie mit Sicherheit alle (0.5) nur die
Hämmerstädter ich sag ja weiße Sitze gleich oder '(1) ne=andere
Stereoanlage oder ne Klima=(Klimadronik) (0.5) das kommt serienmäßig
auch nicht rein=das ist ganz klar=das müssen sie bestellen darum kann's
ja [jetzt
HB: [Die haben gesagt daß die im Ausland da zum Teil andere Ausstattung
kriegen=
KH: =Ne Glaubst du das [Peter
HB: [Als=als [die
KH: [Was müßten die denn für ein La:ger haben
überleg dir das [mal
HB: [und und da wären noch da wären noch die
Lenkungsunter[schiede
KH: [Peter was müßten die denn für ein Lager haben

Excerpt 7.10 Translation 'What do you have to do?'

KH: >They were saying that that< (1) if you buy a car from Regensburg (.) now
that the contract dealers here don't wa[nt to (0.5) repair the car they MUSt
HB: [Yeah
KH: do this >It's their duty=that's a Volkswagen< (0.5) and it's their duty to
repair them (1) to maintain them (1.5) that's e::r
(1.5)
HB: Yeah=yeah
KH: No no=don't be put off=
HB: =Yeah yeah that's putting people off that's right ([ )
KH: [>But they
actually have different ( ) that they say< .hhh (.) the car goes to
Denmark [he doesn't get that in, [he doesn't get that
HB: [Hm [Hm
KH: in the (Wades)-model I am sure they all get(0.5) only the Hammerstädters,
as I'm saying white seats (1) or=a different stereo or air conditioning (0.5)
that doesn't come with all cars within a series=that's quite clear they have
to order it that's why it can [now
HB: [They said that abroad they sometimes get
different equipment=
KH: =No do you believe that [Peter
HB: [When when [they
KH: [What kind of a sto:re must they have
think about [that

24 HB: [And then there are also the differences in [steering
25 KH: [Peter what kind of a
26 store must they have

Of course again, and this appears often in conversational environments when such selves are mobilised in my own data, in response to an other-directed affirmative self, a demeaned self may be mobilised, and perhaps more often than not is. Conversationally this may result in the by now familiar objective discussion or even Wettkampf.

In my earlier consideration of English conversation, I identified what I termed an in-the-know self. I noted there that the German equivalent – although also taking up a conversational stance to in effect impart individuated knowledge to co-present others - was slightly different. What I am terming the *knowledgeable self.* here is one that allows the speaker to display, not a knowledge based in some unique aspect of personal experience, but one based in a more in-depth and often quite technical knowledge of the conversational topic *per se* being developed. Thus, in mobilising a Knowledgeable Self, a particular participant will proceed along the lines – and is expected to proceed along the lines – of positing a factual rather than an experiential base for any particular knowledge claims. From my own observations I can attest to the fact that in German sociable conversation, the knowledgeable self can be mobilised against someone who has clearly more experience of a given sphere of expertise (or at least is claiming the same). As an anecdotal example from my own participation, if and when I have been talking about my own research, there has been no shortage of participants who have stepped forward to display their own knowledge of 'sociological matters' and engage with me in conversation, in effect as equals. Recipients of any explanations I have proffered for my research have often made suggestions for improvements as to how I might gather my data (for example in the positioning of the microphone), identified neglected aspects of my model, or suggested themes to consider in my analysis and final write-up (incidentally, this runs somewhat contra to English sociable participants who more often than not have made a point about not having a clue about what I was doing or how I should do it).

Often, knowledgeable selves are aligned to by other sociabilists in a way that gives them – compared to English sociabilists – disproportionately large amounts of conversational floor space. Many German sociable episodes thus display rather monologic phases, whereby one speaker is accorded significant amounts of time to display his / her knowledge on a certain topic. A nice way to represent this is by drawing on what Germans might refer to as Meinung talk, as in the following example.

Excerpt 7.11 'So ist das'

1	KN:	Trotzdem würden die Leute mit funf und funfzig gehen (0.5) >wenn man
2		nur mal anguckt mal in Frankreich wird da auch mit verhandelt daß an
3		jeder< (1) eh an jeder e:r an jedem Ort ist da eine Zahlstelle [die rund um
4	GB:	[°ja das°
5		
6	KN:	die [Uhr besetzt ist das sind fünf MARK
7	GB:	[könnte sie bei uns auch einführen
8		(0.5)
9	KN:	würden sie das Geld [reinkriegen wir würden weniger Steuern zahlen
10	GB:	[JA
11	KN:	Würde [keiner arbeitslos [warden=
12	GB:	[ja [g'nau
13	GB:	=G'nau=
14	KN:	=da könnten sie vielleicht fünf Millionen (.)Leute [mit beschäftigen ne
15	GB:	[die die (Plaketten)
16		vergeben [ne
17	KN:	[ja
18		(.)
19	KN:	Wenn [sie in ganz Deutschland die Autobahn nicht die Autobahnvignetten
20	GB:	[oder die Vignetten sagt man ja
21		sondern diese Autobahngebühr=
22	GB:	=oder die Gebühr
23		(.)
24	KN:	Denn (0.5) an jeder [Zahlstelle da sitzen dann die Leute (1) das
25	GB:	[( )
26		finanziert sich von selber (1) alle die durchfahren >verdienen was sie noch
27		zusätzlich bekommen=die fahren ja jetzt umsonst durch<
28		(.)
29	GB:	Ja::=
30	KN:	=Ich [würde lieber drei vierhundert [Mark [im Jahr
31	GB:	[So ist das [so ist das

Excerpt 7.11 Translation 'That's the way things are'

1	KN:	24 hours, that's five marks
2	GB:	They could introduce that here
3		(0.5)
4	KN:	They would get the money [back we would pay less tax
5	GB:	[Yeah

6 KN: no [one would become [unemployed=
7 GB: [yeah [that's it
8 GB: =That's it=
9 KN: =they could employ about five million (.) [people
10 GB: [and give out
11 the badges, you [know
12 KN: [yeah
13 (.)
14 KN: When [in all over Germany they hand out these motorway stickers
15 GB: [Yeah stickers they say
16 but this motorway fee=
17 GB: =or the fee
18 (.)
19 KN: Then (0.5) at every [paying booth it finances itself (1) everyone who's driving
20 GB: [( )
21 past >they earn what they get extra=and at the moment they are driving
22 through without paying. <
23 (.)
24 GB: Yeah:=
25 KN: =I'd [rather pay thee fourhundred [marks per year
26 GB: [That's the way things are [that's the way things are

Perhaps more than any other routinely mobilised conversational entity in German sociable talk, the knowledgeable self clearly reflect the German positive social value associated with the possession of knowledge and ability to discuss seriously some given topic, issue' or course of action (see above). Interestingly, in terms of the amount of conversational resources normatively accorded any given speaker for the presentation of, for example 'meinung [opinion] talk', the English counterpart of such extended floor space being granted is when narrating selves are being mobilised. In both cases – German knowledgeable selves and English narrating selves – co-present recipients align in a way that conversationally favours the playing out of these obviously culturally valued selves.

These then are salient and frequently mobilised conversational and sociable selves in each respective culture. In and through these mobilisations, speakers – and by virtue of their alignments, recipients – are able to take varying degrees of negative alignment. Now I want to address the second aspect of conversational alignment – positive alignment.

7.4 Positive Selves

I suggested earlier that the self is, by definition, a primarily individuated entity, based around – albeit to varying degrees (see Chapter 1) - the person as cultural member and social actor. However, as was implied in my discussion in Chapter 6, there are moments in talk where the self becomes symbolically more of a collective thing, not being – conversationally speaking - *distinct from* but rather *bound up with* co-present other selves. In such moments, selves are mobilised as positive entities by symbolically taking on the experiences, viewpoints, and beliefs expressed by other selves. This can be conceived of as, in effect, a diminishing of *the* self as an individuated entity in favour of *a* collective one, as opposed to the amplification of the self as an individuated entity as discussed above (see Chapter 8 for more discussion of this).

In considering my own data, I observed that the range of selves available for positive alignment was not as varied nor as salient as that available for negative alignment outlined above. Nevertheless, there were some obvious ways in which members of both sociable milieu normatively achieved positive alignment via the mobilisation of sociable selves. It is these that I shall now attempt to illustrate, beginning once again with the English.

7.4.1 The English

As I noted above (7.3.1), English participants rarely turn symbolically on each other in sociable conversation. Instance of explicit criticism or confrontational talk between sociable participants – as occurs conversationally in German - are few and far between, and if these do occur, tend to be quickly mitigated or reframed as non-serious (see Chapter 6). However, this does not mean that the English are the amiable and benign conversational animals that it might suggest. Rather than turn on each other, there appears to be a preference in English sociable conversation - and this again is well evidenced in my data - to symbolically turn on and against non-present selves. Such mobilisation and alignment plays itself out conversationally as what is known in English as 'gossip'. This joint alignment of a 'he / she / them' (essentially a

there and then entity) versus 'us' (by the same measure *here and now* entities) is predicated on the first type of self I want to talk about here - the *gossiping self*. Again, a self rarely mobilised in German (which seems to prefer more *here and now* type conflict), the gossiping self normally coalesces with other co-present 'gossipers' to turn critical attention to some absent and commonly known third party. Normally, evaluative solidarity is expressed as a shared definition of a non-present person is constructed. This joint alignment of gossiping selves seems to have tremendous solidaric functions in signalling that 'we are as one' in terms of both identification of characteristics which we find negative, and our ability to talk in such a way freely (Cf Shimanoff 1985). Perhaps more then any other type of alignment I observed in English sociable episodes, such gossiping powerfully indexes an 'in-group' ethos (see Chapter 2).

In the following example, 'Cookie' - a character known by varying degrees to all present - provides the central figure and symbolic resource for solidaric gossiping.

Excerpt 7.12 'Cookie's Shirt'

1	DB:	=The only thing that wasn't borin' was Cookies shirt=it was absolutely
2		hideous=he had a (0.5) a scar[let shirt on
3	LM:	[cgh(hhh)hehe=
4	DB:	=With a big waftin' collar
5		(.)
6	MB:	he [he::
7	LM:	[hahaha[ha
8	DB:	[Rupert the bear keks=
9	LM:	=.hhhyou're lyin'=
10	DB:	=No
11		(0.5)
12	DB:	Well they were stri:pes sorry they weren't Ruperts= and he had this horrible
13		purple jacket on
14		(.)
15	MB:	Sounds love-what colour was the shi:rt
16		(1)
17	DB:	Tartan (.) Red=
18	LM:	=HE SOUNDS like that [fella on Changin' Rooms (0.5) [you know him that
19	MB:	[(Red)
20	DB:	[Haha (.) yeah
21	LM:	wears them purple (.) jackets
22		(.)
23	DB:	(he [had)
24	LM:	[And does everythin' in [black [and red
25	DB:	[bi [big beaufont hairstyle [he had as well=
26	MB:	[°haha°

27	RP:	=get out of it=
28	LM:	=.HHHH=
29	DB:	=>No=he's got a big beaufont hairstyle now< it's [sort of (stuck up) at the
30	MB:	[What's he goin' to wear
31	DB:	front
32	MB:	for his weddin' then=.hhhehe
33		(0.5)
34	DB:	°God knows°
35		(1.5)
36	DB:	Horrible

Here, Cookies self is conversationally mobilised and aligned to in a way that could only be done – at least in English in English sociable conversation - in his absence. His personhood is subject to collective negative evaluation as all co-present participants put their differences aside in as each moblises and aligns a gossiping self internally (vis-à-vis) each other and externally (vis-à-vis) Cookie. It is not simply that such instances of collective gossiping selves can occur as part and parcel of sociable conversation in English, they appear endemic to much talk. As with other positive and negative selves however, and in line with the model of equilibrium outlined above (see esp. 6.5), gossiping phases do seem to be normatively capped and have limited conversational life, at least as far as any particular alignment is concerned.

Alongside the English predilection for the mobilisation of Gossiping Selves in the pursuit positive alignment runs the tendency to mobilise an equally contemptuous self, the *griping self*. Rather than focus on some known third party, griping selves will generally focus some common factor which can be seen to be mutually available for open criticism or display of contempt. The weather provides an omni-available topical resource for the mobilisation of griping selves in English sociable conversation. It is the 'safe topic' *par excellence* (see Goffman 1967; Brown and Levinson 1987) with very little conversational manoeuvre for negative alignment. Similar to the mobilisation of gossiping selves, in mobilising griping selves participants will collaboratively introduce conversational evidence to create a shared picture of the outside world, in a manner as if all heads were speaking as one. An instance of this occurs in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 7.13 'Clocks Back'

The general theme guiding the them of the preceding talk has been about the recent miserable weather.

JL: Clocks go back next week
(1.5)
JW: That shouldn't happen either
(1)
RP: Yeah
(1)
JW: Stupid (1) absolutely stupid

((20 seconds on whether other European countries put clocks back))

JW: They shouldn't even do it
(1)
JW: Its e:r (0.5) all its for is so Farmers can get up (0.5) in the daylight (2) to milk the cows (0.5) that's it (.) that's A:LL its for=
RP: =Right
(1.5)
JW: And theres a strong argument against it
(.)
RP: Yeah
(2)
JW: You know there's there's a strong argument against it=with kids comin' home from school
(.)
RP: Hm
(.)
JL: yeah
(2)
JW: You know=
RP: =Plus its more miserable as well
(1)
JL: More::
(.)
RP: It's miserable in it when it g[oes dark early
JW: [Oh Yea:h
(.)
JW: Exactly

Favoured topics such as bad experiences of customer service encounters, unnecessary imposition at work, or treatment at the hands of local or governmental authorities were developed by positively aligned griping selves in my own conversational data. Such conversational reality of 'having a good moan', like gossiping, seems integral to English sociable episodes.

Comparatively speaking, the griping self may appear rather similar to the German agonised self. However, where these two conversational entities differ I feel is that whereas the griping self is in effect a contemptuous entity, the German *agonised self* (see 7.4.2) which is a more angst-ridden conversational being.

The *re-invoked self* is perhaps a rather clumsy term, and one which is not as transparent as the other terms used here. Essentially the re-invoked self refers to selves – commonly collective ones - which are invoked from past shared experience. Strangely, individuated selves seem to receive far less re-invocation than positive ones, i.e. if a self is to be re-invoked, it is far likely to be one with which the other participants can align to solidarically. Past shared events or experiences provide the common topical resource for the mobilisation of re-invoked selves, with 'Hey, do you remember' being a typical conversational initiator, as in the following.

Excerpt 7.14 'Cookie's Party'

LM: DON'T YOU REMEMBER Terry
(1)
LM: (It was [ )
DB: [Was it=was it in Clayton
(1)
TM: YEAH
(.)
LM: Yeah
(0.5)
LM: It was a nice house that act[ually
DB: [hm
(0.5)
LM: But I remember fallin' downstairs on me feet like that=and me feet went=(d[odododo)
MB: [HHHHHH.hhh=
RP: =Ha=
LM: =And landed at the bottom and [I'd got
DB: [WAS IT A FANCY DRESS Party
(.)
TM: yeah
(.)
LM: And Andy Pan[dy was the:[re
DB: [Yeah
TM: [WE ALL GOT DRESSED UP didn't we=
DB: =yea::h [that's right
LM: [don't you remember Andy Pandy=oh he was dry= a dead sarcastic Andy Pandy with a glass with a be(hhh)er in his ha[nd and fag
MB: [°hehe°
RP: (Oh I know)=
LM: =An he was unbelievable=he wa[s brilliant

32 TM: [WHAT DID WE GO as
33 (.)
34 DB: God knows (I was [ )
35 LM: [I was a Punk Rocker.hhh

This re-invocation of a shared past or specific event is characteristic of positive alignment in English sociable episodes. Of course, this type of alignment does rely on some common past and for that reason may well be specific to in-group sociability.

As with salient selves routinely mobilised for negative alignment, so they have been demonstrated in the above analysis to be routinely mobilised for positive alignment. Their expressive nature has been shown to clearly reflect the overall English sociable style identified in previous chapters.

Now I want to identify and provide evidence of their German positive counterparts, ones routinely mobilised for positive alignment, but expressively and performatively manifesting themselves somewhat differently.

7.4.2 The Germans

Contrary to much of the literature addressing German conversational style, there appeared in my own gatherings to be obvious phases in German conversational episodes where participants expressively put differences aside and closed ranks under some common banner of solidarity. Similar to English sociable conversation, this commonly focused on some external and non-present topical resource which was collectively framed in some negatively evaluative way. However, the emphasis in such German positive alignment seemed not to be on the affective orientation participants could display towards some absent others or thing, but rather on the *threat* they or it qua *alien* pose to us qua *native*. This appeared to be fundamentally different from the English gossiping self which adopting not an angst-ridden but more a cynical stance.

Frequently based around national identity (in the case of my specific data West German[2]), the *agonised self* uses for its mobilisation some common

threat to all, indexing solidarity by subsuming the individual self under a collective notion (a 'we' mentality). A prime conversational focus and symbolic other for the mobilisation of agonised selves is 'Auslaenders' [foreigners] and the threat they pose (in terms of for example unemployment; crime; or urban decay). In mobilising such 'foreign selves' in the true sense of the word, German sociabilists in situ displayed a marked positive alignment vis-à-vis each other contrasted with a marked negative alignment vis-à-vis such foreign selves. The following episode provides a typical example of the mobilisation of German agonised selves.

Excerpt 7.15 'Ganz Schlimm'

1	GB:	Das sieht da auch ganz schlimm aus ([ )
2	HB:	[ACH so da hinten das
3		Einkaufs[zentr [um
4	GB:	[Ja=ja
5	PB:	[Ja=ja:
6		(1)
7	GB:	Das ist der andere Stadtteil
8		(0.5)
9	PB:	Klein=Chica::go=
10	GB:	=Hm::
11		(3)
12	PB:	JA=und wenn man Westhagen sagt dann (0.5) vergleich man das immer
13		(1) mit diesem (1) diesem Stadtteil ne
14		(1.5)
15	GB:	Ja::=und dieser Stadtteil der vere:lendet richtig da hinten=
16	SH:	=>Finde ich unmö:glich daß die das erst [machen ne=
17	GB:	[Ja
18	GB:	=JA
19		(1)
20	GB:	Die Geschäftsleute wandern ab [weil sich die Russen da immer mehr
21	SH:	[JA:::
22		Breitmachen=die [haben da ihre [Geschäfte (1) ich [weiß nicht wieviele
23	HB:	[Hm:: [Ja:: [Ja=a
24		Geschäfte die da [schon übernommen [haben=
25	HB:	[Weißt du [ein
26	HB:	=Ein Russen[laden
27	GB:	[Und wir gehen da gar nicht mehr hin weil das ist für mich
28		fremd da hinten=also die sprechen alle möglichen Sprachen=nur nicht
29		Deutsch (0.5) ne=>Was soll ich da<

Excerpt 7.15 Translation 'Really Bad'

1	GB:	It is really bad there ([ )
2	HB:	[OH up there the shop[ping cen[tre
3	GB:	[yeah yeah
4	PB:	[yeah yeah:

(1)
GB: That's the other part of the suburb
(0.5)
PB: Little Chica::go=
GB: =Hm::
(3)
PB: YEAH=but when people say Westhagen then (0.5) they always compare it (1) with this other (1) part of the suburb you know
(1.5)
GB: Yeah and this part of the town is becoming really squa:lid down there=
SH: =>I find it unbelie:vable that they don't do [anything there eh=
GB: [Yeah
GB: =YEAH
(1)
GB: The businesses are moving away [because the Russians are spreading
SH: [YEAH:::
out more and more=they [have their own [shops there (1) I don't [know how
HB: [Hm:: [Yeah [Yeah=Yeah
many shops they [have taken over [there
HB: [You know [a
HB: A Russian [shop
GB: [And we don't do there any more at all that's all too foreign for me down there=I mean they speak all sorts of languages=but no German (0.5) you know=>What am I supposed to do there<

Other topical resources for the mobilisation of agonised selves in my data included such things as dwindling pension funds and the ontological threats associated with being able to survive as a Rentner [Pensioner], any current political crisis, or world stability – topics which received little if any treatment in my English data set.

As an English national, this routine mobilisation of agonised selves against Auslaenders was one of the first things that struck me about German sociable conversation. However, in line with the already established German tendency for objective discussion over affective expression, I soon came top realise that German conversational treatment of foreigners proceeded along the lines of discussion the problem rather than outright stigmatisation and discrimination.

At moments during the playing out of German social episodes, participants explicitly signal agreement and solidarity over an issue which could very well and perhaps might have already been the resource for negative alignment. It is in these conversational environments that the *confirmative self* is mobilised. I mentioned above that the examining self is often mobilised as a

negative entity, aligned to, for example, the propositional correctness or clarity of a particular speakers claim. In effect, the confirmative self is the positive equivalent of the examining self. confirmative selves are mobilised commonly in conversational environments where some objective claims are being made – commonly through, for example, a Knowledgeable or demeaned self. Such selves are realised and evidenced conversationally most clearly in utterances such as 'ganz genau' ['completely correct'], 'stimmt' ['that's right'] which pepper German sociable conversation. Confirmative selves are not restricted to isolated individual confirmative moves, but are often mobilised collectively over a series of turns as recognisable alignment phases. This joint and collective alignment of confirmative selves plays itself out as a common phase of German sociable conversation – and one *prima facie* contra to the findings outlined in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 – whereby participants engage in heightened expression of reciprocally confirmative solidarity, as in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 7.16 'Das Stimmt'

1	KN:	°Tja:° (1) die Wirtin sagt teilweise die aus der=Ex-DDR (0.5) die stellen
2		so=hohe Ansprü:[che
3	EP:	[JA=JA=
4	HB:	=JA=JA (0.5) (°ja°)=genau das: [haben wir °da=auch.°
5	KN:	[Wenn wir=wenn WIR Rü:ber kommen wir
6		(0.5) wissen=>[na ja gut das ist da< ei:nfache::r=
7	HB:	[( )
8	GB:	=Hum::[:
9	KN:	[Aber=die
10		(0.5)
11	GB:	Ja=das stimmt=
12	HB:	=JA=JA
13		(.)
14	GB:	Nicht nur [im=im Urlaub
15	KN:	[Nicht ALLE aber=es gibt [so einige:
16	GB:	[überALL wo die hinfahren [stellen die
17	HB:	[JA=JA
18		Ans[prüche:
19	KN:	[Ja::
20		(.)
21	HB:	Ja=ja=
22	GB:	=Was meinst du wo:hl=
23	HB:	=Hm

Excerpt 7.16 Translation 'That's Right'

1	KN:	°Yeah:° (1) the landlady said that partly some people from the ex-GDR
2		(0.5) they really have high dema[nds
3	EP:	[YEAH=YEAH=
4	HB:	=YEAH=YEAH (0.5) (yeah)=correct that's [exactly it: we have °as well°
5	KN:	[if we=if WE go over there
6	KN:	there (0.5) we know=>we [know well it's all more basic<=
7	HB:	[( )
8	HB:	=Hum::[:
9	KN:	[But they
10		(0.5)
11	GB:	Yeah=that's right=
12	HB:	=YEAH=YEAH
13		(.)
14	GB:	Not only [on holiday
15	KN:	[Not ALL of them=but there are [some
16	GB:	[And everywhere they go they
17		[have high dem[ands:
18	HB:	[YEAH YEAH
19	KN:	[yeah
20		(.)
21	HB:	Yeah=yeah=
22	GB:	=What do you: think=
23	KN:	=Hm

Confirmative selves seem to allow German sociabilists to achieve both heightened levels of solidarity, but also re-affirm the prevailing social values of arriving at solidarity via evaluative and examinatory conversational routes rather than affective ones.

Whereas in English conversations collective past selves are often invoked and positively aligned (see the re-invoked Self above), in German conversation there seems to be a tendency for future collective selves to be invoked. This seems to reflect an underlying Zukunft [future]-orientation which under-runs much German conversation compared to a frequent retrospective alignment seen in English sociable talk. *Pre-invoked selves* then are frequently mobilised and positively in German sociable episodes. What I am referring to here is the prospective equivalent to the retrospective re-invoked self. For example, plans to meet in the near future are form a fundamental part of German sociable gatherings and provide a prime resource for positive alignment. Importantly, as has been noted by House (1996) although 'plans to meet' also appear in English conversation, these are often not 'meant as serious' nor taken as so. The situation is different in German though. If

plans for the future are made they are taken to be valid and reliable prospective invocations of solidaric selves that will actually take part in some future solidaric reality. A typical example of German pre-invoked selves can be seen in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 7.17 'Allerseefest'

KN: Regina (0.5) wie sieht denn das bei Euch mit Dienstag aus
(1)
RT: Dienstag ist doch Allerseefest
(.)
FT: Ja (.) >warte mal< wir wir können aber nicht so lange ble[iben=
RT: [Hm
KN: =Aber wir können aber auch zusammen hin
(.)
RT: Hm:[:
EP: [Oder zussamen=ja:
(0.5)
RT: Die die Heike müssen wir auf jeden Fall wieder nach Hause bring[en
FT: [Eben
meine ich doch
(0.5)
RT: Die müssen wir (.) erstmal nach Hause bringen=aber [danach
FT: [Danach können
wir noch zu uns ne=
PN: =Hm::
(1)
EP: Ja (0.5) das wäre doch 'ne Möglich[keit=
KN: [Ja::
RT: =Dann können wir uns ja schon am Allersee treff[en (.) [ne
EP: [Joo
KN: [Das wäre was=
EP: =Joo (1) ab wann seid ihr denn da
(0.5)
RT: Ja so am Nachmittag=
KN: =Aber nicht vor [3 Uhr
EP: [Also uns ist egal
(1)
RT: Na (0.5) wollen wir sagen (1) um vier (0.5) am Eingang
(.)
KN: Jo=das [geht (.) [ne Peter
EP: [Hm:
EP: [Hm::

Excerpt 7.17 Translation 'Allersee carnival'

KN: Regina (0.5) what's it like with you on Tuesday
(1)
RT: Tuesday is Allerseefest
(.)
FT: Yeah (.) >but hang on< we can't stay so [long=
RT: [Hm
KN: =But we could go there together
(.)

9 RT: Hm::
10 EP: Or together=yeah:
11 (0.5)
12 RT: In any case we'll have to take Hei:ke [home
13 FT: [Yeah: that's what I mean
14 (0.5)
15 RT: We'll have to (.) take her home first of all=[after that
16 FT: [But then we could go to our
17 place couldn't we=
18 PN: =Hm::
19 (1)
20 EP: Yeah (0.5) that would be a possi[bility=
21 KN: [Yeah
22 RT: =But then we could [meet at Allersee couldn't [we
23 EP: [Yeah
24 KN: [Yeah that's an idea=
25 PN: =Yeah
26 (1)
27 EP: Yeah (1) from when will you be there
28 (0.5)
29 RT: Well (0.5) around the afternoon=
30 KN: =But not before [3 o'clock=
31 EP: [To us it's the same
32 (1)
33 RT: Well (0.5) shall we say (1) 4 o'clock (0.5) at the entrance
34 (.)
35 KN: Yeah=that's [manageable (.) isn't [it Peter
36 EP: [Hm:
37 PN: [Hm::

Similar to English re-invoked selves, it may be the case that German pre-invoked selves are contingent on some in-group status and therefore not only endemic but perhaps unique to sociable conversation.

These then are salient and frequently mobilised conversational and sociable selves in each respective culture. In and through the mobilisation, speakers – and by virtue of their alignments, recipients – are able to take varying degrees of positive alignment.

7.5 Summary: Sociable Selves - Player, Images, and Positive Social Values

In the preceding discussion I have attempted to expand on and evidence the sociable selves set out in table 7.1. A re-reading of the data presented in Chapter 6 may, in the light of this particular chapter, further evidence some

of these selves at conversational work. Whereas the previous chapter focused on demonstrating the contingencies of positive and negative alignment practices, this chapter has been about setting out some of the symbolic building blocks which allow those practices to be manifest as sociable conversation. In using the concept of the self (7.1), I have gone beyond the basing my arguments in general propensities of sociable conversation (see Chapter 3) to consider more specifically how such propensities may be played out conversationally as part and parcel of the sociable practices. This is achieved I have argued in and through a range of culturally available sociable selves.

I stated at the beginning of this chapter that the concept of the self employed here was based in the dual mandate reading of Goffman (see 7.1). That is, the self as conversational performer or player, and the self as image proffered in and through talk (Cf. Goffman 1963; 1971). Fundamentally, this notion of the self was posited as being informed at a cultural level by prevailing positive social values (see 7.1). Upon reflecting on the findings presented in sections 7.2 to 7.4, it is clear that the performances made and images presented in the normal process of conducting sociable episodes in each respective milieu are variously influenced by those values. German sociable conversation requires for instance participants to mobilise demeaned, knowledgeable, and examinatory selves in and through their sociable conversation. This can be clearly seen to index the values set out in 7.1 and Chapter 2. Likewise, English sociabilist, in and through their performances and proffered images – narrative / narrated and often abased in nature – can clearly be seen to be claiming (Goffman 1967) the positive social values operating in their particular cultural milieu.

Participant in both cultures then can be seen to be aligning themselves to fellow participants, the situation as a sociable one, and a higher set of shared cultural vales. What has been implied as alignment throughout will be the focus of interest in the following and final of the analytical chapters. In terms of the usefulness of the concept of the self in allowing some analytical purchase both here, and as part of the study as a whole, I would argue that the data presented has clearly evidenced the amenability of a sociological conceptualisation to actual spoken interaction and highlighted the centrality of the concept of the

self to understanding the symbolic playing out of conversational facework.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed sociable selves in sociable episodes. After setting out the intellectual provenance from which my initial conceptualisation of the self was taken (7.1), I moved on to present a set of salient conversational and sociable selves which I have observed both through my own extensive participation in both German and English sociable gatherings and analysis of the conversational episodes (see table 7.1) (7.2). In presenting what I termed 'types of selves', I hope to have highlighted some of the salient symbolic conversational entities routinely mobilised by English and German conversationalists in the doing of their respective sociabilities. Moving on from this initial typification, I spent the majority of the chapter attempting to illustrate by drawing on the conversational data how these selves may be manifest in actual sociable episodes (7.3 and 7.4 respectively). The aim of these chapters was to illustrate the typifications set out in table 7.1 rather than attempt any analysis of the conversational data as such (see for example Chapter 6). In the following chapter I shall attempt to adopt a primarily analytical stance by examining the alignment of selves in four episodes of naturally occurring sociable conversation drawn from the sociable topic categories identified earlier (see table 5.1).

What I have presented here has been an illustrated selection of exemplar conversational selves routinely in and as the activity of sociable conversation in each respective culture. These have not been *a priori* categories but rather ones which I have identified from both my participant observations in situ and analysis of the selected conversational episodes (see Chapter 4). In effect, what I have captured and presented in the preceding discussion is some of the fundamental symbolic building blocks for sociable conversation, and to that extent, for conversational facework as alignment in each respective culture. Alongside the analytical and illustrative nature of the discussion, as with previous chapters (see Chapters 5 and 6), I have attempted to maintain and

develop the comparative focus, one which shall be continued in the following chapter and consolidated in Chapter 9.

In the next chapter I shall attempt to illustrate how these conversational selves as presentational entities can be employed the meeting of negative and positive face needs in terms of face predicated on what I shall term the conversational self-construal. In terms of the overall thesis, I shall use this chapter to conduct a final analysis of English and German sociable conversation as an issue not of differences in language use, but of one grounded in different mobilisations and alignments of conversational selves which satisfies both negative and positive face needs in each respective milieu.

Notes to Chapter 7

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[1] This predilection for narrative as the basis for self presentation is also reflected in stand up comic routines, where the comic may begin an account with 'a funny thing happened to me on the way here tonight' to go on to proffer a humorous narrating / narrated self. From my experience, this type of comic devise occurs much less so in German stand up comic routines, which tends to be more observational or explicitly 'goonish'.

[2] Strictly speaking, since re-unification, the terms East- and West-German have been obsolete. However, there is still today a popular understanding of these categories which filters into everyday discourse and forms a salient basis for national identity.

CHAPTER

8

ALIGNING SELVES IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SOCIABILITY

8.0 Introduction

In Chapter 6 I drew on conversational data to illustrate both *positive and negative alignment possibilities* in sociable conversation. Following this, In Chapter 7, I identified certain *sociable selves* regularly mobilised in sociable conversation by English and German conversationalists in their respective settings. Here I want to essentially put the two together – the notion of conversational alignment and the conceptualisation of the conversational self – to show how facework in sociable conversation can be demonstrated to be contingent upon the mobilisation and alignment of sociable selves.

I shall begin this chapter by briefly consolidating comments made in the previous two chapters about conversational alignment and sociable selves. I shall also draw on the second of the two conceptualisations of the self guiding this study – that of the self-construal – to illustrate the positive and negative status of the self in terms of what I shall refer to as the conversational construal (8.1). I shall then move on to consider specific conversational excerpts drawn from sociable episodes in both milieu, focusing in each case on one of the topic type categories identified in Chapter 5, that is, an example of a reminiscence (excerpt 'Cookie's Party'), a reportable (excerpt 'Tommy Fields'), an agoniser (excerpt 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit' ['International Unemployment'], and a biographical (excerpt 'Studieren als Hobby' ['Studying as a Hobby']) (8.2). Following this central analytical section, I shall summarise and discuss the findings presented (8.3), before moving on to conclude the chapter (8.4).

The emphasis of this chapter will be on the comparative analysis of

English and German sociable episodes by within the *facework as alignment* framework set out in Chapter 3. In this respect, the chapter shall represent the most systematic piece of analysis of the study as a whole.

8.1 Alignment and the Self as Conversational Construal

Facework as developed in the current approach is taken to involve not the use of verbal strategies *per se*, but rather the mobilisation, ratification and support, and alignment of conversational selves. Fundamental to this approach is the idea that sociable selves are dependent for their conversational survival on the recognition and ratification by others, i.e. on the alignments taken by both speakers and recipient(s). In this sense, sociable conversation can be conceived of as an ongoing flow of alignment of selves, working normatively in a ratificatory and supportive way. Conversationally this manifests itself in the way topic is handled. It has been argued that, where participants in sociable episodes focus on a common theme for the purposes of expressing solidarity and communality, they will also normatively express variation on this common theme during the course of its development (i.e. proffer individuated viewpoints or experiences). The converse of this is also true (i.e. topics chosen for individuated development will also often be used for the joint expression of solidarity. I have attempted to frame this recurrent sociable phenomenon as positive and negative alignment (see Chapter 6). Further, in considering English and German data in particular I have identified a range of sociable selves commonly mobilised in each culture to achieve these alignments (see Chapter 7). In general, what I classed as predominantly positive selves assume and express some solidarity between fellow participants. In this sense, in terms of the relationship between participants, positive alignment serves to draw selves closer together. At its extreme or example, positive alignment would result in the assimilation of selves to the point of complete and total solidarity in terms of their viewpoints, experiences, or definitions. This, I have argued occurs seldom, or if so, only briefly, due to what I have pointed to as normative solidaric thresholds governing equilibric interaction (see Chapter 6). Conversely, negative selves express and support some degree of individuation between one or the other participant. Negative alignment then refers to the claiming,

ratification and support of unique, autonomous, or individuated selves. At its extreme, negative alignment would result in the differentiation of selves to the point of total incommensurability and a loss of grounds for commonality and solidarity. As with positive alignment, this, I would argue, is seldom, or if so, only briefly realised due again to the normative regulating mechanisms of sociable conversation (see Chapter 6).

Thus, conversational facework is essentially a matter of selves-work. Fundamentally, it is a matter of alignment of selves, ones essentially operating on an underlying positive-negative continuum which underlies not only sociable conversation *per se* but more specifically both Goffman's and Brown and Levinson's approaches.

These propositions when considered in the light of, not the conversational content of the self as player or image (see Chapter 7) but rather the *positive and negative status of the self* in talk point to the analytical purchase afforded by the second conceptualisation of the self informing this study, that is, the self-construal (see Chapter 1). In such a conceptualisation the self can be conceived of as being surrounded by various boundaries, starting with the individual as the locus and expanding to include variously the selves of others. Cross-cultural work addressing facework practices has identified certain salient cultural differences in how the self is perceived in terms of these boundaries and thus how face is perceived. Fundamentally, work has shown that the culturally predominant status of the self in terms of the self-construal directly affects communicative style in that particular culture and forms the basis for normative facework practices (see Chapter 1).

This cultural reading of the self as a culturally varying construal can I believe help consolidate the seeming fluidity of the self across the positive and negative flow of conversation. First, I am employing the term self in a way similar to the Goffman's comprehensive conceptualisation. That is, the self can be regarded as an enacted and enacting entity, contingent on recognition, ratification, and support by others. This conceptualisation was used as the basis for the discussion in the previous chapter. Second however, I would argue that

the self may also be considered to the extent that it 'overlaps' with other selves, similar to the construal reading. That is, the extent to which the self is in *solidarity with* or *autonomous from* other selves. Importantly, unlike the general appropriation of the self as construal in cross-cultural work, I am not treating this overlapping as a static one (as implied by cross-cultural studies attacking western conceptualisations of facework – see Chapter 1), but rather as a conversationally dynamic. That is, a conceptualisation of the self in construal terms which is contingent on the flow of ongoing conversation. What this allows us to arrive at is the notion of the 'conversational self-construal' (see fig. 8.1).

Fig. 8.1 The Conversational Construal

ENACTING / ENACTED *SELF* *(interactionally contingent)*	+	*OVERLAPPING SELF (culturally contingent construals)*	=	*INTERACTIONALLY OVERLAPPING 'SELVES' (interactionally contingent construals)*

This reading of the self is I believe essential to understanding both positive and negative facework as alignment in terms of not the image of self, but the status of self. Positive alignment can be regarded as a process whereby participants work to 'overlap' selves, in terms of, for example, their experiences, definitions, and points of view. Negative alignment can be regarded as the process whereby participants work to similarly 'individuate' selves. Positive alignment can thus be recast as evidencing the expansion of the self to include others, and negative alignment as the contraction of the self as a more individuated and salient entity (see figs 8.2a and 8.2b) (see also Chapter 9).

Fig 8.2a. The Overlapping Selves (as Conversational Construals) of Positive Alignment

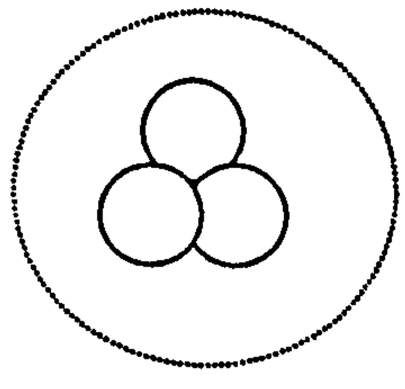
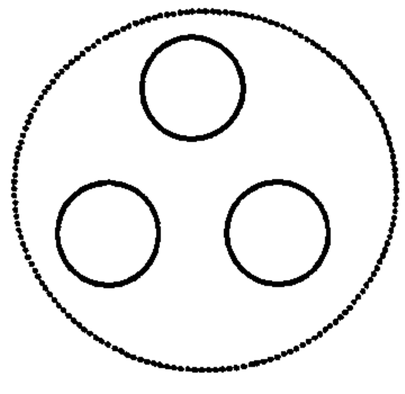


Fig 8.2b The Individuated Selves (as Conversational Construals) of Negative Alignment



In effect, this conceptualisation of the self is something akin to a fusion of a Goffmanian reading of self, and a cross-cultural one. Both conceptualisations are essential I believe to understanding conversational facework as alignment in general, but also cultural differences in conversational facework (see Chapter 9).

With these comments in mind, I now want to consider more closely the conversational mobilisation of sociable selves, both as players and images, as well as entities able to alter their statues as conversational construals in the ratificatory and reciprocal achievement of sociable equilibrium. In the following section, I shall attempt to illustrate this by employing a sustained focus on instances of sociable conversation from both milieu.

8.2 Selves in Action

I now want to turn to four particular sociable episodes – two from each culture – which I shall address by applying the analytical framework advanced and developed in the preceding chapters. In focusing on these particular examples of talk, the aim is to demonstrate how, what plays itself out as sociable conversation, can actually be accounted for on a turn by turn basis as alignment of some of the sociable selves identified in Chapter 7.

In Chapter 5 I identified a set what I presented as salient topic categories, ones necessitated from a practical point of view to gain some sort of descriptive 'handle' on the range of topics, themes, and issues drawn upon

in both cultures as conversational resources for sociability. The data presented here can be seen to reflect these categories. The English episodes presented here can be classed as examples of a reminiscence (excerpt 'Cookie's Party') and reportable (excerpt 'Tommy Fields'), whilst the German episodes can be classed as examples of a biographical (excerpt 'Studieren als Hobby' ['Studying as a Hobby']) and agoniser (excerpt 'Internationelle Arbeitslosigkeit' ['International Unemployment']). In terms of how these topic types are generally handled (see Chapter 5), each episode has been selected as epitomising salient aspects of English and German sociable conversation. I am confident in attesting to the representativeness of each episode from both my extensive experience of participation in sociable gatherings in both cultures, corroboration with my wife Elke, but more importantly from my close and sustained observation of the conversational data gathered for this study (see Chapter 4).

As with Chapters 6 and 7, I shall begin with the English data (8.2.1) followed immediately by a similar consideration of the German data (8.2.2).

8.2.1 English Alignment of Sociable Selves

The two sociable episodes I wish to consider here are 'Cookie's Party' followed by 'Tommy Fields'. Upon listening to the conversations in my initial stage of analysis (see Chapter 4) it became quickly clear that these data were what I knew to personally to be characteristic of English sociable conversation, and what marked my own body of English conversational data. I shall treat each episode separately although overlap between the two episodes in terms of topic handling and development, and selves mobilised will be apparent.

Beginning then with 'Cookie's Party', here we have typical example of English sociable conversation between friends and close acquaintances, and one exemplary of my own conversational data in general.

Excerpt 8.1 'Cookie's Party'

LM: I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHIN' Though tha•=his=pa•=his house party was very good
(.)
DB: hm: (0.5) yeah
(.)
LM: Cos I fell downstairs and landed upright (0.5) now that was good
(.)
DB: Yeah t'w[as (.) was pretty good tha[t
RP: [hahaha
LM: [And I (never) spilt any (.) and I had a can: (.) you know one of them gold la:bels
(1)
RP: ((cough))
DB: all I ca[n remember about that night was sa=I think somebody
LM: [it were le::thal wrecked his bathroom as well didn't they
(.)
MB: Was that before I met you Dave [(I don't)
TM: [(who where that)=
LM: =hm
(.)
LM: No [it was before you met him that
DB: [I don't know I know (0.5) shower got ripped off the walls or summat=I can't remember exactly what h[appened
MB: [(Di[d it)
LM: [( )
(1)
DB: (I don't know)=someone were havin' a bonk in there
(.)
LM: hm::
(0.5)
TM: You reckon
(.)
DB: yeah
(.)
MB: Why:: where d'ya live
(1)
LM: DON'T YOU REMEMBER Terry
(1)
LM: (It was [ )
DB: [Was it=was it in Clayton
(1)
TM: YEAH
(.)
LM: Yeah
(0.5)
LM: It was a nice house that act[ually
DB: [hm
(0.5)
LM: But I remember fallin' downstairs on me feet like that=and me feet went=(d[odododo)
MB: [HHHHHH.hhh=
RP: =Ha=
LM: =And landed at the bottom and [I'd got
DB: [WAS IT A FANCY DRESS Party
(.)
TM: yeah
(.)
LM: And Andy Pan[dy was the:[re

61 DB: [Yeah
62 TM: [WE ALL GOT DRESSED UP didn't we=
63 DB: =yea::h [that's right
64 LM: [don't you remember Andy Pandy=oh he was dry= a dead
65 sarcastic Andy Pandy with a glass with a be(hhh)er in his ha[nd and fag
66 MB: [°hehe°
67 RP: (Oh I know)=
68 LM: =An he was unbelievable=he wa[s brilliant
69 TM: [WHAT DID WE GO as
70 (.)
71 DB: God knows (I was [ )
72 LM: [I was a Punk Rocker.hhh
73 (0.5)
74 DB: What was I then (.) or was I just a (1) (nob)
75 (1.5)
76 LM: ( )
77 MB: You se =>You went as yourself<=°haha°=
78 (0.5)
79 TM: =HAHA[HAHA
80 LM: [HAHAHAH[A=Yea::haha[hahaha=yea:::h=hahaHAHAHA
81 RP: [hahahaha
82 TM: [HAHAHAHAHA[HAHAHAHAhaha
83 RP: [haHAHAHA
84 LM: HAHAHAHAHAHA
85 TM: .hhhh:HAHAHAHAHAHA=
86 DB: =°yeah°=
87 LM: =I love her (.) she's brilliant
88 (1)
89 LM: That's [right he did actually=
90 MB: [°hm=hm°
91 MB: =°hm=hm=hm (.) hm=[hm=hm=hm°
92 TM: [hahaha
93 (2)
94 LM: hm=hm=hm=hm=[hm=hm
95 MB: [hehehe.hhhHHH
96 (.)
97 DB: °(I can't remember)°=
98 LM: =It wasn't you that broke the shelf was it
99 (0.5)
100 DB: No[::
101 MB: [BROKE the what
102 (.)
103 LM: Shelf
104 (.)
105 MB: °Shelf°
106 (1.5)
107 DB: We was all s[=pretty squiffy that night=
108 LM: [Fa:lin' down
109 LM: WE WAS very squiff

Beginning with the topic of conversation, the common focus of attention in this episode is 'Cookie's Party'. Cookie is an absent third party who at the time of this conversation had not been seen for some years. Cookie was however once a central figure in the past joint biographies of all but one of the participants in this gathering (as is evidenced in her conversational contributions – line 18 - MB met and married DB after this particular sociable milieu had disbanded). Some ten plus years prior to the gathering from which this episode has been drawn, Cookie had held a house party to which the social group present here had been invited. Such parties were frequent at that time in these peoples biographies, and marked the time in their histories when most weekends would be marked by a visit to local pubs, a party of some sort, or a trip to a local nightclub. Whichever was the case, relatively large amounts of alcohol would be involved as part of a general hedonistic lifestyle. Ten years later on, the participants at this gathering are all married and have to varying degrees 'settled down'. As a conversational topic then, 'Cookie's Party' provides an important biographical and conversational resources for the indexing of commonality and solidarity with which participants can jointly reminisce.

As far as the general handling of 'Cookie's Party' as a conversational topic is concerned, in the first instance the talk is being framed retrospectively, that is, as a what I classed earlier as a reminiscence topic type (see Chapter 5). Such topics generally involve drawing on a past events, and importantly, the identification and invocation of past selves. As opposed to individuated events, experiences, and selves (Cf. 'Tommy Fields' below), topics categorised above under reminiscences were those characterised by the identification of common events, experiences and selves.

In general, the replayed reality of 'Cookie's Party' is invoked and evaluated consensually. Both the definitions of what happened and the evaluation of those events are in the first instance shared ones. 'Cookie's Party' is framed as a 'good party' at which the current conversationalists were present and all had a good time. In this particular episode salient aspects of

the environment, activities, and prevailing ethos are drawn upon to create a dramatic framework within which such selves can be made sense of.

Typically for English sociable topic management in general (see Chapter 5), there is much humour employed in the general handling of 'Cookie's Party' (see also 'Tommy Fields' below). This includes the invocation of both comical figures *per se* (e.g. LM falling downstairs [line 6]; the sarcastic Andy Pandy [line 64-65], DB attending as nob [line 74]), as well as treating more serious ones humorously (e.g. the 'bonking' couple ripping the shower off the wall [line 28]). As with most English sociable conversation, what seems to be important in conversationally handing 'Cookie's Party' is not such matters as factual accuracy (e.g. whether or not LM actually did fall downstairs and land on her feet without spilling the can of lager, or whether a 'bonking' couple really did rip the shelves off the wall – both of which seem dubious assertions), but rather what might be better termed as dramatic intensity (Cf. Goffman 1974).

Fundamental to the reading of sociable conversation that I have been advancing throughout this study is the proposition that such conversation in both cultures relies not on conversational contributions *per se*, but rather the mobilisation of particular sociable selves. That is, sociable conversation is not a result of linguistic practices but of symbolic ones (see Chapter 7). In 'Cookie's Party', we can clearly identify certain salient English sociable selves at work. In the first instance these might be subsumed under a heading specific to this particular conversation like 'party goers'. However, the construction of such party going selves is achieved through the mobilisation of more generic selves in line with those identified in Chapter 7. Such generic selves are mobilised as both conversational players and (that is, the self that handles the talk) and as conversational images (that is, the self that is handled in the talk) (see 7.1).

As players – i.e., in effect 'harried fabricator[s] of impressions involved in the...task of staging a performance' (Goffman 1969, 222), the most salient of these selves mobilised in 'Cookie's Party' are what was referred to earlier

as re-invoking selves. The category of re-invoking selves was used to refer to the way conversationalists in English sociable episodes routinely invoke past images of selfhood, ones which are essentially in some way similar to those past selves available to be drawn upon by other co-present participants in the gathering. This similarity is usually based in commonality of experiences or activities and was posited as prime way in which English participants achieved some degree of positive alignment. 'Cookie's Party' as an event clearly provides a resource for the invocation and mobilisation of such selves.

In terms of conversational selves as images – i.e., as invoked characters or images (Goffman 1967; 1969) (see Chapter 7), the most salient re-invoked selves in 'Cookie's Party' are generally abased ones, again, symbolic entities frequently mobilised and aligned in the achievement of English sociable style. These two generic sociable selves – re-invoking and abased – are at the centre of the sociable organisation of 'Cookie's Party'. Alongside these primary sets of selves, there is evidence to show that speakers mobilise at points in the conversation selves which, in Chapter 7, I associated more with negative alignment, namely, what I referred to earlier as narrating selves. That is, selves mobilised to present some unique aspect of selfhood. Such selves however enjoy only secondary status in this particular episode and operate within the reality of 'Cookie's Party', although nevertheless allowing for some degree on individuated variation on an essentially highly solidaric event.

What is fundamental here is that, for the duration of this particular part of the conversation, all participants are of a one-ness, in terms of their sociable selves mobilised as players of performers. This positive alignment of similar sociable selves is essential if the past sociable reality of Cookie's party is to be sustained, and the positive face needs of each of the participants is to be met.

In 'Cookie's Party' there is what might be termed a symbolic symmetry in terms of the distribution across participants of selves as both images and as players. That is, most participants mobilise to varying degrees re-invoking

selves as players to mobilise essentially abased selves as conversational images. Such distribution of selves points to the fact that 'Cookie's Party' can be seen to be primarily positively skewed. That is, uniqueness in terms of selves mobilised as both conversational images and players is minimised in favour of the mutual mobilisation and alignment of essentially similar selves both as sociable players and sociable images.

The key of course to fully understanding how such selves are relevant to our understanding of conversation in sociable episodes lies in the manner in which they are aligned in the sequential development of the talk itself. Moving on from these general alignment observations then, I now want to consider more closely the conversational data for its alignment features.

At the beginning of the excerpt, LM makes an evaluative statement about Cookie's house party (line 1). This in itself reveals nothing of its alignment features – it may for instance have been a unique experience which LM wishes to develop into a narrative. However, rather than negatively aligning to this particular re-invocation (as would be necessary for the pursuit of narrative), in line 4 DB similarly mobilises a re-invoking self, and one which consensually attests to the evaluation made by LM. From this point onwards, LM, DB, TM, and RP mobilise similar re-invoking selves by drawing on the past reality of Cookie's party. Subsequently, DB, RP, and TM mobilise and align selves as both players and images grounded in a similar symbolic universe.

In terms of selves as conversational players, there are certain similarities in the types of selves mobilised and how these are handled. All co-present selves here orient to the same past reality, appear to evaluate this similarly, and invoke similar past selves as figure within that reality. In this sense, the primary selves mobilised as players here are re-invoking selves. In line 1, LM clearly mobilises a re-invoking self, followed by DB and TM. By mobilising such solidaric sociable selves the participants in 'Cookie's Party' are able to align positively as each engages in the similar practice of talking about a past sociable event in a present sociable one.

An interesting phenomenon which is evidenced in DB's contribution line 18 is one seen in much of this type of collective re-invocation in English sociable conversation, namely, the temporary 'freezing out' of a participant from moments of heightened positive alignment. Here, DB signals here inability to mobilise and align positively with her co-participants in talk. By asking 'Was that before I met you Dave', DB clearly signals here inability to positively align. In effect, at least for the duration of this particular phase of the episode, DB is somewhat forced to negatively align, by adopting more of an audiential footing, evident in her contributions in line 101 ('BROKE the what'), and arguably in line 77 where she attempts to mobilise a more humorous based self, effectively negatively altercasting the others temporarily in an audiential role.

Overall though, aside from DB's temporary alienation (see also JL's temporary alienation in Excerpt 6.3 'More Often'), as players, similar sociable selves are mobilised and mutually aligned.

To consider the selves as images mobilised in the talk, as I noted above, the general nature of selves invoked here is party-goers. One striking feature of these selves mobilised by participants in this episode is their abased nature. For instance, in lines 6-11, and again in lines 51-54, LM invokes a figure 'falling downstairs' and having a can of 'gold label' (an extremely potent English beer at around 9% alcohol content) in her hand. This type of abased inebriated self is similar to that drawn upon by AL in his account of getting drunk in Stockton (see Excerpt 7.6 'Up a Hill') and as I noted earlier, one often drawn upon for both negative and positive alignment in English German sociable conversation (see Chapter 7). In positive alignment, DB similarly invokes an abased aspect of past selfhood, manifest in his claims to remember nothing about 'that night' apart from Cookie's bathroom being wrecked (lines 14-16). What is implied by this conversational claim – and what DB himself is implying - is not that DB has a faulty memory, or that the event was too insignificant to be remembered (indeed the converse seems to be the case as all that DB can recall is the shower being ripped off

the wall by a couple 'bonking' in the and 'wrecking the bathroom'). Rather, what would seem to b the case is that DB's inability to invoke his party going figure is that it was itself inebriated. Of course, this is explicitly evidenced in DB's collective claim in line 109 that 'We was all pretty squiffy that night' (squiffy being an English idiom for quite drunk – often to the point of losing one's demeanor).

This invocation of a figure that is 'unable to remember a thing is typical of such mobilised abased selves in English sociable conversation. Although RP and TM do not explicitly invoke such abased party going selves, there is no contradiction of these selves, nor any positing on their part of contra-selves. They are thus by implication positively cast in the same abased light. Aside from these abased selves based on alcoholic consumption, a second type of figure is invoked from Cookie's Party – that of the 'dressed up' self. This type of image is first invoked by DB at line 55. Again, DB asks the question of the co-present others – evidence again of his inability to recall events clearly. Over lines 55-74, specific figures are invoked which evidence the nature of the party. LM recalls both an absent third party who went as a 'sarcastic Andy Pandy' alongside herself who went as a 'punk rocker'. DB interestingly again claims not to be able to recollect his fancy dressed self, other than perhaps being a 'nob', a derogatory term used to refer to – in this instance – somebody who may have been drunk and generally unpleasant.

The resultant talk is a product of the alignment of these selves. First, it is apparent that re-invoked selves are aligned positively with one another. For instance, following LM's initiation of the talk, TM, LM, and RP all quickly aligning similar selves. This positive alignment both ratifies and supports LM's re-invoking self. From this point onward, for the duration of this particular excerpt, re-invoking selves are aligned in a reciprocal and ratificatory as the mobilisation of one in itself supports he mobilisation of another. In terms of conversational images, again, positive alignment carries perhaps a more important ratificatory function. Rather then for example mobilising a different self in response to LM, DB mobilises a similar image of self. This both ratifies LM's abased self and casts it positively.

An additional consequence of alignment is not simply the support of a particular mobilised self for another, but also the sense participants can make of a particular self by virtue of how it is aligned. for example, one of the ways we are able to make sense of DB's abasement of self where he claims to have been drunk to the point of not being able to remember what went on at Cookie's party is not just because of the content of the conversational claim made, but by its sequential placement vis-à-vis LM's prior abased self. Thus, selves can be made sense of due to their alignment statuses.

An added dimension to this episode are two instances within the general solidaric frame were individuated aspects of selfhood are mobilised. In one case such individuation is ratified, in another not ratified. Both however are treated equilibrically. For instance, LM attempts to mobilise some individuated aspects of selfhood where she experienced some unique happening at 'Cookie's Party', that is, falling downstairs and landing on her feet. Although her initiation of a re-invoking self leads to the mobilisation of similar re-invoking selves and thus becomes ratified and supported, the narrative aspect of selfhood (one as I noted in Chapter 7 which is normatively associated with negative alignment) does not, i.e. it does not lead to the mobilisation of audiential selves thereby leading to its ratification and continuance of this aspect of experience from LM (even though over the ensuing few lines of talk she further attempts to do this). This then is a self which is not ratified but done so equilibrically (or politely). The second example occurs, as I mentioned above, when MB implies DB is synonymous with a 'nob'. This altercasted abased self (one rarely mobilised in English sociable conversation outside of a 'teasing' context) is ratified by the rest of the group who burst into laughter and even explicitly agree with MB's claim. DB subsequently agrees to himself ratify this abased aspect of selfhood. Again though, I would argue that this is achieved equilibrically, i.e. as part and parcel of the normative achievement of sociability, or in this particular case, a reminiscence episode.

In terms of its positive and negative characteristics then, this piece of talk may be treated as marked by heightened positive alignment. That is, as both players and images, contributing participants mobilise similar selves. In terms of images, participants mobilise what were termed generally 'party-going' selves, that is persons who all attended the same party. Importantly, there are similarities in the symbolic nature of these selves. In terms of selves as players, again, there are striking similarities in the types of selves mobilised across participants. All mobilise re-invoking and abased selves.

Thus, what is primarily positive alignment is achieved in and through the mobilisation of normative English sociable selves.

The equilibric handling of conversation and selves is clearly evidenced in 'Cookie's Party'. First and foremost, this piece of talk is 'typical' of English sociable handling of reminisced topics. It is quite generally clearly recognisable talk about a past party that 'we' attended, one not unique to one or the other individual but common to all. Second, there is an preference towards solidarity in terms of how the party is defined, and how it is evaluated. There is then a definitional and evaluative working consensus underlying the talk (Goffman 1967). In terms of sociable selves, participants are clearly working towards ratifying and mutually supporting re-invoking selves as players, and abased selves as images, achieved primarily in and through the mobilisation of similar selves. Participants collective mobilise both re-invoking and abased selves not only to allow them to make their own conversational claims, but to support those made and mobilised by their fellow participants. In this way, participants are able to talk about Cookie's party in the way that they do, as a collective reminiscence. Of course, as I shell demonstrate in the following episode, ratification and support need not rely on the mobilisation and alignment of similar sociable selves, neither in English nor German talk. However, it is the positive alignment of sociable selves which marks 'Cookie's Party'.

Conversely, in considering the next episode, I want to demonstrate how sociable equilibrium is equally routinely and normatively achieved in and through what I referred to in Chapter 6 as primarily negatively aligned talk

The dramatic exaggeration and humour evidenced in Cookie's Party is much evidenced in the following episode. Here however, a different set of sociable selves are being mobilised and a different primary alignment being achieved.

Excerpt 8.2 'Tommy Fields'

1	RP:	We went to some rough joints in Hamburg, big style (0.5) Hm but at least
2		you had it (0.5) you felt safe didn't yeah
3	EP:	That's right yeah it was=
4	LP:	=You've never been to the Tommy Fields in Oldham
5	KP:	Ohhhhh[h
6	RP:	[Well no I know I don't wanna go there [Kens told me about it
7	LP:	[Ohhh: God::
8		(1)
9	KP:	Terrible [that
10	LP:	[That is the the (1) THE=
11	RP:	=Yeah=
12	LP:	=most worst (0.5) sc- I mean=
13	KP:	=Scary=
14	LP:	I can look after meself and [I'm generally extremely confident (
15	EP:	[Yeah
16	LP:	[ )
17	KP:	[I mean when I say it was scary I'm not bein'=
18	LP:	=in a pub)=
19	KP:	=Scary place to be=
20	LP:	But, it's one of those, it's [like the hills have eyes they was [a::ll
21	RP:	[yeah
22	KP:	[I was less=I
23		was less scared, no word of a lie
24		(.)
25	LP:	You walk in and everybody stops [talkin' instantly
26	KP:	[I was less scared in the middle of the
27		main st[and
28	EP:	[Awe:::::
29		(.)
30	LP:	Stops dri[nkin'
31	KP:	[At City
32	LP:	And they've all got like b[ald heads and sticks, everybody
33	KP:	[(when United)
34	EP:	Awe hahahahha[ha
35	LP:	[h)And hob nail boots [on
36	RP:	[Yeah
37	LP:	And they stop instantly=the whole pub [goes dead quiet and they look at
38	KP:	[yeah
39	LP:	yo[u
40	EP:	[Bloody hell fire

LP: And this is in the afternoon and it was packed out wan't it?
EP: My::: God[::::
LP: [They all had big coshes even like women .hhh [it was terrifyin'
KP: [You know
(when) it's like () honestly I'm not jokin'=
LP: =I had a Rum and coke [I said you drink it I wanna go
KP: [the pub (.) it was a Wednesday afternoon or
somet [(most of the) pubs are dead quiet we thought we'll nip in there
EP: [yeah
KP: and have a spot of a spot to eat [( )
LP: [We thought we'd have lunch didn't we=
KP: =spot of spot of lunch in the pub with nice
(0.5)
RP: How you do
KP: Yea::h have lager shandy and we'll sit down (0.5) we walked in the door
and it were fuckin' heavin'=
LP: =And it just went (zinc)=
KP: There must have been about hu[ndred and fifty people in the pub
LP: [It was dead noisy, we walked in (0.5)
everybody stoped ta[lkin'
EP: [Oh:: my:: G[o::d
LP: [And then every single person looked at
us (1) as [we walked in
KP: [We just thought (0.5) EVERYbody in there=there wasn't one
person in there >and I mean< that was the scary thing was (0.5) there
wasn't one person in there () who didn't have a fuckin' head about that
fat=
EP: =haHAHA[HA:::::::
LP: [And a walkin' stick even young lads of twenty had big bleedin'
cosh walkin' sticks
(.)
RP: HAHAha[ha:
KP: [Sixty year old blokes=
LP: =There were=
KP: =There were sixty year old blokes in the[re
LP: [It's not it's not an [exageration
RP: [HAHAhaha
KP: And their heads were about that fuckin' [(fat)
LP: [all with [Donkey jackets and
RP: [HAHAHA
jeans an[d hob nail boots and bloody sticks
KP: [They've all got skinheads, heads like that, fuckin' teeth missin'
and they're (0.5) and they're all shoulders out here () I lo[oked like fuckin'
EP: [haHAHAHA:::
Mr Punny[verse ri:ght
RP: [HAHA
LP: ([ )
KP: [I mean I've got a bit of weight on me (0.5)and [I walked in and I
LP: [It was that bad
KP: looked round and there must've been about 120 of 'em=
LP: =But nobody spoke
(.)
KP: There wasn't one [pers- there wasn't one normal lookin' person in there
LP: [Everybody instantly stopped speakin'
RP: Right
KP: And every person I saw in there (0.5) was bigger than any cunt I've ever
seen before in my life=
EP: =haha=HAHAHAhahaha[haha
LP: [It was sca:::ry=it was scary

100 KP: I mean you see two or three you think look at them they look hard them
101 three over there (0.5) wouldn't mess with them=
102 RP: =Yeah=
103 KP: The enti::re pub, there wasn't one normal person in there=
104 EP: =Bloody [Hell
105 KP: [I mean I use the word normal to mean me[self
106 RP: [Fuckin' hell::=
107 KP: =there wasn't one normal pe::rson

Whereas 'Cookie's Party' was organised around some commonly experienced sociable event, the talk here specifically centres around an event uniquely experienced by KP&LP, namely, that of visiting a pub by the name of 'Tommy Fields'. RP and KP are brothers, with EP and LP being their respective wives (see appendix A). Although the two couples do see each other with some regularity on similar sociable occasions, each has considerable access to uniqueness of experience (places seen, events witnessed, activities engaged in) during their respective daily rounds. Normatively, as is the case with much English sociable conversation, such experiences come to provide a routinely exploited experiential resource for sociable conversation where they may be recalled and reported to fellow participants. 'Tommy Fields' provides a clear example of such sociable talk. In the talk immediately preceding 'Tommy Fields', RP&EP have been accorded considerable conversational floor space to relay a detailed account of having visited the 'Reeperbahn' – Hamburg's infamous red light strip. As with 'Tommy Fields', this was an experience unique to one set of the participants in the sociable gathering. At the point at which we enter the talk, RP&EP have concluded their narrative by giving an account of a particularly 'rough' pub which they had visited during their night on the Reeperbahn. At this juncture, KP&LP reciprocate by initiating and developing their own experiences of a rough pub, not the same pub visited by RP&EP, nor any pub on the Reeperbahn, but one in Oldham, a provincial town approximately 20 km from the site of this particular sociable gathering. Over the ensuing talk, 'Tommy Fields' proves to provide a ripe conversational resource for the relaying of a similarly unique event and experience and allows for the invocation of a unique set of conversational selves, both as conversational players able to

convey and receive this particular replayed set of experiences and as figures in that replayed reality. In this sense, whereas 'Cookie's Party' was essentially positively skewed, with all participants having a common experiential past, 'Tommy Fields' is essentially negatively skewed.

Whereas I posited 'Cookie's Party' as an example of a reminiscence topic type, 'Tommy Fields', in the way it is collaboratively conversationally handled by KP&LP and RP&EP, can be classed as what I referred to earlier as a reportable type of topic (see Chapter 5). The talk is essentially framed as a narrative, that is, a story or report of a directly experienced event which can be relayed to co-participants. In this sense, whereas 'Cookie's Party' was an event experienced by all but one of the participants, 'Tommy Fields' is essentially presented and framed as an event experienced by only one set of participants – KP&EP. Again, the manner in which this particular narrative is handled is typical of English sociable conversation in general. Similar to 'Cookie's Party', in fact more so, it is both highly dramatised and exaggerated, and peppered with both the expression and appreciation of humour. Again, quite clearly, the truth value or factual accuracy of the narrative is relegated in favour of what might be termed the entertainment value. As with 'Cookie's Party', alongside the general handling as sociable style, of fundamental importance here is the self-work being achieved. That is, as equally important as the relaying of unique experience is the mobilisation of a unique set of selves, both as players and images.

As with 'Cookie's Party', we might initially employ a vernacular category to account for the selves mobilised in 'Tommy Fields' such as 'visitors to rough pubs'. However, more generic types of sociable selves can be identified which allow for the presentation of such vernacular selves. There are two basic types of sociable selves mobilised here. These are, in the first instance are narrating selves, and what was generally referred to earlier as audiential selves (see Chapter 7). The preceding examination of 'Cookie's Party' allowed for an illustration and brief discussion of the nature and mobilisation of narrating selves (see LM's attempt to narrate her falling down stairs), albeit within an episode of generally solidaric alignment. Here

however, such narrating selves are more salient and provide not secondary symbolic resources – as in 'Cookie's Party' - but primary ones. The category of audiential selves was used earlier to refer to the general standpoint taken by recipients of talk in response to the mobilisation of narrating selves. Audiential selves are generally receptive entities, their conversational function being to appreciate – more specifically demonstrate their appreciation of - such things as unfolding narrative (see Goffman 1974). Both sets of selves, narrating and audiential, are central to the organisation and achievement of 'Tommy Fields' as a recognisable piece of sociability, and are invoked and aligned with one another in the replayed setting to create what is cast as a truly dramatic and unique event to which KP&LP had access.

As images, the primary selves invoked in 'Tommy Fields' can be seen to belong to the category of what was referred to earlier as affected selves, that is, selves which display some heightened degree of emotion and affective state. As in 'Cookie's Party', there are moments in the talk were similar selves are mobilised in order to signal solidarity and nuances of positive alignment. Such moves do not however threaten the essential uniqueness of the selves proffered by KP&RP but rather, support them.

Whereas in 'Cookie's Party' the selves as both players and images were essentially shared out across speakers, who drew on these as a type of symbolic pool, in 'Tommy Fields' there is more of an asymmetrical distribution of selves. Generally, narrative selves are mobilised almost exclusively by KP&LP, whilst audiential selves are mobilised similarly exclusively by RP&EP. Further, due to their monopoly on narrating selves, KP&LP are able to claim the lion's share of affective selfhood, although not exclusively so. This asymmetrical distribution of available selves is one of the general organisational features of this talk which adds to its essentially negative skewing in terms of overall alignment.

The excerpt begins with RP&EP's closing comments on their account of the Reeperbahn in Hamburg. Immediately following this in line 4, LP introduces the pub 'Tommy Fields'. Even though RP notes that KP has

previously relayed some of the details of this particular pub – the extent and nature of such being indicated by RP's claims in line 6 of not wanting to 'go there' and experience what KP&LP had experienced – this moment marks the beginning of the phase 'Tommy Fields'. From this point onwards, all participants can be seen to mutually conversationally align to the past reality of 'Tommy Fields'.

The conversational and symbolic resources are embedded in this past individuated event, and, like 'Cookie's Party', for the duration of this particular phase of the episode, these linguistic and sociological resources are drawn upon to achieve equilibric sociable conversation. Subsequently, KP&LP and RP&EP mobilise and align sociable selves as both players and images grounded in essentially – at least for the duration of the narrative – unique symbolic universes.

As conversational players, the salient selves mobilised in 'Tommy Fields' are narrative ones. If we consider the talk itself, it is clear that what the narrating selves mobilised by KP&LP are conveying is not a measured and factual account of the interior of Tommy Fields. Rather, such selves are conversationally manifest in the dramatic licence being exercised to make this account a sociable one, that is, entertaining and interesting for the recipients RP and EP. There are frequent vivid claims made as to the nature of the pub and participants within it. For instance, claims such as 'You walk in and everybody stops talkin'' (lines 25 and 60), 'all' customers (necessarily apart from KP&LP) had 'skinheads' and 'teeth missing' (line 82), 'coshes' (lines 43 and 70), 'hob nail boots' (line 35), and being 'bigger than any cunt' KP had ever seen in his life appear prima facie exaggerated – untrue even. However, as I noted above (Chapter 5), and has been observed by others (e.g. Byrnes 1986; Straehle 1997), truth value, factual accuracy, and clarity are not characteristic of English sociable conversation or, importantly, not conversationally characteristic of narrative selves. This is clearly evidenced in Tommy Fields as KP&LP mobilise narrating selves which allow the invocation of Tommy Fields and allow also for the invocation of KP&LP as conversational images around which the situated reality of 'Tommy Fields' unfolds.

Running alongside these narrative selves are the second type of sociable selves mobilised in such contexts, namely, audiential selves. The conversational work required of such sociable selves is reduced compared to narrating selves but equally as important to the episode. RP and EP mobilise and align audiential selves throughout this episode to ratify in the first instance the narrating selves of KP&LP. In doing this, RP and EP demonstrate both their aliveness to the unfolding event and KP&LP's general handing as narrative conversational players.

In terms of the self as image, KP and LP posit their narrated and situated selves as being in a very alien environment and in a state of high affectiveness – that is, primarily 'scared' (lines 13, 17, 23, and 26) more than they ever had been before, to the point of being 'terrified' (line 43). As I noted in Chapter 7, affected selves are aided in their conversational life by the treatment accorded them by some participating conversational player. Over lines 12-27, both LP and KP invoke the general nature of the scene within which their replayed selves and those of the other pub customers will be invoked. The word 'scary' and derivatives thereof is employed several times over these 15 or so lines to make it unequivocally clear, not only the nature of the pub, but importantly, the affective states of both KP and LP upon contact with the pub. In line 20, LP invokes a 1980's horror film 'The Hills have Eyes' as analogous with the setting, whilst in lines 26-33 KP states how he was 'less scared in the Main stand...at city...when United', referring to his attendance at a Manchester United versus Manchester City match he and RP attended some years previously where they were two of only three 'United' supporters in amongst thousands of 'City' supporters (a situation carrying some potential consequences for physical assault if they had been identified). Following this unequivocal framing of both the nature of the pub and the affective states of both KP and LP, the narrative is relayed with the use of salient selves.

How is primary alignment achieved in this episode then, or how is this sociable made narrative made possible in and through the mobilisation of the sociable selves identified above? Fundamentally, in terms of the types of

players drawn upon, this type of dramatic exaggerated telling evidenced in LP and KP's narrative selves relies on the alignments taken up by RP and EP. In the first instance, this requires RP&EP to receive the narrative proffered by KP&LP, i.e. listen and demonstrate they are listening and not proffer any counter-narratives – at least not until KP&LP's narrating selves have been de-mobilised. Secondly, the alignment also requires that uniqueness is largely maintained throughout the course of the narrative. Thus, as audiential selves, RP&EP are obliged to treat KP&LP as conveying some 'new' information – even though as is evidenced by RP's comments at the beginning of the excerpt, having already been told about Tommy Fields and made an evaluative judgement, RP has decided that he doesn't want to go there. This narrator-narratee alignment is evidenced in over the ensuing lines of talk. Such alignment of audiential selves at these junctures on the talk clearly ratify both the self proffered by KP&LP and their negative statuses.

As with Cookie's Party however, there are moments of secondary alignment in this episode which run contra- to the primary negative alignment being sustained by the participants. In terms of players, positive alignment is subdued and the only example seems to occur when RP admits also having some prior experience of the pub, albeit second hand. However, this brief moment of positive alignment seems not to threaten the negative self prefaced by LM's mobilisation of what is in effect a pre-narrative self in the preceding lines of talk. Rather, the admission by RP as to the nature of the pub ratifies the experiential resource implicit in LM's preface as one worthy of extended narrative. Positive alignment in terms of selves as images also occurs. This can be seen at points where RP and EP mobilise similarly affective, for instance, in RP's exclamation of 'fucking hell' towards the end of the transcript. This I would argue is an example of temporary and subsidiary positive alignment. That is, for this moment, RP mobilises an image of self, which is in effect posited in the same reality in which KP,&LP's experiential selves were based. Thus, momentarily, positive alignment is achieved as RP's affective self is mobilised and positively aligned by KP&LP. This action of course also attest to the power of the replayed reality and thus the narrative

capabilities of KP&EP and in this way, does not threaten the primary negative alignment, but support it.

In terms of its positive and negative characteristics then, this piece of talk may be treated as marked by heightened negative alignment. That is, as both players and images, contributing participants mobilise rather different and individuated selves. Thus, what is primarily negative alignment is achieved in and through the mobilisation of normative English sociable selves.

In my earlier discussion, I showed how 'Cookie's Party above could be conceived of as an example of equilibric interaction in terms of how participants both handled the topic in general, and mobilised and aligned sociable selves in a ratificatory and supportive manner. The same equilibric practices can be seen to underlie 'Tommy Fields'.

First, as with 'Cookie's Party', both sets of couples are demonstrating a shared orientation to a common topic in terms of definition and evaluations. The pub Tommy Fields is being defined as an example of a 'rough pub' and evaluated as 'scary' 'alien' and possibly 'contemptible', similar to the treatment accorded 'The Reeperbahn' by RP&EP in the immediately preceding talk. The narrative is thus built on a common understanding on the nature of the social locales being discussed. In terms of the mobilisation and alignment of sociable selves however, whereas 'Cookie's Party' exhibited a marked skewing towards positive alignment, in 'Tommy Fields' there is more of a skewing towards negative alignment between sociable participants, but, importantly, this is achieved also equilibrically, i.e., in a manner that is mutually ratificatory and supportive. Participants engaged in 'Tommy Fields' achieve this by mobilising and aligning unique selves, specifically narrating and audiential selves which work to support the other. Finally of course – and I wish not to understate this particular aspect of sociable alignment – 'Tommy Fields' is a typical in the way reportables are handled in sociable episodes not just between these particular participants, but more generally across the majority of sociable episodes in my corpus. 'Tommy Fields' thus reflects an

important facet of 'working consensus', 'institutionalised talk' etc. in English sociable gatherings.

Having addressed the English data to be included in this particular chapter, I now want to move on to consider the German data, employing the same conceptual language and theoretical framework advanced over the preceding pages.

8.2.2 German Alignment of Sociable Selves

The sociable episodes that I wish to consider drawn from my German data are firstly 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit' ['International Unemployment'] and secondly 'Studieren als Hobby' ['Studying as a Hobby']. The transcript of each episode will be presented initially in the original German followed by an English translation for each episode. As I noted earlier, all translations were carried out by my wife Elke who is a German national but also bilingual (i.e. a level of competence in the English spoken language comparable to a native English speaker – see Chapter 4 for more details of the methodology employed in the translation process). As with the English data presented in 8.2.1, I am positing these data as characteristic of German sociable conversation, and representative of much of my own body of German conversational data. This is based again on my own experiences of participation within German sociable episodes, but also reflects Elke's own experiences and observations. In this sense, the data here enjoy a double-corroboration and validation as being representative of a predominant part of German sociable conversational style.

Similar to the English data, shall treat each episode separately although overlap between the two episodes in terms of topic handling and development, and selves mobilised will be apparent.

Let us begin then by turning to the first of the two excerpts, 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit'

Excerpt 8.3 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit'

EP: obwohl ich [meine du hast ja heutzutage nirgendwo keine Arbeitslosen
HB: [(hor auch)
EP: keit die herrscht auf der [ganzen Welt ( )
HB: [(darf nicht verge[ssen)
KN: [hm::
(0.5)
EP: Amerika ist nun gerade am boomen aber auch da gibts Arbeitslos[igkeit
KN: [hm::
EP: und in Großbritannien da gibt sie au[ch
KN: [IN HOLLAND habe ich aber Peter hat sich mit einem Holländer unterhalten und gibts einen ganz geringen Anteil an Arbeitslosen und der meint die wollen überhaupt nicht arbeiten
HB: auch
Gehen ([ )=
HB: [Auch =auch die
HB: =die Schweiz=
KN: =hm
(.)
HB: hat nur=
KN: =gibts [kaum Arbeitslose=
HB: [wenig
EP: =hm
(0.5)
HB: Ja und die Schweiz die hat =
KN: =Mensch
(.)
HB: die hat das so::
(.)
KN: WENN JEDER [GELD hat kann kaufen dann gehts doch auch wieder HB:
[geregelt
KN: besser als wenn wir so einen Haufen Arbeitslose haben
(0.2)
HB: (ja) in=in der Schweiz da hat man
(.)
KN: Haben sie auch [wenig
HB: [Er
(.)
HB: Ja ganz wenig und [zwar aus aus einem einfachen Grunde (0.5) er
KN: [ja:
>ich meine wenn man hier mal bei uns::< sieht wieviel (.) Millione Ausländer haben wir hier schon ich weiß gar nicht wieviel das sind
(1.5)
HB: erm (.) aber die entsprechen in ETWA DENEN unserer Arbeitslosenzahlen ich jetzt ich ich bin kein rechter und ich bin auch auch er jetzt er ha=auch ke(hh)i-=
KN: =Ja aber [wenn die keine Arbeit hätten
HB: [alles andere als als einer der für Hitler und seine Machenschaften waren oder was jetzt aber nur mal rein [realistisch
KN: [hm:
HB: gesehen ja (0.5) erm wenn wir die Leute nicht hätten (.) >hätten wir schon eine ganze Menge Arbeitslose weniger< (.) und die Schweiz die hat von vornherein (.)schon als bei uns das anfing daß die Italiener kamen=
KN: =hm::
(0.5)

HB: Ich hab nichts dagegen Italiener [und die Tunesier
KN: [hm::
HB: und was hier Türken massenweise millionenfach reinkamen
da hat die Schweiz gesagt, gut, wenn wir Arbeitsplätze brauchen,
??: °(jo:)°
HB: kriegen sie einen Vertrag für ne kurze Zeit (.) ja=
KN: =Hm=
HB: =>und dann müssen sie wieder< RAUs (.) ja (0.5) und kann sein daß er
verlängert wird=
KN: =hm[:::
HB: [daß wir euch noch weiter gebrauchen können auf jeden Fall haben
die von vornherein haben die das alles anders gehandhabt und haben
somit heute so [gut
KN: [hm::::
(.)
HB: wie keine Ausländer (0.2) ja (.) ne=warum die wissen von vornherein
wenn sie kommen ich kann nur so lange bleiben bis daß ich keinen
Arbeitsvertrag mehr kriege (.) ja (.)und ich brauch meine Familie erst gar
nicht herholen also ich fahr lieber gleich nach Italien oder such mir
woanders Arbeit (.) ja
(2)
GB: Ich denke auch die sollten [nur Leute reinholen die wirklich einen
HB: [und
GB: Arbeitsplatz haben
(0.5)
HB: Ne=
GB: =Aber das läßt sich nicht [machen
HB: [Und
(.)
HB: und die haben so gut wie keine keine e::::::r
GB: weil wir weil wir zu [liberal sind in
HB: [Aus(
GB: der( )
HB: schon sagt (.) haha=
GB: =allem
(0.5)
HB: die [die keine Ausländer da
GB: [Es wird immer schlimmer=
KN: =JA:::=ich weiß nicht aber wenn [das man könnte vielleicht auch
HB: [und
anders geregelt werden ( )
(3)
KN: wenn man Arbeitsplätze schaffen will
(3)
HB: Ja (0.5) Ja:: (.) e::r=
GB: =wieder mehr ma[nuelle Arbeit=
HB: [das ist
HB: =Ich ich [sehe auch das Problem dabei ne wenn heute eine Person
KN: [hm:::

Excerpt 8.3 Translation 'International Unemployment'

EP: although I [mean that nowadays you don't have zero unemployment
HB: [(erm also)
EP: anywhere in the [whole world ( )
HB: [(You mustn't for[get)
KN: [hm::

(0.5)
EP: America is booming at the moment but even there you have unem[ployment and in Great Britain you have it is there as we[ll
KN: [hm::
KN: [in HOLLAND have I but Peter was talking to a Dutchman and there is a very small proportion of unemployed, and he said, they don't want to work [at all
([ )=
HB: [Also [also the
HB: =Switzerland=
KN: =hm
(.)
HB: has only=
KN: =has hardly [any unemployed=
HB: [few
EP: =hm
(0.5)
HB: Yeah and Switzerland has=
KN: =Man
(.)
HB: they have done it in a way
(.)
KN: WHEN EVERYONE'S GOT [MONEY can buy things, then it's fine
HB: [ruled it
KN: and again better than having such a large number of unemployed
(0.5)
HB: (yeah) in.. in Switzerland they have
(.)
KN: They have only [few
HB: [Er
(.)
HB: Yeah [very few and for a simple reason
KN: [yeah:
>I mean, if you see here with us::< how many (.) million foreigners we have here already I don't know how many they
(1.5)
HB: erm (.) but they roughly correspond to the number of unemployed, I am, erm no(hh)t erm... I am=
KN: =yeah but [if they didn't have jobs
HB: [anything other than someone who would have supported Hitler and his wheeling and dealing but when we just look at it realistically (0.5) erm if we didn't have these people, we would much
KN: hm:
HB: fewer unemployed, and Switzerland, they arranged it from the outset, as early as we started having Italians coming=
KN: =hm::
(0.5)
HB: I have nothing against Italians and [Tunisians
KN: [hm::
HB: and the masses of Turks who came here in millions Swit[zerland then said, fair enough, if we need jobs, they'll get a contract
?? [jo
HB: for a short time (.) you know=
KN: =Hm=
HB: =>and after that they'll have to LEAVe (.) yeah (0.5) and it might be the case that the contract is extended and that we can
KN: hm[:::
HB: [employ you longer, and from the outset the handled it differently, and that's why nowadays they have virt[ually
KB: [hm::
(.)
HB: no foreigners (0.2) you know , why - they know from the start when they

68 come, I can only stay so long as I can get working contracts, you know,
69 and I don't even need to consider bringing my familiy over, so I'd rather go
70 to Italy and look for a job elsewhere, you know.
71 (2)
72 GB: I also think they should [only let people in who
73 HB: [and
74 GB: really have a job
75 (0.5)
76 HB: You know=
77 GB: =But that can't be [done
78 HB: [And
79 (.)
80 HB: and they have virtually no e::[::::r
81 GB: [because we because we are too [liberal we
82 HB: [Foreig-
83 GB: the( )
84 HB: Already says (.) haha=
85 GB: =everything
86 (0.5)
87 HB: they they [have no foreigners there
88 GB: [It's getting worse all the time=
89 KN: YEA:::H=I know but if you [could do this possibly regulate this
90 HB: [and
91 KN: differently ( )
92 (3)
93 KN: when you want to create jobs
94 (3)
95 GB: ( )=
96 HB: Yeah (0.5) yea::h (.) er=
97 GB: =again more man[ual work=
98 HB: [this is
99 HB: =I [see the main problem in the fact when nowadays a person =
100 GB: [hm

This conversation takes place between GB&HB their daughter EP, and EP's best friend KN. HB, GB, and KN regularly meet along with PN (KN's non-present husband on this particular instance but referred to by KN in the transcript as 'Peter') for 'kaffee und kuchen' ['coffee and cake'] to chat about various issues on a sociable basis. At the time of this conversation, EP was visiting Germany. The common focus of conversational attention here is 'Arbeitslosigkeit' ['Unemployment']. In this part of the episode the conversation moves froma discussion of various countries' unemployment situations before moving on to concentrate more specifically on German unemployment, at which point the question of the relationship between Germany's unemployment rates and the number of 'Auslaenders' ['Foreigners'] is raised. 'Arbeitslosigkeit' as a sociable topic thus provides a pertinent conversational theme for co-present participants, particularly as the talk moves to Germany's

own unemployment levels – a concern which has provided the resource for much German sociable conversation since re-unification with the East in 1989. Although not falling into the category 'Arbeitslos' ['Unemployed'], the problem of 'Arbeitslosigkeit' is one of common relevance to all participants. Thus, I shall posit this particular piece of conversational activity as an example of what I classed earlier as an agoniser (see Chapter 5).

This episode displays several of the features which characterise much of German sociable conversation. For instance, the way in which this topic is being handled (and is handled for the majority of its twenty minute elaboration) is in general in a serious, informed manner, whereby all participants can engage in a thoughtful and well informed discussion of a serious issue (see Chapter 5). Specifically, the second part of the transcript points to the direct relevance of unemployment figures to Germany's economy in general and those co-present – as German nationals – in particular. As with 'Cookie's Party' and 'Tommy Fields', this general handling as sociable style is reliant on the conversational work done with sociable selves, in particular, those which I categorised above as German sociable selves (see table 7.1).

As with my earlier consideration of English sociability, in Chapter 7 I identified a set of routinely mobilised salient selves regularly drawn upon by German participants in the achievement of sociable episodes. A particularly salient category of sociable selves frequently mobilised in German sociable episodes was what I identified above (table 7.1) as agonised selves. Agonised selves are essentially angst ridden entities, and feed conversationally on specific issues or problems usually drawn in for the outside world which pose some degree of threat or source of concern for the co-present sociabilists as a collective. As sociable players, agonised selves are clearly mobilised in 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit'. Agonised selves, due to their grounding in commonality, allow for the positive alignment of sociable selves within or across any given episode of sociable conversation. However, also present in 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit' is a second category of German sociable self identified in Chapter 7, that of knowledgeable selves. Knowledgeable selves in German sociable conversation are conversationally manifest in claims

made by participants to factual and objective knowledge of some wider topic or issue. In and through the mobilisation of such selves, speakers are able to demonstrate their uniqueness of understanding and access to factual knowledge on any given issue. In this sense, their primary use, particularly when mobilised against one another, is to achieve negative alignment (Cf. 'Studieren als Hobby').

However, similar to 'Cookie's Party', the mobilisation of what I have referred to above as normatively negatively aligned selves in what I will argue is the essentially positively aligned nature of 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit' is secondary, and serves not to undermine agonised selves but to support them and thereby support the primary alignment status of 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit' as positive .

Similar to the distribution of available selves seen in 'Cookie's Party', it appears that agonised selves are spread across all participants in this particular episode, with HB, GB, KN, and EP all mobilise at one time or another both knowledgeable and agonised selves. There is then, similar to 'Cookie's Party', a general symmetrical distribution of conversational selves, pointing to the generally positively skewed nature of this particular episode.

'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit' as a sociable episode is already well underway at the point at which this excerpt allows us to enter. In this particular excerpt the first few lines of talk are filled with participants discussing various unemployment rates in Europe, before moving on to focus more closely on Germany. Over the duration of the talk, as with 'Cookie's Party', participants are clearly mutually aligning to some common topic, sharing definitions of what this topic is, and expressively evaluating it (i.e 'Arbeoitslosigkeit als Schlimm' ['Unemployment as a bad thing']). As also with 'Cookie's Party', the conversational and symbolic resources are embedded in these shared definitions and are drawn upon to achieve equilibric sociable conversation for the duration of this particular phase of the episode. Subsequently, EP, KN, HB, and GB mobilise sociable selves grounded in a similar symbolic universe to which they are solidarically aligned.

In terms of the selves mobilised, these in the first instance – due to the nature and relevance of the topic - can be classed as agonistic selves. The most salient manifestation is the way in which the topic is taken – not with exaggeration and humour (as was endemic to both the English episodes), but rather more seriously. Agonised selves are clearly mobilised not on their ability to entertain wit dramatic and factual licence, but to convey quite precisely their stance towards unemployment. The excerpts begins with a clear manifestation of this general agonised alignment with three of the four participants identifying unemployment rates as salient aspects of a countries international profile, and ones which require some precise consideration. EP claims that no country in the world enjoys zero unemployment (lines 1-3), even in Amerika [America] where at that time EP noted the economy to be 'gerade am boomen' ['booming at the moment'] (line 7), as well as in Grossbrittanian [Great Britain] where EP is currently resident. Following this, other participants cite other countries' unemployment rates, such as KN's claims regarding Holland (lines 10-14) and HB's observations about Schweiz [Switzerland] (line 15 onwards). Collectively then what the participants work towards is a cumulative corpus of factual data organised around a central theme and upon which further consensual definition and evaluation of the problem of Arbeitslosigkeit can develop.

As is common for German sociable conversation, much of the talk here is taken up by one speaker, namely, HB. Importantly, HB's claims, and therefore HB's self, is not being proffered nor taken as an individuated one based for example on some counter-position, but as one representative of the definitions and views of the participants *qua collective*. What HB's claims further manifest is evidence of a German agonised self. In line 38 and beyond, HB mobilises such an agonised self as he provides the evidence for the 'einfachen Grunde' ['simple reason'] for Germany's employment problems being the correlation between its unemployment rate and the millions of non-working 'Auslaenders' ['foreingers'] in the country (lines 40-41) . As the talk progresses and HB continues to develop the talk in and through this primarily agonised self, other participants mobilise similar recognisably agonised

selves. For example GB who claims 'die sollten nur Leute reinholen die wirklich einen Arbeitsplatz haben' ['they should only let people in who really have a job'] (lines 77-79) and notes that the current situation 'wird immer schlimmer' ['is getting worse all the time'] (line 93), and KN who attempt to introduce suggestion how the influx of Auslaenders into Germany might be 'anders geregelt' ['regulated differently'] (line 96).

In terms of alignment – as both ratification and support of mobilised selves - agonised selves are clearly aligned and aligned positively over the duration of the talk. As with 'Cookie's Party', this is manifest in both conversational content and the sequential placement of selves over the flow of 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit'.

Again, as with the previous excerpts, within this primary framework of positive alignment, participants are able to achieve some degree of negative alignment. This is achieved in and through the mobilisation of another salient aspect of German conversational selfhood and one I primarily associated above with negative alignment, viz., the knowledgeable self. This is manifest in the cumulative accruement of conversational facts by three of the four participants. Although these claims primarily demonstrate a solidaric alignment to a central agoniser, and although none are posited as counter-propositional nor examined by another participant for their factual accuracy or lack of clarity thereby leading to a more salient state of negative alignment (Cf. 'Studeirein als Arbeitn' below), they do allow participants to display individuated knowledge claims on a common theme. Indeed, it is almost pre-requisite in German sociable conversation – even within primarily positively aligned joint agonism contexts – to have a 'Meinung' ['opinion'] or is some way be able to suggest how the joint problematic invoked in the collective alignment of agonised selves might be resolved, any such claims needing to be credible and based on a clear understanding of the issue (see e.g. Kotthoff 1991; Friday 1994). Comparatively, one might find such individuated nuances on a common theme analogous to that attempted by LM in her attempt to introduce an individuated experience on a commonly experienced past reality

in 'Cookie's Party' – again, a secondary negative alignment within a primarily positively aligned context.

Overall then, what is achieved primarily in 'Internationalle Arbeitslosogkeit by the positive alignment of agonised selves is what plays itself out conversationally as German agonistic conversation.

As I noted above then, this particular piece of sociable conversation is somewhat skewed towards the positive end of the alignment spectrum. Solidarity and sameness of beliefs, viewpoints and definitions are expressed in and through the collective and reciprocal alignment of essentially agonised selves.

What evidence is there then of 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit' being equilibric? In discussing 'Cookie's Party' earlier, I noted that equilibrium was achieved in the way the conversation was handled in general, and more specifically in terms of how sociable selves were mobilised and aligned in the process of mutual ratification and support. The same set of equilibric practices can be seen to be operating in 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit'. First, similar to 'Cookie's Party' and as with all four episodes considered here, this piece of talk is 'typical' of the way in which German participants handle talk in sociable episodes, and in particular the way in which agonisers are handled. 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit' is quite generally clearly recognisable talk about Arbeitslosigkeit and Auslaenders. Second, again similar to 'Cookie's Party', there is a salient preference towards solidarity in terms of how the problem of Arbeitslosigkeit is defined, and how equally it is evaluated. There is then a definitional and evaluative working consensus underlying the talk. More importantly though is not the support of conversational claims, but the ratification of mobilised sociable selves. In 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit' participants are clearly working towards mobilising and ratifying agonised selves as players. In this sense, mutual ratification and support of sociable selves is achieved primarily in and through the mobilisation of similar selves, that is, participants collective mobilise both agonised selves not only to allow participants to make their own conversational claims, but to support those

made and mobilised by their fellow participants. In this way, participants are able to talk about 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit' in the normative and recognisable way they do. Similar to English conversation though, such ratification and support need not rely on the mobilisation and alignment of similar sociable selves as I shall now demonstrate by considering the final of the conversational data to be considered here, 'Studierien als Hobby'.

Having considered a data from a sociable episode which was essentially positively aligned in nature, I now want to consider the second of my German episodes, this time one marked by a typical example of German negative alignment.

Excerpt 8.4 'Studieren als Hobby'

1	SH:	Die Braunschweiger haben auch ['nen [komischen Dialekt
2	HB:	[Erm
3	GB:	[Nein, der Robert
4		(.)
5	GB:	der Robert [macht schon was eigenes=
6	SH:	[Komischen Dialekt
7	HB:	=Na gut, das kann ja das kann dem Robert vielleicht [auch
8	GB:	[Die Elke macht
9		Sprachforschung
10	HB:	Es geht ihm vielleicht [auch um was anderes er [ist ja e:::r
11	GB:	[und der [der Robert macht
12		Soziologie=
13	HB:	=Ja (.) er[::
14	GB:	[also das sind zwei verschiedene Schuhe
15		(.)
16	HB:	Ja, eh [stimmt
17	GB:	[Hat das eine mit dem [anderen überhaupt nichts zu tun=
18	HB:	[Stimmt
19	HB:	=Ja überhaupt nicht abe::r er:::m=
20	GB:	=Nenee es hat nichts da[mit zu tun
21	HB:	[Es geht ihm vielleicht [auch um was anderes
22	KB:	[Geht's um die Sprachen,
23	HB:	dabei
24		da wer will das jetzt wissen (0.5) daß die jetzt wird [sie jetzt vom Lande
25	GB:	[Ach
26		oder von der Stadt bezahlt [ode:r
27	GB:	[Der stellt die These auf der [stellt die These
28	KH:	[Denn das ist ja
29	GB:	auf weißte und dann wird das widerlegt, und dann
30	KH:	das kannst Du ja nicht verkaufen sowas ( )
31		(.)
32	GB:	kommen wieder neue [Erkenntnisse dazu und das ist also
33	KH:	[( )
34	HB:	Hm::

GB: kann man nie als [endgültiges Ergebnis nehmen
KH: [Wie wird sie denn jetzt bezahlt vom vom vom=Land
oder wie wird das bezahlt
(0.5)
HB: .hhhh=Die hat nu:::r 'ne eh >Bafög gekriegt< ne (1) als Zuschuß (1.5) wir
mußten auch noch zuzahlen damit sie [studieren konnte
KH: [>Ja gut aber irgendwas ist ja
auch dabei< (.) irgendwas=
HB: =NAJA ne, eh, das ist ja ein Riesenbereich, ne, und sie hat unter
anderem auch 'ne Sti.. ne, ein
(1.5)
GB: Ein Stipend[ium
HB: [Ein ja Nee=ein Stipendium hat sie auch gehabt in englisch,
England, ja, aber sie hat ja auch Altgriechisch gemacht, auch ein=e[::r
KH: [>Du
hast das [nicht, du hast das nicht verstanden Heinz< (.) wenn sie jetzt
HB: [Semester
damit [fertig ist (0.5) JA von wem wird sie bezahlt? (1.5) Die muß ja
HB: [E::rm
irgendwie Geld verdienen jetzt=

GB: =Ja was heißt von [wem wird sie bezahlt=[Sie muß sich was suchen
HB: [Im Endeffekt [im Endeffekt ist sie ja nu::r ja
Nu[:r
GB: [Sie muß sich was suchen sie [macht das=
KH: [( )
HB: =Lehrerin geworden
GB: Sie macht das Privat=also [sie macht sie [bezahlt das alles jetzt
HB: [Ne [und jetzt
GB: selber
(.)
KH: Ja nein [ich meine jetzt irgendwann [wird sie ja auch
GB: [Ja [und wenn sie fertig ist dann muß sie
sich umgucken, wo bekomme ich eine Stelle als Dozentin oder als was
weiß ich was=
KH: =Ja=
GB: =sie machen will=
HB: =Hmmm=
GB: =Das ist also niemand und da ist auch nichts da was also schon auf sie
wartet, sondern sie muß sich selbst drum kümmern
(0.5)
KH: Ja:::
(.)
GB: Ne (2) Also e::r
(2)
HB: Er Sie [wird
GB: [Da wird sie [von niemandem bezahlt sie macht jetzt
HB: [sie wird mit diesen Forschungen wird sie wohl auch
kaum ihr Geld verdienen sondern eben mit mit den Sprachen, das ist ja,
sie hat ja Sprachen studiert und da ist, da zählt eben alles mit, jetzt, sag
ich, ne? Das ist alles drinne
(0.5)
SH: Was hat sie für Sprachen studiert
(.)
HB: .hhhh=e:::r (.) Englisch:: und unter anderem Lateinisch da hat sie das
Große Latinum, und sie hat auch eben Altgriechisch gemacht, hat sie
noch irgenwas=
GB: =Ja aber hauptsächlich hat sie Anglistik Germanistik Also [Deutsch
HB: [Jaja
Englisch [und in Englisch und=

95 HB: [Jaja
96 SH: =Hm[:::
97 GB: [Und in England unterrichtet sie Deutsch als Fremdsprache (0.5)
98 Nicht=
99 HB: =Hm:[::
100 GB: [Die lernen dann [Deutsch und [das
101 HB: [Damit [damit verdient sie [praktisch ihr Geld
102 GB: [Und das sind die
103 HB: ne
104 GB: Studenten die sie dannu[nterrichtet
105 HB [([ )
106
107 GB: [Dann war sie auch in in
108 e::r (0.5) ja alles [was...
109 SH: [>Also ist das 'n Hobby, was sie so jetzt< (0.5) in in in
110 dieser Sprachforschung [macht
111 HB: [Ja:::
112 (.)
113 GB: Nee, Hobby eigentlich ni[cht
114 HB: [Nee=
115
116 GB: =Das ist schon [ganz schön ( )
117 KH: [Ja darum wollt ich ja wissen wer besteht [jetzt darauf
118 SH: [NEIN ist ein
119 Hobby, sie kriegt's ja nicht bezahlt
120 (.)
121 GB: Nee sie kriegt's [nicht bezahlt ab[er sie braucht es also Hobby ist das
122 HB: [Nein [was=was
123 wirklich nicht=
124 HB =Nein=
125 GB: =denn sie wird ja später mal in diesem arbeiten, als als eh=
126 HB: =hm=
127 GB: =eh (0.5) also sie hat später ihren Doktortitel und wird dann auf [diesem
128 HB: [Ja
129 GB: Geb[iet auch nur was sie [dann macht [weiß ich nicht
130 HB: [Ja:: [das [das wollte ich noch sagen auch

Excerpt 8.4 Translation 'Studying as a Hobby'

1 SH: The people in Braunschweig [have a [funny dialect
2 HB: [Erm
3 GB: [No Robert
4 (.)
5 GB: Robert is [doing something of his own=
6 SH: [funny dialect
7 HB: =Okay, Robert might also [be able to
8 GB: [Elke is doing language research
9 HB: Perhaps he's dealing [with something different, er it's e[::r
10 GB: [and [Robert is doing
11 Sociology=
12 HB: =Yeah er that's [correct
13 GB: [so that's two different things
14 (.)
15 HB: Yeah, that's [correct
16 GB: [One's got nothing to do with the [other=
17 HB: [That's right

HB: =Yeah not at all but e::rm=
GB: =No no it's got nothing to [do with it
HB: [He might be dealing [with something else
KB: [It's about languages
HB: although
KB: who wants to know this now, if she is she being [paid by the state
GB: [oh
KB: or by the council o[::r
GB: [One sets up this thesis, the other one [sets up that
KH: [Because this is
GB: thesis you know, and then it's disproved and then and then there
KH: you can't sell it, such a thing ( )
(.)
GB: are new [findings and that is
KH: [( )
HB: Hm::
GB: you can never take it [as a final result
KH: [How is she being paid then, by the state
or how is she paid
(0.5)
HB: .hhhh=she o::nly >received a grant< yeah (1) as a supplement (1.5) we also had to pay so that she [could study
KH: [>Fair enough, but something is also in it< (.) something=
HB: YEAH, eh, that's a large area and among others she had a schol- a
(1.5)
GB: A scholarship
HB: a yeah no=a scholarship she also had in English, England, yeah but she also did classical Greek also a e[::r
KH: [>You haven't you haven't understood Heinz< (.) if she's now ready with it you know (0.5) by whom
HB: one semester
is she going to be paid She must be earning money now=
HB: E::rm
GB: =Well, what do you mean by whom is she being paid=She'll have to look
HB: At the end of the day at the end of the day
GB: for a job
HB: she's, well, yeah, well only
GB: She'll have to look for something, she's doing this=
KH: ( )
HB: =become a [teacher
GB: [She's doing this on a [private basis=so she's [paying it all for
HB: [You know [and now
GB: herself now
(.)
KH: Yeah [no I mean at [some stage she'll also have
GB: [You know [and when she's finished she'll have to look out for a job 'where do I get a job as a lecturer' of whatever=
KH: =Yeah=
GB: =she wants to do=
HB: =Hmmm=
GB: =So there's nobody there and there's also nothing waiting for her, but she'll have to sort that out for herself
(0.5)
KH: Yeah
(.)
GB: You know (2) so e::r
(2)
HB: He she [will
GB: [She's not [being paid by anyone she's doing this now

78 HB: [with this research she will hardly earn her money
79 anyway, but with these language, that is, she has studied languages and
80 and that is, all this counts now, I would say, you know That's all part of it
81 (0.5)
82 SH: Which languages has she studied?
83 (.)
84 HB: .hhhh=e::r (.) English:: and among other things Latin, she's gained the
85 'Große Latinum', and she also did Classical Greek and then she's done
86 something else=
87 GB: Yeah, but in the first place she studied English and [German English
88 HB: [Yeah=yeah
89 and [in English and
90 HB: [Yeah yeah
91 SH: =Hm[:::
92 GB: [And in England she's teaching German as a foreign language (0.5)
93 you know=
94 HB: =Hm[:::
95 GB: [They are learning [German [this
96 HB: [This way [this way she's [practically earning her
97 GB: [And these are the
98 HB: money you know
99 GB: students that she's [teaching
100 HB [([ )
101 GB: [Then she was also in in e::r
102 (0.5) yeah, everything that
103 SH: >So it's a hobby then what she's doing now in in in this
104 language res[each
105 HB: [Well:::
106 (.)
107 GB: No, hobby [not
108 HB: [no=
109 GB: =That's actually [quite
110 KH: [Yeah, that's why I wanted to know, who's [demanding that
111 SH: [NO, it's a
112 hobby, she's not getting paid for it
113 (.)
114 GB: No, she's [not getting paid for it [but she needs it so a hobby it is
115 HB: [No [what - what
116 GB: really not=
117 HB =No=
118 GB: =because later she'll be working in this area as erm erm=
119 HB: =hm=
120 GB: eh (0.5) so later she'll have her doctor title and she'll be working in [this
121 HB: [Yeah
122 GB: area as well, only what she'll be doing I don't know

The topic of conversation in 'Studierien als Hobby' focuses around the academic studies of RP and EP respectively. EP is the daughter of HB&GB and RP the son-in-law (see Appendix A). The specifics of the talk address the issues of what exactly RP and EP are studying, who is paying them, and the question of whether unpaid work is actually work at all or rather a 'hobby'. Neither RP nor EP themselves are present in the gathering in which this

episode takes place. Rather, the talk is conducted between HB&GB and KH&SH, the latter couple being the parents-in-law of HB&GB's other child, also non-present. As in the previous three episodes considered, the participants in this encounter come together at regular intervals purely to meet on a sociable basis.

What I categorised above as biographicals provide a routine conversational resources on such occasions. The biographical in question here receives what is quite typical conversation treatment in German sociable episodes, as both sets of participants accord focused and quite serious attention to the topic of RP&EP's studies. Throughout the duration of this particular episode, KH&SH display considerable interest in the activities of EP&RP. KH&SH adopt a generally interrogative standpoint, with questions directed to HB&GB not about their own biographical activities but about their daughter and son-in-law. In this sense, although EP&RP are absent third parties, they are closely connected to HB&GB. This is evidenced in what is very much a defensive standpoint being taken up by HB&GB, one not atypical of much of German sociable conversation. As with both the English examples and 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit' discussed above, this talk can be seen to be contingent on the types of selves mobilised and the way in which these are normatively aligned over the course of the episode.

Again, this archetypal German treatment of biographicals evidenced in 'Studieren als Hobby' is contingent on the mobilisation and alignment of sociable selves. These however differ to those evidenced in 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit' in terms of their symbolic nature.

Whereas that particular episode was dominated by the mobilisation and alignment of agonised selves towards what developed into the problem of 'Auslaenders' and an essentially positive alignment, 'Studieren als Hobby' is dominated by the mobilisation of two more of the routinely mobilised salient German sociable selves identified in Chapter 7. That is, what were termed examining and demeaned selves. Both these selves are mobilised and aligned as sociable players in this episode. The examining self is, as I have

noted throughout my discussion, a salient and routinely mobilised entity in German sociable conversation. Conversationally, this is manifest in the close attention paid by a recipient of one or the other conversational claim to a speaker's followed by repeated and direct close questioning, request for clarification, identification of flaws, or even unmitigated correction of that speaker's claims. A salient function of what were termed demeaned selves was to respond and align to such examining selves. Conversationally, as players, demeaned selves are conversationally manifest in behaviour ranging from defensive to counter-examining stances as speakers mobilise them to clarify or justify prior claims, or refute those made by examining selves. In terms of alignment, both sets of selves provide a routine resource for negative alignment. Alongside these primary sociable selves there is also conversational evidence for the mobilisation of knowledgeable selves, albeit serving essentially to support examining and demeaned selves.

Although this conversational activity marks 'Studierien als Hobby' as primarily negatively aligned, as with both the German and English data considered in the preceding discussion, selves are mobilised – specifically confirmative ones - in a way which allows for some degree of positive alignment. As with the preceding data though, such positive mobilisation of selves within a primarily negatively aligned conversational environment does not undermine that alignment but rather supports it.

Throughout the duration of the talk, examining selves are mobilised by both KH and SH, whilst HB and GB generally reciprocate with demeaned selves. Thus, whereas 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit' and 'Cookie's Party' were marked by a symmetrical distribution of conversational selves, similar to 'Tommy Fields' then, participants here (also as in 'Tommy Fields' as married couples) enjoy an asymmetrical distribution of selves, with one couple mobilising a different but equally ratificatory set of conversational selves than the other. This distribution of sociable selves adds further to make 'Studieren asl Hobby' primarily negatively aligned.

The excerpt begins as HB is proffering a definition of the nature of RP's academic studies. From this point onwards, all participants can be seen to mutually conversationally align to one and the same topic, namely, that of RP and EP's studies, the nature of them, and the implied evaluation of the status of academic study. In terms of definition and evaluation, unlike 'Internationalle Arbeitslosigkeit' and 'Cookie's Party', there is a lack of solidarity and commonality between participants. The selves mobilised are essentially oriented to these incongruities for the duration of the episode. The conversational and symbolic resources are thus embedded in essentially individuated spheres, and, for the duration of this particular phase of the episode, these linguistic and sociological resources are drawn upon to achieve equilibric sociable conversation. Subsequently, GB&HB, and KH&SH mobilise sociable selves as both players and images grounded in essentially – at least for the duration of the narrative – unique symbolic universes

First, to consider the salient selves mobilised here. Both KN and SH clearly mobilise what I referred to earlier as examining selves in this excerpt whilst HB and GB mobilise what I referred to earlier as demeaned selves. The former is manifest here by repetitive examination, the latter by a serious and ernst attempt to clarify and defend a standpoint. The actual nature of these selves is perhaps more salient in 'Studierien als Hobby' than in any of the previous excerpts presented in this study. This is in part due to the negative alignment, where one set of selves is clearly not only in support of but effectively 'foiled' against the other, but also in the direct and at points counter-propositional alignment of examinatory and demeaned selves. KH and SH's examining selves are clearly mobilised in this excerpt. Their conversational moves here are oriented directly at the claims made by HB and GB. Likewise, HB and GB's demeaned selves are equally evident. Here, HB and GB attempt to clarify and defend their prior conversational claims regarding the central topic of their children's studies.

In terms of alignment, as with the preceding three excerpts, we can see how the mobilisation of sociable selves here occurs sequentially and works to

mutually ratify and support the symbolic and conversational nature of co-participants selves at this point in the conversation and pursue a period of negative alignment. Across lines 1-23, HB and GB explain the nature of EP and RP studies. In response to this joint attempt to precisely define the nature of these studies, in line 24 KH mobilises an examining self by asking the question who wants to know (wer will das jetzt wissen) and whether or not EP wird... vom Land oder von der Stadt bezahlt (line 24 - 26). This is done in a rather direct manner and allows KH to demonstrate both his own reading of RP and EP's statuses, and proffer a legitimate and perhaps fundamental question – one which might question the actual validity of RP's and EP's studies. Having failed to receive a suitable response to his question, KH in line 36 - 37 re-mobilises an examining self by reiterating 'Wie wird das bezahlt' [Who's going to pay for that']. Following a short pause HB responds with what I described earlier as a demeaned self which continues over lines 39 - 48. Over these lines, HB directly aligns himself to the examining self mobilised by KH. However, rather than accepting HB's response as adequate (as might an English speaker), KH continues further along his examinatory lines path, by both rejecting HB's answer and implying that HB has quite simply 'nicht verstanden' [not understood] what he has been asking. At this moment in the interaction GB in line 56 in effect launches a counter-examinatory self by asking KH 'ja, was heißt, von wem wird sie bezahlt'. Following this GB immediately provides a detailed explanation of EP's situation regarding her current status and future work plans. This continues until line 74 at which point GB finishes her turn at talk and the conversation pauses. Finally, in line 82 - 85 HB re-mobilises a demeaned self to further clarify the nature of research. Following a slight pause at line 86 SH enters the conversation for the first time by asking 'was hat sie für Sprachen studiert', similar to the alignment effects of KH's original question. SH's mobilisation of an examining self at line 87 results in HB and GB again mobilising demeaned selves. This continues until line 108 at which point SH based on her close listening of the talk over lines 89 - 108 concludes that EP's work has the status of hobby, largely due to its non-paid status. This assertion is immediately and unequivocally rejected by GB and HB in lines 113 and 114 with the word 'nee' followed by further clarification up until line 132.

What this talk demonstrates is that the initial mobilisation of an examining self in German conversation normatively results in the mobilisation not of an abased self (one for instance that might be conversationally manifest in claiming a lack of knowledge or deferring to interlocutors suggestions, or even aligning against RP and EP by also examining their financial and employment statuses – a strategy that I have witnessed in English conversation), but by a demeaned self which often takes on a defensive characteristic.

Of course, aspects of selfhood are also invoked something akin to knowledgeable selves. Both HB & GB and KH & SH lay claim to factual knowledge about the nature of EP and RP's studies and the status of them in terms of hobby vs. real work. Whereas in 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit' these were mobilised in the pursuit of solidarity and primarily positive alignment though, here they are mobilised to strengthen positions and further amplify negate alignment. These knowledgeable selves also reveal an example of secondary alignment in this particular episode. Although the preceding talk almost exclusively characterised by negative alignment between HB & GB and KH & SH, there are some elements of positive alignment. For example, at the beginning of the talk a limited form of negative alignment occurs between GB and HB. In response to HB's analogy of RP's work with dialectal studies in line 1 GB unequivocally rejects HB's assertion on grounds of factual accuracy with 'nein, der Robert... macht schon was eigenes' [No, Robert's doing something different] in lines 3 to 5 up until line 20 with 'neenee, es hat nichts damit zu tun' [No no, it's got nothing to do with it]. However, rather than placing HB in the situation of being under examinatory attack from both his own wife and their fellow participants GB realigns herself positively with HB in joint defence against the subsequent assertions made by KH und SH. There are also moments of positive alignment between KH&SH qua married couple and HB&GB, for example when KH seems to demobilise his examinatory self by signalling that that clarity has been reached and agreement achieved. More generally though, underlying this talk is an issue which often provides the conversational resource for the mobilisation of a

salient positive German self, the agonised self. That is the theme all participants in 'studieren als hobby' are orienting to is the ultimate value associated with 'Arbeit', or more specifically, 'bezahlte Arbeit'. In that sense there is an over-arching positive alignment to this episode in that although the nature and status of RP and EP's studies are causing some negative alignment the question of whether or not paid work is valued is never explicitly brought into question. Indeed, the immediate rejection of the association of KP and RP's work as a hobby evidences this paid work (highly valued) vs. hobby (non-valued) dichotomy. This, of course, relates to the images invoked of non-present RP and EP in that where KH and SH seem to be abasing RP and EP, HB and GB are struggling to invoke demeaned images of RP and EP, thereby further evidencing the value of demeaned selves in German conversation interaction.

Thus, as with the previous three excerpts, 'Studierien als Hobby' is primarily rather than exclusively negatively aligned (although prima facie it may appear so) and stays within the boundaries of equilibric sociability.

Although – at least to the English reader – this piece of sociable conversation may appear *prima facie* potentially non-sociable and threaten the underlying condition of ritual equilibrium, it is not uncommon of conversation within German sociable episodes. Indeed, in my own data and from my wider observations, such talk is endemic to German sociability. However, as I have maintained throughout, the reasons for this particular episode and much of German conversation taking such a form is not in the fist instance the motivations of speakers but rather the normatively available sociable selves.

First, as with 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit', both sets of couples are demonstrating a shared orientation to a common topic, that is, the academic studies of RP and EP. Second, there is a clear distinction oriented to by all participants in the talk between paid work and non-paid work, with the former being valued and the latter much less so – this heightened valuing of paid

work or 'Arbeit' being an extremely salient undercurrent in German conversation. However, in terms of the conversational topic, unlike the negative alignment seen in 'Tommy Fields', there is first some lack of clarity as to what exactly RP and EP are doing in their 'studies' or how these studies are, and second, some question as to whether these studies are actually work at all or just a hobby. There is then some definitional and evaluative incongruity between participants. This is clearly reflected in the way participants mobilise and align conversational selves, what were classed as examining and demeaned selves. However, aside from the institutionalised form of this talk attesting to its equilibric status, the selves mobilised can, as with the previous data, be seen to be both ratificatory and supportive and by the same measure equilibric. Examining selves are ratified and supported in and through the demeaned selves mobilised and aligned by HB&GB. Likewise, the continuing alignment of examinatory selves both ratifies and supports the continued mobilisation of demeaned selves on the part of HB&GB, even to the point (and again, this is not uncommon in German sociable conversation) where HB&GB may mobilise counter-examinatory selves. Although then prime facie this episode appears non-equilibric, both sets of participants are clearly working to a culturally specific version of working consensus in – an this is fundamental id it id to remain equilibric – an institutionalised way.

Having now concluded my analysis of both the German and English data, I now want to briefly discuss the findings presented in this chapter

8.3 Discussion: Aligning Selves in the Achievement of Sociability

In the preceding analyses I have considered a series of transcribed excerpts of conversation drawn from sociable episodes occurring within both English and German sociable gatherings. Beginning with the English data, each excerpt has been analysed by employing the facework as alignment

approach advanced in Chapter 3. I have drawn on both the observations set out in Chapter 6 regarding conversational alignment and Chapter 7 regarding sociable selves to illustrate how facework in sociable episodes can be demonstrated to be alignment of sociable selves.

Fundamentally, what the preceding analysis has evidenced is that sociable episodes can be conceived of as being characterised by varying degrees of both positive and negative alignment, with certain primary alignments giving a particular skewing to any given sociable episode. Importantly, these various alignments have been shown to be contingent on the mobilisation of salient and routinely mobilised sociable selves – ones regularly drawn upon as symbolic resources by participants in each culture. Although this drawing from what is in effect a symbolic conversational pool of routinely available sociable selves has been shown to occur equally routinely in both cultures, the analysis of the preceding data has evidenced some cultural variation in terms of the nature of the selves mobilised and the manner in which they are aligned in the achievement of sociability. This culturally expressive variation on a universal set of symbolic practices (i.e. alignment of sociable selves) has been shown to apply to both conversational selves as images (i.e. figures invoked in talk) and players (i.e. the selves employed to manage those figures in talk) (see Goffman 1967).

Taking these basic premises of sociable conversation, what the preceding analysis has demonstrated is that the various sociable selves mobilised by participants in talk are ratified in and through the reciprocative mobilisation of supportive sociable selves in both primarily positively aligned and primarily negatively aligned contexts. For example, re-invoked selves have been shown to be ratified in and through the mobilisation and alignment of similar re-invoked selves (see 'Cookie's Party'), and agonistic selves are ratified in and through the mobilisation of similarly agonised selves (see 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit') in the achievement of positively skewed alignment. Similarly, narrative selves have been shown to be ratified in and through the mobilisation of appropriate audiential selves (see 'Tommy Fields') and examinatory selves are ratified in and through the mobilisation of

demeaned and knowledgeable selves (see 'Studieren als Hobby') in the achievement of negatively skewed alignment in English and German sociable episodes respectively.

Such activity has been shown to play itself out as equilibric conversation, that is, recurring and institutionalised forms of talk endemic to sociability in each respective culture. Further, this is talk which accommodates variously both negative and positive aspect of conversational selfhood. In this sense, what the preceding analyses have demonstrated is that equilibric interaction has been shown to be contingent on cultural variations in what Goffman (1967) famously termed working consensus. That is, participants in both primarily positively aligned and primarily negatively aligned conversational environments appear to be mutually and reciprocatively aligning to culturally normative ways to achieve sociable equilibrium. I shall discuss this last point further in Chapter 9.

Aside from demonstrating how both positive and negative alignments occur variously in the same conversational environment in each culture, I have also demonstrated in the preceding analysis that such alignments can be seen to occur in each of the topic types identified in Chapter 5 – viz. reminiscences (excerpt 'Cookie's Party'), reportables (excerpt 'Tommy Fields'), agonisers (excerpt 'Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit' ['International Unemployment']), biographicals (excerpt 'Studieren als Hobby' ['Studying as a Hobby']) - ones endemic to sociable conversation in each culture. These findings are represented in table 8.1. This again evidences the endemic nature of positive – negative alignment practices in both cultures across major topic types routinely drawn upon for sociable conversation.

Table 8.1 Sociable Episodes and the Positive and Negative Alignment of Sociable Selves

Episode	*Cookie's Party*	*Tommy Fields*	*Internationale Arbeitslosigkeit*	*Studierien als Hobby*
Topic type	Reminiscence	Reportable	Agoniser	Biographical
Primary selves mobilised:	Reinvoking-Reinvoking (s)	Narrating-Audiential (a)	Agonised-Agonised (s)	Examining-Demeaned (a)
Primary alignment	+	-	+	-

(a) asymmetrical alignment
(s) symmetrical alignment

As well as evidencing the analytical purchase provided by an essentially Goffmanian (1967; 1969) reading of the self (see Chapter 7), I would argue that the second conceptualisation - that posited as the 'conversational-construal' at the beginning of this chapter – might also have been evidenced in the preceding analysis. That is, in both negative and positive alignments over the course of and at various points within the episodes considered, participants have mobilised effectively individuated and collective selves. Importantly, these self 'statuses' - which refer not to in the first instance players mobilised or images invoked but rather the status of persons vis-à-vis one another – in this sense, have been shown to be, not fixed and stable (as in a cultural reading of the 'self-construal'), but rather fluid and contingent on the flow of conversation.

These comments may appear prima facie somewhat conjectural, but I would argue that, taken in a heuristic sense, the alignment practices in both cultures attest to some degree to their legitimacy.

In the light of the preceding analysis then, what statements might we make about English – German variations in sociable style. If we take the

preceding comments regarding sociable selfhood to hold, we might state that, in each cultural milieu, although different sociable selves are mobilised and aligned qua players and images (Goffman 1967; 1967), in terms of the self as conversational construal, each participants in each sociable milieu can be seen to be individuating and communing – or expanding and contracting – in and through their alignment practices.

In terms of what we are now able to say about these differences being interpretable within the context of the facework as alignment approach, what the preceding analysis has clearly demonstrated is that English and German sociable conversations display both positive and negative alignment across and within sociable episodes. Such alignment is directly contingent on the mobilisation of normatively available sociable selves in each culture. The expressive nature of each of these selves though is subject to cross-cultural variation. It is variation at the level of such normatively available and routinely mobilised conversational selves both as conversational players and conversational images that results in what is manifest conversationally as differences in sociable style.

8.4 Conclusion

I began this chapter by discussing the conversational capacity of the self to both expand to include the experiences, viewpoints and definitions of other selves, and contract to become a conversational entity characterised by more unique and individuated experiences, viewpoints and definitions – what I referred to as the self as 'conversational-construal' (8.1). The aim of this treatment of the self was to illustrate that the self in conversation can variously enjoy either positively or negatively skewed status, dependant on the alignment context of talk. Conversationally, this was shown to be manifest in the conversational claims of participants as sociable players or sociable images. Following this, I moved on to consider in some detail transcribed and translated examples of sociable conversation (8.2), drawn from four different

sociable episodes occurring in English (8.2.1) and German (8.2.2) sociable gatherings. These analyses – which formed the bulk of the chapter - sought to demonstrate how facework in sociable conversation could be seen to be contingent upon the mobilisation and alignment of appropriate sociable selves. More specifically, I sought to show how English – German variation in sociable style could be seen to be explained in cultural variation on a universally applicable framework of facework as alignment practices. Following these analyses I briefly discussed the findings in terms of any conclusions we might be able to make about English – German differences in sociable style (8.3).

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, the analyses presented here has been guided by what is in effect a dual mandate. That is, to both consider closely differences in English and German sociable conversation; and to apply the facework as alignment framework advanced in Chapter 3 and developed over the chapters leading up to this point in this chapter. In order to fully assess both the specific findings from the cross-cultural analysis of both data sets analysis and the appropriateness and analytical purchase afforded by the facework as alignment approach, I shall in the following and final chapter conclude the study as a whole by addressing these two sets of issues as well as directions for future studies wishing to address ongoing naturally occurring conversation for facework practices.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION: THE TO AND FRO OF FACEWORK IN SOCIABLE EPISODES

9.0 Introduction

In the preceding analysis presented over Chapters 6 to 8 I have attempted to address German and English differences in sociable conversation by applying the model of facework as alignment advanced in Chapter 3. In Chapter 6 I drew on conversational data to illustrate how talk could be interpreted in terms of both positive and negative alignment possibilities suggested by this approach. Following this, In Chapter 7, I identified and illustrated salient sociable selves regularly mobilised in sociable conversation by English and German conversationalists in their respective milieus. Finally, in Chapter 8 I essentially put the two together to illustrate how German and English differences in sociable conversation could be explained in terms of the routine alignment of sociable selves.

In this chapter I wish to conclude the study as a whole. First I shall briefly summarise the work presented in this thesis chapter by chapter (9.1). Following this I shall reflect more specifically on the facework as alignment approach employed in this study, focusing specifically on the concepts of equilibrium, alignment, and the self as central elements to this approach. In particular I want to spell out quite clearly what I attempted to achieve by developing this particular analytic framework, and in how far its application over the preceding chapters has afforded some analytical purchase on the body of data available for analysis (9.2). Following this I shall consider specifically what the application of this analytical framework has told us about English and German sociable conversation and the sociological bases for variations in sociable style (9.3). I shall then attempt to sketch out areas for possible future research employing

facework as alignment approach to conversational analysis. (9.4). Finally, I shall provide a conclusion (9.5).

9.1 Review of the Study

I began the study by introducing the concept of face as developed in the work of Erving Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson (1987). In terms of the former, I paid emphasis to the notion of equilibrium as a process of mutually supportive facework practices where face was claimed, ratified, and sustained over the flow of interaction. In terms of the latter, I highlighted the conceptual import afforded by the positive – negative reading of face needs and facework strategies. I then moved on to consider the concept of face as a possible universal by drawing on cross-cultural literature, particularly that focusing on Asian cultures (e.g. Matsumoto 1988; Mao 1994; Morisaki and Gudykunst 1994; Scollon and Scollon 1994). Here I highlighted amongst other things the concept of the self-construal as providing some conceptual import for an understanding of the concept of face as a universal. I then moved on to consider other non Anglo-American cultures to show how conversational behaviour which ran prima facie contra to face work a la Goffman or politeness a la Brown and Levinson but which nevertheless was perceived by persons in certain cultures as non face-threatening or not impolite (e.g. Blum-Kulka 1987; Wierzbicka 1985; Katriel 1986; Tannen 1981a; 1981b; Schiffrin 1984). Drawing on Goffman I concluded the chapter by suggesting that the considerable variety of conversational practices in a range of cultures could be conceived of similarly, as evidencing the collaborative achievement of ritual equilibrium, albeit culturally variant in its conversationally manifest form.

Next, in Chapter 2, I drew on a range of studies which focused specifically on English – German differences in what I referred to generically as communicative style (e.g. Blum-Kulka and House 1989; Byrnes 1986; Fetzer 1996, 1997; Friday 1994; Hellweg, Samovar, and Skow 1994; House 1979, 1982a, 1982b, 1982c, 1989; House and Kasper 1981; Kotthoff 1989, 1991, 1993, 1994; Straehle 1997; and Watts 1989). A salient set of differences were

identified in conversational behaviour across the two speech communities which, in part, were attributed to a set of communicative parameters as well as varying orientations to self and other face-needs in talk. Such differences were suggested to be partly explainable in terms of the bases for cultural variation in facework practices outlined in Chapter 1. However, upon reviewing the extant studies of German-English differences and scholars' possessive attempts to locate the etic underpinnings of emic differences, it was argued that a central concept, although intimated to in a number of the works cited, had not been fully examined, namely, that of the self as a basis for facework. Further, empirical limitations were identified in some of the current approaches specifically in terms of the limited use of naturally occurring conversation. Based on these limitations, it was suggested that the systematic analysis of the self in naturally occurring conversation as underlying the variations in conversational style between the two speech communities might allow a better and more sociologically grounded analysis and explanation.

In an attempt to employ some analytical framework for the analysis of German – English conversation from a facework perspective, I then reviewed currently available frameworks for the analysis of facework in discourse, most notably Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson (1987). Based upon the premises drawn from the specific research problem set out at the end of Chapter 2, upon reviewing extant established frameworks for the analysis of facework in discourse, I concluded that although various models and interpretive frameworks allowed in part some analytical purchase, no one available approach appeared appropriate for the analysis of facework – and one with the concept of the self as central – in naturally occurring conversation in the two speech communities. This problem was further compounded due to the cross-cultural nature of the particular research problem which this study sought to address. That aside, the problematic nature of the analysis of facework in discourse was exposed, one which seemed to highlight the inherent recalcitrance of naturally occurring conversation to any systematic analysis other than under controlled circumstances und in terms, for example, of specific speech-acts or discourse-components. However, it was suggested that, although the questions of addressing facework in naturally occurring conversational interaction *per se* was highly problematic, and none of the

extant approaches seemed particularly suitable for this, literature addressing sociability (Simmel 1949 [1911]), particularly the dynamics of sociable (Riesman and Watson 1964; Watson 1958; Watson and Potter 1962; Tannen 1984; Schiffrin 1984; Blum-Kulka 1997) or casual conversation (Eggins and Slade 1997) might help in taking a more heuristic stance to facework in conversation as advocated by scholars noting these problems associated with discourse analysis for facework practices. I moved on to suggest how the sociological concepts of alignments and equilibrium could be employed to accommodate the inherent dynamics of sociable conversation and, more importantly, could be seen to provide some analytical purchase on the self in sociable conversation as a concept directly linked to both positive and negative face needs. I then presented a framework of the analysis of facework as a matter not of utterances per se, but of selves, what I termed a facework as alignment approach to the analysis of facework in conversation. Based on these theoretical propositions, I pointed to certain questions which would need to be pursued if an understanding of English and German differences in conversational style as facework as alignment was to be arrived at.

In Chapter 4 I briefly spelled out my methodology for the gathering and initial analysis of conversational data guided by the analytical and empirical parameters arising from the development of the facework as alignment approach outlined in Chapter 3. Here I also addressed the nature of conducting data gathering and ethnographic observations in a sociable milieu – what I referred to as social(b)l(e) science. Issues addressed here included ethical ones, and my particular role as both researcher and bona fide participant in sociable gatherings.

Chapters 5 to 8 were analytical in nature and were organised around the presentation and analysis of observational and conversational data. In Chapter 5 I attempted to delineate sociability as particular form on interaction by identifying how participants in both cultures aligned at a general level to sociable gatherings. This was stressed as important as it was within this normative milieu that sociable conversation developed and participants were seen to align for alignment as I had termed it. In this chapter I also pointed at quite a general level to how participants in each respective milieu variously

handled sociable topics, in terms of for example the nature of topics developed, the extent to which topics were collaboratively developed, and how topics were commonly framed, for example in either a narrative of more substantive manner. In effect I attempted to demonstrate how participants aligned for the achievement of sociability as a socially and culturally recognisable style.

In Chapters 6 to 8 I moved from a focus on observational to transcribed conversational data. The main thrust of Chapter 6 was to illustrate how sociable conversation could be seen to be characterised by instances of what I termed both positive and negative alignment, including illustrating the range of possible alignment contingencies suggested by the interpretive framework set out in Chapter 3 in both English and German sociable episodes. From the analysis of the conversational data from both milieu, it was concluded that instances of both positive and negative alignments – at the level of conversational claims – were evidently intrinsic to sociable conversation in both English and German sociable settings. Importantly, the nature of these alignments clearly reflected some of the salient aspects of conversational style in general identified in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 7 I extended and developed the discussion of the self (Goffman 1953; 1967) as a symbolic resource for alignment (Goffman 1981; Katriel 1986; Malone 1997; Nofsinger 1991; Stokes and Hewitt 1976). Specifically, again by drawing on conversational data from both cultures, I identified certain salient conversational selves routinely mobilised by participants in each milieu. These conversational selves were posited as being necessary symbolic resources to both engage in the sociable style demonstrated in each respective culture, and allowed for the claiming and ratification of prevailing positive social values. Fundamentally, such selves were seen to be the symbolic resources through which participants were able to achieve both positive and negative alignment, and thus, over the flow of the conversation have both positive and negative face needs met within a wider reciprocal framework of mutually supportive ritual equilibrium.

Finally, in Chapter 9, I conducted an analysis of conversational data employing all these elements of the facework as alignment approach. The

aim of this final analytic chapter was to demonstrate the analytical purchase afford by such an approach, as well an demonstrate through actual empirical data how German and English participants in talk variously used the symbolic resources of the self as part and parcel of achieving ritual equilibrium. From a discussion of the findings arising out of the analyses conducted in Chapter 9, I was able to make a general summative statement about the sociological bases for salient differences in English and German sociable styles.

This then has been the thesis in a nutshell. I want now to reflect more specifically on the three central concepts underlying this study: That is, equilibrium, alignment, and the conversational self.

9.2 Reflections on the Current Approach

As I noted in the Introduction, in this study I have attempted to do two things: The first out of empirical interest, the second out of theoretical and analytical necessity. That is, I have conducted a comparative study of facework in English and German sociable episodes, and, developed a framework for the analysis of facework, not in the first instance as politeness, or as remedial work oriented to face-threatening behaviour, but as alignment of sociable selves. I shall discuss the first of these endeavours – the empirical aspect – below. First however, I should spend some time reflecting on the theoretical and analytical aspects of the study.

What I hope to have achieved here is to have conducted, in essence, a more 'sociological' study of facework than might have been allowed for by extant approaches to the study of facework in discourse. I have done this by organising my analysis around three central sociological concepts: Equilibrium; alignment; and the self. As I outlined in Chapter 3, extant frameworks for the analysis of facework in discourse are largely premised on the positive – negative conceptualisation forged by Brown and Levinson (1987). Positive facework was demonstrated to be an essentially 'approach based' phenomenon. That is, by employing positive facework strategies, persons seek

to bring themselves and their interlocutors closer together; it is in effect a ratification of sameness. In the facework as politeness paradigm, this is normally taken to be achieved via a range of discourse strategies, from specific politeness 'markers' in the realisation of speech acts (e.g. the use of "we" over "I"), to general orientations to conversation *per se* (e.g. 'showing interest') (see Brown and Levinson 1987). The importance and salience in conversation of solidaric expression underlies both Goffman's and Brown and Levinson's development of facework. Goffman (1967) for instance speaks in quite general terms of 'working consensus' or 'lip-service'. Whilst Brown and Levinson (1987) provide a comprehensive list of 'positive politeness' strategies. In short, positive facework can be perceived of as a kind of '...social accelerant' functioning to bring people 'closer together'. (Brown and Levinson 1987, 103). This general ethos associated with positive politeness was shown to underlie subsequent models of facework which have incorporated and sought to build on this fundamental reading (e.g. Arndt and Janney 1987; Lim and Bowers 1991; Scollon and Scollon 1981) as well as in more conventional studies of politeness (e.g. Lakoff 1973; 1979; Leech 1983; Fraser 1990). Conversely, negative facework was shown to be generally treated as an 'avoidance' based phenomenon. That is, by employing negative facework, persons seek to keep their own selves and others at some 'symbolic distance', thereby recognising and ratifying themselves and others as autonomous preserves. Again, as with positive facework as politeness, a range of discourse strategies have been identified within the facework as politeness paradigm . As with positive politeness, the focus on a recognition and redressing of the autonomy of one's interlocutor underlies both Goffman's and Brown and Levinson's work.

Although well-proven concepts in the analysis of facework, I noted in Chapter 3 that studies subsequent to Brown and Levinson have increasingly noted the complexity of discourse and its apparent recalcitrance to systematic analysis for facework using the facework as politeness paradigm. These observations have come about even though there has been an increasing call for the turn to naturally occurring conversational data drawn from naturally occurring settings for a more valid and comprehensive understanding of facework practices.

In part, at a procedural level, this study has attempted – largely necessitated by the specific research problem and data employed – to resolve this tension by applying in the first instance symbolic categories (i.e. the self) rather than linguistic ones (i.e. utterances and their components). In addition, in order to locate the self – or more specifically conversational selves – within a useable framework, I have employed the concepts of alignment to refer to the collective facework practices, and equilibrium to refer essentially to the normative thresholds on sociability. All three concepts have been incorporate into a single analytical framework which has sought to traverse the analytical impasse associated with facework in naturally occurring conversational interaction.

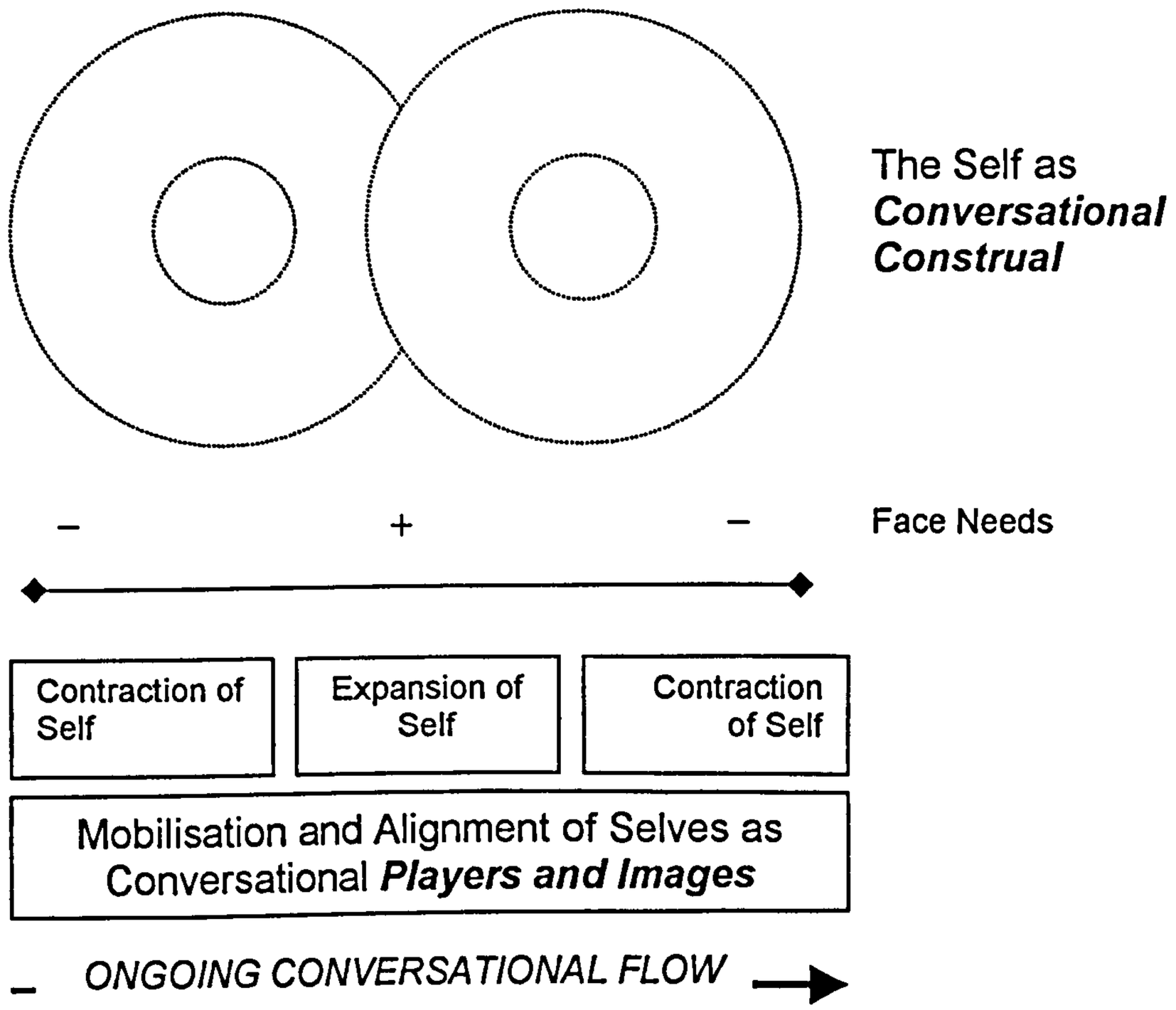
These three central concepts the self, derived from an Goffmanian reading and conceptualisation as construal, alignment, drawn from sociological and cultural based work, and equilibrium, drawn primarily from the work of Goffman (1967) have then been central to my approach to the study of facework. I hope to have demonstrated in the preceding paragraphs how these three concepts are not distinct and mutually exclusive ones, but rather necessarily interwoven in with one another to form the conversational and symbolic matrix that allows for the proffering and ratification of culturally valued selves and the mutual activity of facework.

Briefly taking each one of these turn, the concept of the self as the interactional and cultural basis for face has been fundamental to this study. In Chapter 1 I drew on a body of literature which identified culturally varying notions of the self as the basis for culturally specific conceptualisations of face. Cultural nuances of the self were seen to be contingent on the extent to which the self of the individual 'overlapped' with the selves of others. Much of the discussion was based on an East-West distinction of the self, and how cultural differences directly informed the notion of face in Eastern and Western cultures. In Chapter 8 I introduced a more 'sociological' reading of the self, one based not on culture as such, but rather a more dynamic conceptualisation of the self, as arising out of and being contingent on interaction. Thus, I posited the concept of the self as essentially a conversational-construal, an entity capable of variously overlapping with the selves of other conversationalists over the flow of

sociable conversation. This sociable expanding and contracting of the self as construal was seen to be conversationally achieved and empirically manifest in and through the mobilisation of selves as both conversational players and conversational images. Conversationally, contraction, it was argued, can be seen to be achieved through the proffering of individuate standpoints or perspectives, in for example the reporting of a unique narrative or proffering and defending an individuated personal standing on an issue. Expansion of the self can be regarded as the symbolic converse of this, namely, the weakening of the self as a unique of individuated locus of expression vis-à-vis those other selves co-present. Conversationally this is realised through expressions of sameness during positive alignment whereby the self in effect expands to encompass sociable others, in terms of stances, viewpoints, and definitions. The self then in this sense has been treated as a conversational entity, capable of being expanded and contracted to allow the claiming of negative and positive face needs.

Fundamentally, the way participants in sociable episodes were demonstrated to achieve such expansion and contraction of the self as construal was in and through the mobilisation and mutual ratification and support of both negative and positive sociable selves as images and players. That is, in the preceding analysis I have demonstrated that solidaric and individuated claims are made in and through routinely mobilised sociable selves, ones which index prevailing cultural values (see Chapter 2). This relationship between the self as conversational-construal and the sociable self as both player and image is represented in figure 9.1.

Fig. 9.1 The Symbolic Propensities of the Conversational Self



I have treated the second key term of alignment in quite general terms to refer to the way selves are mobilised vis-à-vis other selves in talk. Participants in sociable episodes have been conceived of as being both alignable and align-dependent entities in their sociable capacities. In sociable episodes, particular selves were shown to be mobilised, commonly typical ones, recognisable by co-participants as sociable. In order to ratify and support these selves, appropriate recipient selves were shown to be mobilised and, appropriately aligned.

I demonstrated in Chapter 6 that the facework as alignment approach allows for a range of conversational possibilities centred around the ratification and non-ratification of sociable selves. It was argued that – and in line with Goffman's (1967) comments on the fundamental condition of ritual equilibrium - under normal circumstances, selves are aligned in a way that encouraged ratification and support. This preference for ratification was shown to apply equally to both negative and positive alignment. On occasions when selves were not ratified, participants were shown to normatively re-align so as to

maintain the underlying equilibrium of sociability. Finally, if and when alignments threatened this equilibrium, participants were shown to engage in remedial work to restore sociability in and through their alignment practices.

The third of the central concepts – equilibrium - was drawn from Goffman's (1967) seminal work as well as being influenced by related conceptualisations of interpersonal harmony (see Chapter 1) and 'politic work' (Watts 1989). At a discourse level, equilibrium can be seen as synonymous with 'good' sociable conversation (Cf. Straehle 1997). More specifically, in relation to face, equilibrium was used to refer to an interactional context where participants demonstrated their willingness to mutually support both positive and negative face needs. Rather than equating such 'working consensus' with 'lip service' (Cf. Goffman 1967), I broadened the concept to include *any sociable activity routinely and normatively engaged in to claim and support both positive and negative face needs*.

These central concepts and propositions were crystallised in the heuristic model of facework as alignment presented in Chapter 3.

Fundamentally, this thesis study has not been about conceptual or theoretical development per se, but about trying to address a particular research problem, viz. English – German differences in sociable conversation. More specifically, the attempt has been made to address these differences not in the fist instance from a linguistic perspective, but from a sociological one. In this sense, the model developed in Chapter 3 has been a theoretical means to achieve an empirical end. What then has this approach told us about German – English differences from a sociological perspective on facework?

9.3 Alignment and English-German Differences in Sociable Conversation

The research problem which this study sought specifically to address was based in what were outlined in Chapter 2 as apparent differences in

communicative style between English and German speakers and apparent cultural variations in the importance accorded to self and other face concerns in verbal face-to-face interaction (Blum-Kulka and House 1989; Byrnes 1986; Fetzer 1996, 1997; Friday 1994; Hellweg, Samovar, and Skow 1994; House 1979, 1982a, 1982b, 1982c, 1989; House and Kasper 1981; Kotthoff 1989, 1991, 1993, 1994; Straehle 1997; Watts 1989). The remit was to consider these differences within one particular conversational context; that of the sociable gathering. In particular, I attempted to focus on instances of sociable conversation (Riesman and Watson 1964; Simmel 1949 [1911]; Watson 1958; Watson and Potter 1962). In an attempt to delineate in some way such moments of sociability, I focused in from considering alignment to sociability as a situated type of activity per se, to look at more closely at conversational behaviour in what I termed main phases of sociability. Drawing on the notions of topic and the general notion of episode (Katriel 1986; Malone 1997; Penman 1990; Tannen 1984; Watson and Potter 1962; Wood and Kroger 1994), I identified my main unit of analytical interest as conversational behaviour within what I termed 'sociable episodes'.

I began the comparative analysis in Chapter 5 by providing a broad and largely ethnographically informed account of sociability in both milieus. Participants in both cultures were shown to equally recognise and align to their entrances into and departures from the situational world of sociability. In what I termed aligning for alignment, I identified certain differences between each lingua-culture in the first instance in terms of the type of topics generally favoured, and the extent to which and nature of topic development. Much of what was said in Chapter 5 corroborated aspects of communicative style identified in the previous studies outlined in Chapter 2, particularly those relating to naturally occurring conversational between close friends and acquaintances. In effect this chapter demonstrated that the concept of sociability as being a recognisable context and requiring and certain demonstration of intent to be sociable was common to both cultures, but that the process of sociable conversation per se appeared subject to cultural variability.

In Chapter 6, I looked more closely as sociable conversation in each milieu. Here I was able to demonstrate that the sociable contingencies

allowed for by the facework as alignment framework advanced in Chapter 3 could be seen to occur in both English and German episodes. This appeared to run contra- to the propositions outlined in Chapter 3, that English sociability was essentially a positive alignment pursuit whilst German sociability was essentially a negative one. It appeared that sociable episodes in both speech communities equally required both positive and negative alignment for the achievement and sustaining of sociable conversation. However, differences were identified in terms of the nature of conversational claims in each milieu.

In Chapter 7 I identified rather obvious differences in terms of the type and nature of sociable selves routinely drawn upon by participants to achieve these necessary alignments. In a nutshell, English sociable selves appeared to be more entertaining entities, whilst German sociable selves appeared to be more evaluative ones.

Extending the analysis into Chapter 8, I addressed the question of alignment in both cultures. Drawing on excerpts of talk taken from sociable episodes in both English and German sociable gatherings, I outlined how these essentially entertaining and evaluative and selves were aligned together in the achievement of sociable conversation. Instances of both primarily positive and primarily negative alignment were drawn upon. In looking at these data it became evident that the sociological bases for English German differences in sociable conversation was not any preference for negative alignment over positive, or vice versa, but rather the nature of the selves mobilised to normatively achieve such alignments. In short, what underlay both English and German sociable style was shown to be the availability, mobilisation, and alignment of sociable selves.

To conclude then, what this study has demonstrated is that English and German sociable conversations display both positive and negative alignment across and within sociable episodes. Such alignment is directly contingent on the mobilisation of normatively available sociable selves in each culture. The expressive nature of each of these selves though is subject to cross-cultural variation. It is variation at the level of such normatively available and routinely mobilised conversational selves both as conversational players and

conversational images that results in what is manifest conversationally as differences in sociable style. In short, sociable selves lie at the heart of sociable style. Fundamentally, both English and German sociable styles have been shown to be organised around the mutual and normative support of both negative and positive face needs. In order to both have supported and support positive and negative face needs in English and German sociable settings, one needs to have access to and be able to normatively mobilise appropriate sociable selves over the flow of the conversation.

9.4 The Facework as Alignment Model of Conversation: A Symbolic Terrain for Future Research

Due to its focus on sociability this study has been essentially skewed in the direction of equilibrium. Indeed, on those grounds alone it has gone of at somewhat of a tangent to the majority of facework and politeness studies which largely concentrate on what might be termed 'disequilibric' interaction, i.e., moments of talk when face emerges into the conscious of interlocutors to be a salient central issue in need of some redress or repair. However, the approach that I have sketched out here does allow for disequilibric alignment. That is, when sociable / casual conversation becomes not so sociable, or more conscious work than casual play.

I noted above that negative threshold breaches threaten positive face, and positive threshold breaches threaten negative face. For example, a classic example of negative threshold breach (at least to British speakers), is the situation where the self is mobilised as aloof from co-present others, or different to such an extent as to move slightly too far from others. Participants mobilising and aligning such selves in effect signal 'we are not the same', or 'I am different from you'. A less motivated but more frequent example is the conversational participant who is aligning him- / herself quite equilibrically, until he or she makes a conversational faux pas, and in doing so crosses the threshold beyond which autonomy can no longer be easily accepted as equilibric. Positive threshold breaches might be seen to occur for example in situations where

somebody who is overly-friendly, gets too close, or appears to be 'creeping' in some way, overly-underplaying difference as it were. Of course, these breaches may be the bases of cross-cultural misunderstanding, with one culture perceiving the other as 'creepy' or alternatively aloof and snobbish. When such instances of autonomous alignment occur, conversationalists much do much work to incorporate the offender back into the overarching equilibric bonds which underlies their solidarity. This area of breach, its repair or avoidance might warrant further research. Additionally, aggressive uses of both positive and negative alignments may be addressed. A much harder task may be to attempt to measure these heuristic boundaries to show for instance, how much negative or positive alignment is too much and do different cultures or different contexts have different normative tolerances.

Aside from working on disequilibric terrain or at the boundaries of equilibrium / disequilibrium, further studies might attempt tot address facework as alignment in different contexts. The work here has focused on in-group settings. The formality of the suggested analytical framework allows for analysis of any setting however where sociable or casual conversation takes place. Indeed, the studying of different contexts and different relational milieu might allow for the reincorporation of sociolinguist variable underlying current politeness research to be mobilised, such as power and social distance or any of the variant on these developed in work following Brown and Levinson. Work of this nature may also identify the particular situational selves routinely mobilised by participants in situ and consider the way these are aligned.

Although I posited my work here as essentially a research enterprise, I feel the approach taken and findings presented may have practical implications, particularly for English – German cross-cultural interaction. For example, those interested in cross-cultural communication might draw on the findings presented here in aiding the understanding of the nature of sociability in each culture. Similarly, language teaching may well focus not just on the conversational grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, but also on the way language can be used to manifest more symbolic exchanges of conversational selfhood fundamental to normative conversation.

I suggested in Chapter 1 that existing models of politeness were inadequate to capture facework in ongoing conversation. In Chapter 3 I posited sociable / casual conversation as particularly recalcitrant to politeness based research, due essentially to its apolite nature. That is, sociable conversation was shown to be relatively free of conventional politeness based on variables such as status and power differences between interlocutors. The question begs then, can there then be such a thing then as conversational politeness?

The proposition I would like to make here is that appropriate alignment of 'appropriate selves' is the hallmark of polite behaviour. Ratifying the self proffered by the other, reciprocating with an appropriate self, and co-jointly engaging in the ritual of that particular episode is what makes for polite conversation[1]. In the light of the preceding discussion, I would define 'conversational politeness' then as *the symbolic recognition (ratification, reciprocation, and ritual) of conversational selves. This is done, not primarily through the use of appropriate language use, but through the mobilisation of appropriate selves.*

In this sense, politeness isn't necessarily saying the right things, it's more mobilising the right selves. Politeness is an expressive order that one adheres to in the practice of everyday life. Between strangers, engaging in for example speech acts or formulaic intercourse, conventional politeness might be used. This can be regarded as an alignment of appropriate selves and orient to a shared definition of the situation (service encounter, asking a stranger for directions). During less formal encounters, as with the ones studied here, conventional politeness diminishes, but symbolic politeness continues. Appropriate selves are mobilised and aligned to create a an equilibric milieus in which action may be carried out. Both – conventional and sociable politeness – are examples of the alignment of appropriate selves.

One might posit a general rule of polite sociable conversation as being 'allow your interlocutor to proffer both solidaric and individuated selves'. Translated to a 'maxim', this might read something like fig. 9.2.

Fig 9.2 A Maxim of Conversational Politeness

SUPPORT AND RATIFY PROFFERED *POSITIVE* AND *NEGATIVE* CONVERSATIONAL SELVES	+	a) Maximise the expression of solidarity between selves b) Minimise the expression of individuation of selves
	−	a) Maximise the expression of individuation of selves b) Minimise the expression of solidarity between selves

I think that future politeness research might gain some purchase by employing the facework as alignment approach and be in a position to bring the sociological concept of the self more in line with linguistic practice.

I have concentrated specifically on two cultures here – the English and the Germans. Alongside further exploration of these two particular speech communities, I believe the facework as alignment approach has relevance for cross-cultural studies of facework in general. A dichotomy revealed in the initial review of face and facework in Chapter 1 was that between Eastern and Western conceptualisations of face. Indeed, the differences between Eastern and Western conceptualisations of the self formed one of the foundational objections to Brown and Levinson's conceptualisation of face, particular the negative aspect which was framed as overly individualistic. I believe that my appropriation of the positive and in particular negative aspects of face here might help resolve this apparent East-West contradiction. The self as conversational construal, manifest as normative conversational behaviour, is not a fixed one but a conversationally contingent one. Thus, work in Asian Cultures may begin by examining actual ongoing conversation (very few do) to see a) what salient conversational selves are routinely mobilised, and b) how selves are mobilised along a solidarity-autonomy dimension in the playing out of equilibric conversational interaction (i.e., how do conversationalists in Asian cultures safely negatively align themselves and claim autonomous stances?).

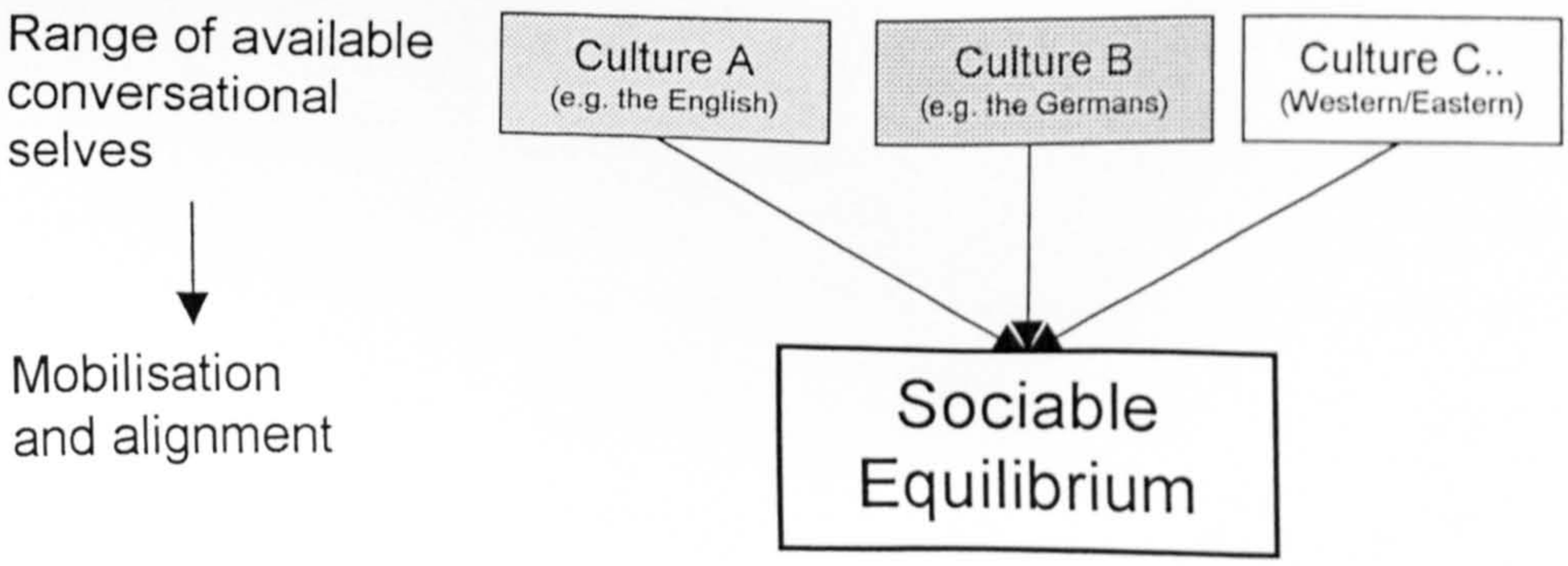
9.5 Conclusion

To conclude this chapter and the thesis as a whole, I would like to cite Goffman's observations on cultural variation in facework practices and the achievement of ritual equilibrium:

> Each person, subculture, and society seems to have its own characteristic repertoire of face-saving practices. It is to this repertoire that people partly refer when they ask what a person or culture is "really" like. And yet the particular set of practices stressed by particular persons or groups seems to be drawn from a single logically coherent framework of possible practices (Goffman 1967, 13).

I would hope that, by addressing two different cultures, who appear to be 'really' unlike each other in terms of their conversational style, I have illustrated how such a single framework - that of conversational selves - is drawn upon variously in the doing of sociable conversation. These are in effect the symbolic cards with which one must play the culturally specific game of sociability (see fig 9.3).

Figure 9.3 Cultural, Self, Sociable Equilibrium



It remains to be seen whether such a broad claim can be validated by future research. I would hope that, even if I have taken the wrong way in tackling my specific research problem, others reading this thesis may be inspired to find the right way.

Notes to Chapter 9

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[1] When we are taught how to behave properly as children, what we are actually being taught to do is ratify, reciprocate and engage in the ritual engagement of selves that is inherent in accepting a sweet from an adult, or following the teachers instructions to pretend to be a sunflower.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant Details

English Participants

Name	Age	Occupation	Relationship to others
KJ m	32	Air Traffic Controller	Partner to LJ, friend of RP
LJ f	38	S/E Café Owner	Partner to KJ
AL m	50	Manual Worker	Partner to JL, father of JW
JL f	58	Care Assistant	Partner to AL
LM f	37	Housewife	Wife to TM
TM m	34	S/E Electrical Retailer	Husband to LM, close friend of RP
EP f	37	Language Lektor	Wife to RP
RP m	34	FT PhD Student	Husband to EP, brother of KP, friend of KJ, TM, JW.
KP m	31	Casino Manager	Husband to LP, brother to RP
LP f	34	Cleaner	Wife to KP
JW m	33	Unemployed Engineer	Husband to ZW, friend of RP
ZW f	22	Housewife	Wife to JW
DP m	59	Painter	Husband to VP
VP f	55	Librarian	Wife to DP
KPs m	55	Taxi Driver	Husband to LuP
LuP f	47	Housewife	Wife to KPs
PH m	53	Council Employee	Husband to SS
SH f	47	Careworker	Wife to PS
JL m	54	Railwayman	Brother in Law to KPs
JR f	43	Cleaner	Sister to LuP
GP f	45	Housewife	Girlfriend to JP / Sister to KPs
JP m	42	Builder	Boyfriend to GP
CM f	61	Cleaner	Friend of LuP
JF f	46	Housewife	Friend to LuP
BM f	53	Housewife	Friend to LuP

German Participants

Name	Age	Occupation	Relationship to others
HB m	62	Retired Computer Eng	Husband to GB, father of PB & EP
IB f	34	Housewfie	Wife to PB
KB m	44	S/E Medical Supplier	Husband to UB
GB f	57	Retired	Wife to HB, mother of PB & EP
PB m	33	Racing Team Engineer	Husband to IB, son of GB & HB, brother of EP
UB f	42	Nurse	Wife to KB, Cousin to EP
SD f	35	Nursery Nurse	Sister to KN
IF f	48	Lab Technician	Wife to LF, Cousin to EP
LF m	60	SE Builder	Husband to IF
HG m	75	Factory Worker	Husband to KG
KG f	72	Retired	Wife to HG, Sister to GB
EM f	55	Housewife	Wife to HM
HM m	61	Factory Worker	Husband to EM
RM m	67	Retired Engineer	Husband to SM
SM f	68	Retired	Wife to RM, Sister of HB
KN f	39	Housewife	Wife to PN, close friend of EP
PN m	42	Security Guard	Husband to KN
EP f	37	See above	See above plus daughter of GB & HB
RP m	34	See above	See above
FT m	42	Quality Control Worker	Husband to RT, Sister to PN
RT f	35	Shop Worker	Wife to FT
GW m	37	Shop Worker	Wife to LW, Friend of KN
LW f	47	Factory Worker	Husband to GW

Appendix B: Gathering Details

English Gatherings

Gathering	Date	Setting	Members Present	Duration of Recordings
E1	18/10/98	Evening meal at home of JW & ZW	RP, EP, JW, ZW, AL, JL.	2 hours 20 minutes
E2	21/11/98	Raclette at the home of RP & EP	RP, EP, TM, LM, KJ, LJ	2 hours 20 minutes
E3	12/12/98	Meal following video viewing at home of TM&LM	RP, TM, LM, DB, MB	30 minutes
E4	20/4/99	Evening meeting of RP, EP, KP & LP	RP, EP, KP, LP	3 hours 20 minutes
E5	10/12/99	Coffee at the home of TM & LM	RP, LM, TM, DB, MB	1 hour 30 minutes
E6	11/11/00	Coffee at home of KsP &LuP	KPs, LuP, KP, JL, JR	1 hour 30 minutes
E7	16/11/00	Social gathering at home of S.H	LP, GP, SH, JL, BM, CM	1 hour 30 minutes
E8	06/01/01	Dinner at home of PH & SH	KPs, LuP, DP,VP, PH, SH	3 hours
E9	25/12/00	Christmas dinner at home of KP and LuP	KPs, LuP, KP, GP, JP	1 hour 30 minutes
E10	08/01/01	Drinks at home of LuP	LuP, JP, CM	1 hour 30 minutes
E11	09/01/01	Drinks at home of LuP	LuP, CM, GP, JP	1 hour 30 minutes
E12	10/04/01	Social gathering at home of CM	BM, CM, JR, GP, SH, LuP	1 hour 30 minutes
E13	10/10/01	Social gathering at home of KP and LuP	KP, LuP, DP, VP	1 hour 30 minutes
E14	24/11/01	Social gathering at home of KP and LuP	KP, LuP, DP, VP, PH, SH	3 hours
E15	27/07/01	Drinks at home of Dan and Vera	DP, VP, KP, LuP, PH, SH	1 hour 30 minutes
			Total Duration Or Recordings	**28 hours**

German Gatherings

Gathering	Date	Setting	Members Present	Duration of Recordings
G1	29/8/98	Coffee at home of HB & GB	RP, EP, HB, GB, KN	1hour 30 minutes[1]
G2	25/8/98	Coffee at home of KB & UB	RP, EP, GB, HB, KB, UB	1hour 30 minutes
G3	24/12/98	Xmas Eve at home of IB & PB	RP, EP, HB, GB, IB, PB, KH, SH	3 hours
G4	25/12/98	Xmas Day Lunch at home of GB & HB	RP, EP, GB, HB	45 minutes
G5	26/12/98	Boxing Day at home of GB & HB	RP, EP, GB, HB	1 hour 30 minutes
G6	31/12/98	New Years Eve at home of KN & PN	RP, EP, KN, PN	1 hour 30 minutes
G7	2/1/99	Coffee at home of GB & HB	RP, EP, GB, HB, KN, PN	1 hour 30 minutes
G8	30/6/99	Birthday Party at home of IB & PB	RP, EP, GB, HB, IB, PB, KH, SH	3 hours
G9	1/7/99	Garden barbecue at home of RM & SM	RP, EP, GB, HB, RM, SM	4 hours 30 minutes
G10	2/7/99	Evening at home of KN & PN	RP, EP, KN, PN	4 hours 30 minutes
G11	10/7/99	Garden barbecue at home of GB & HB	RP, EP, GB, HB, KN, PN	7 hours
G12	17/7/99	Evening meal at home of GB & HB	RP, EP, GB, HB, IB, PB	2 hours
G13	21/7/99	Barbecue at home of KN & PN	RP, EP, KN, PN, SD	30 minutes
G14	24/7/98	Barbecue at home of KN & PN	RP, EP, KN, PN, LW, GW, FT, RT	4 hours 30 minutes
G15	25/7/99	Barbecue at home of HB & GB	RP, EP, GB, HB, EM, HM	4 hours 30 minutes
G16	7/8/99	Barbecue at home of GB & HB	RP, EP, GB, HB, IB, PB, HG, KG, IF, LF	6 hours
			Total Duration Or Recordings	**47 hours, 45 minutes**

[1] The frequency of recordings of 1 hour 30 minutes is due to the fact that often I took only one cassette along to gatherings that I anticipated would not be of great length, or I expected to be involved in for only a limited period of time.

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